



Kiesau's plan: Stick to it

New Buffs OC doesn't want to stray from vision during season

By Kyle Ringo
Friday, August 7, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Plays and formations are written on dry erase boards behind him. Paperwork, a hard-working computer and a half-eaten sandwich litter his desk. Four classroom chairs are parked just in front of him like he's been teaching.

This sunny corner office in the Dal Ward Center is where new Colorado offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau has been holed up most of the summer, studying film, designing plays, talking on the phone or via e-mail with colleagues around the country. All of his efforts and time spent away from his family have been focused toward getting the Buffs moving again.

Since coach Dan Hawkins, Kiesau and former offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich came to CU in 2006 as well accomplished offensive minds, the CU offense hasn't finished a season ranked in the top two-thirds of the Big 12 Conference. Kiesau believes he knows why and what must be done to end that streak.

"I think what happens is, the guy that is running it has got to have a clear vision of what he wants for his offense," Kiesau said. "That's the No. 1 thing. You can't get caught up in saying, 'This is what we do, but, oh wait, Missouri does that. That looks pretty intriguing. Let's try that. Let's try this.' You have to stay focused and have a crystal vision of exactly what you want your offense to look like. You can't get distracted by, 'Well, Texas Tech threw for 6,000 yards. We should do that.' You can't compete with the Joneses."

Now, with Helfrich having moved on to Oregon following spring ball earlier this year, Kiesau finds himself in the job he has always wanted, offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for a major college program.

When the Buffs begin fall camp today with an evening practice, Kiesau will experience another first in his career. The former college quarterback at Portland State has never coached the position he used to play. He will break into the job this month as the man primarily responsible for deciding whether his boss's son, Cody Hawkins, or sophomore Tyler Hansen will be the starter in 2009.

"Everybody says, 'Do you feel pressure to play him because he's your head coach's son?'" Kiesau said. "Not at all. We're going to play the best guy. Proof of that is last year when Cody struggles and we insert a freshman. If there was truth to that then Tyler would have kept his redshirt and Cody would have kept playing."

The Buffs of 2009 will look nothing like the 2008 version offensively, Kiesau said. Many of the changes were put in place in spring football when his predecessor was still calling the plays. But plenty more has

changed in the months since.

In an age when many college teams are switching to wide open, hurry-up versions of the spread offense, Kiesau and Hawkins and the Buffs have elected to go back to basics, basing their attack out of a two-back, pro-style system that they hope will produce a power running game and plenty of play-action opportunities in the passing game.

Kiesau said the system will make choosing the starting quarterback easy because everyone in the offensive meeting rooms will know who the most consistent player is after watching film.

"Some of the changes I've made in the offense, it's going to define the quarterback position," Kiesau said. "This offense is very quarterback friendly and the quarterback has got to run it. So if he makes a wrong check or if he makes a wrong read, it's going to be defined because it's very black and white."

Kiesau spent five years coaching at the University of California under head coach and quarterbacks coach Jeff Tedford. When he was named offensive coordinator at CU in the spring, Kiesau said he sought advice from Tedford, who was eager to help, despite the fact the Bears and Buffs will meet in 2010. Kiesau said he had already learned a lot about coaching and evaluating quarterbacks during his time at Cal as wide receivers coach.

"For five years, I was with the best quarterback coach in the country in Jeff Tedford," Kiesau said. "I have all his drill tapes and we would analyze quarterbacks together. The technique, the mechanics, even the drops and the reads I learned from him. It's like learning from Michael Jordan if you're a basketball player. That guy is the best."

Kiesau said he is a big believer in one of the core principles of Tedford's program at Cal. Tedford always encouraged his offensive coaches not to get caught up in beating the defense in practice every day, but focusing instead on perfecting the system they run. Kiesau said that will be his approach running the offense at CU.

When the Buffs open to season in a month against in-state rival Colorado State at Folsom Field, Kiesau will experience another first. He will be the guy responsible for calling the plays. The only other time he has done so during his career came during an offseason all-star game in Japan when he was still a member of the Cal staff.

Kiesau said he isn't completely green. Every offensive coach has some idea of what they would call on just about every down of every game, and he frequently spoke on the sideline phone with Helfrich, giving his input on play calls over the past three seasons.

"For some reason, and I could be crazy and it could change when I walk up for game day against Colorado State, but for some reason, I'm not nervous about that aspect of the game," he said. "I feel if you prepare yourself and you know exactly what you're going into, you'll have that confidence to call plays."

"It's kind of like a chess match. Wherever they are, go the other way."



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WR Simmons cleared to join Buffs

Junior college transfer admitted to CU

By Kyle Ringo
Thursday, August 6, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Junior college wide receiver Andre Simmons has been academically cleared and admitted to school in what might be a modern-day record for efficiency at CU.

Simmons spent this summer working to complete three online courses to receive his associates degree from Independence Community College in Kansas. He completed some of the work for his classes earlier this week, but everyone involved apparently put his grading and paperwork on the fast track.

Simmons was among the last players to officially report Thursday for the start of fall camp. He arrived in Boulder late in the afternoon and was immediately swept away by staffers in a golf cart to make getting to various stops around campus quicker.

Sports information director Dave Plati said late Thursday that director of academics Kris Livingston had confirmed Simmons is academically eligible to play this season for the Buffs. As long as CU receives a faxed copy of his academic transcript by this afternoon, Simmons should be able to participate in the first practice session this evening.

The football program is counting on Simmons to fill the void left by former wide receiver and kick returner Josh Smith who transferred to UCLA this summer. Simmons is one of four new scholarship wide receivers to be added to the program this offseason.

Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau confirmed Thursday that true freshman wide receiver Will Jefferson also has been cleared by the NCAA and admitted to school. Jefferson was offered a scholarship only last week after a friend of Kiesau's called to tell him Jefferson was available earlier this summer.

Kiesau said Jefferson was missing one core class on his high school transcript and didn't know he could take the class in summer school to get qualified. Once he passed the course, the Buffs were thrilled by the turn of events.

"We got a good one late," Kiesau said. "He was the right fit. He's got great hands. He's not a burner, but he's fast enough. He'll have the ability to help us if he knows what he's doing mentally."

Tau loses 2nd year

Offensive lineman Sione Tau will miss his second consecutive season in the program after violating a team rule, Plati confirmed.

The 6-foot-5, 320-pound Hawaiian missed last season after becoming academically ineligible during his

redshirt freshman season in 2007. If Tau sticks with the program, he will be a fourth-year junior with two seasons of eligibility remaining next fall.

Tau was placed on the inactive list and missed the final week of spring ball earlier this year. At the time, coach Dan Hawkins said Tau was dealing with personal issues.

Healthy Buffs

CU head athletic trainer Miguel Rueda has been through what was undoubtedly his most busy offseason with the football program, but he reports every member of the team will be physically cleared to practice today.

The Buffs lost 121 games do to a rash of injuries last season, leading to a slew of surgeries and rehabilitation. Rueda said not every player is 100 percent recovered.

"It's a lot better than it was last year," he said.

The list of players returning to action includes senior cornerback Cha'pelle Brown, who missed much of spring ball with Giardia, an infection of the small intestine caused by a parasite. Brown lost more than 10 pounds from the infection, but has regained much of that weight this summer.

Ticket surge

Athletic director Mike Bohn said Thursday the schools has sold 500 season tickets this week alone. Bohn said the start of fall camp typically touches off one of the busiest periods of the year for the ticket office.

While the sales news is good, the department remains about 2,000 tickets shy of meeting last season's total of approximately 22,300 season tickets sold.

Celestine working

his way back

Former CU wide receiver Kendrick Celestine said he has been told he won't be able to rejoin the team until at least the end of training camp. Celestine quit the team and gave up his scholarship last season to return home to Louisiana to prepare to become a father. He returned to CU for summer classes and said he did well in classes he paid for with student loans and pell grants. He plans to use financial aid to pay for school again this fall as he attempts to earn back his scholarship. He hopes to begin practicing as a walk-on before the Colorado State game. He is ineligible this season because he has not made enough progress toward his degree under NCAA rules.



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THE DENVER POST

CU newcomers cleared to start

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Wide receivers Andre Simmons and Will Jefferson have been cleared by the Colorado admissions office and are expected to practice with their new teammates Friday, the first practice of August drills, the CU sports information office confirmed today.

Simmons' participate is pending his official transcript is received before practice starts.

Simmons, a 6-foot-3, 210-pound transfer from Independence (Kan.) Community College, had to complete summer credits to gain his eligibility. A native of South Carolina, Simmons was ranked by Rivals.com as the nation's 35th-best junior-college sophomore and the No. 6 wideout. He combined for 91 catches in two seasons of at the junior-college level.

Jefferson, a 6-foot, 190-pounder, was a late signee from Vista Del Lago High School in Moreno Valley, Calif. He reportedly accounted for more than 2,000 all-purpose yards last season.

Colorado Football

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- of football practice Aug. 7 .

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Simmons and Jefferson will join two incoming freshman receivers from Texas, Jarrod Darden (6-5, 210) and Terdema Ussery (6-4, 205), to give the Buffaloes a quartet of newcomers who should bolster a position of need.

Players reported for physicals and meetings today. The first practice is scheduled for 5:30-7:45 p.m. Friday. It is open to the public.

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THE DENVER POST

cu football

Early focus on CU wide receivers

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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The spring announcement that Colorado head coach Dan Hawkins also will handle the wide receivers this season barely caused a blip on the news meter. Preoccupied with big-picture responsibilities, Hawkins would probably just go through the motions with the wideouts, some figured, and let others do the hands-on work.

No chance of that. Beginning with today's opening practice (5:30 p.m., open to the public), Hawkins needs to get newcomers up to speed in a hurry. The transfer of Josh Smith to UCLA left an already-thin position almost emaciated.

Help for junior Scotty McKnight likely must come from third-year sophomore Markques Simas, who hasn't played a down for CU because of academic problems, and four new arrivals: junior college transfer Andre Simmons and freshmen Jarrod Darden, Will Jefferson and Terdema Ussery. Jefferson is expected to be a late addition from Moreno Valley, Calif.

Colorado Football

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"I'm really excited about it," Hawkins said of coaching the wide receivers. "I coached the tight ends when I was the head coach at Boise State. I've been raised as a teacher. I think every five years a head coach ought to go back and also be an assistant, because you figure out what it's like in the trenches."

Here are a few things new to the CU program this year:

New staffers.

Eric Kiesau was promoted to offensive coordinator. Bob Foster, who coached at Cal-Davis during Hawkins' playing days, was hired to coach outside linebackers. Former Illinois State head coach Denver Johnson directs the offensive line (he has brothers named Dallas and Houston).

Three new D-line starters.

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THE DENVER POST

At this point, however, it's unclear who they will be. More than a dozen candidates are ready to join junior defensive end Marquez Herrod, the lone returning starter.

Number change.

Sophomore tailback Rodney "Speedy" Stewart has switched from jersey No. 43 to No. 5, which he wore in high school.

Big'uns along the O-line.

Nine blockers are 6-feet-4 or taller. That includes a basketball-like front line of 6-9 Nate Solder, 6-8 Ryan Miller and 6-6 Bryce Givens as projected starters. In the spring of 2007, only one offensive lineman measured taller than 6-4.

Healthy roster.

Only two players — offensive guard Max Tuioti-Mariner (ACL) and cornerback Anthony Wright (ankle) — are not listed as "full go" for today's start of August drills. Last season, Colorado lost 121 man-games because of injuries.

Talent at cornerback.

Entering the 2008 season, cornerback was a concern. But this year with Cha'pelle Brown, Jimmy Smith, Jalil Brown and the return of 2007 starter Benjamin Burney, corner is considered a plus position. Good thing, considering the pass-happy nature of the Big 12.

Freakish athlete at defensive end.

Blue-chip freshman Nick Kasa ran sprints for the Legacy High track team with bests of 11.1 for the 100 meters and 23.7 for the 200 — at 6-7 and 250 pounds.

Position changes.

Not as much movement as in the past, but redshirt freshman Ray Polk has switched from tailback to safety, and senior tailback Kevin Moyd is getting a trial at wide receiver.

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Under repairs: CU offense seeks to forge new identity after recent struggles

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — Eric Kiesau sat in his cluttered corner Dal Ward office Thursday afternoon like a kid who couldn't wait to get outside and play.

Notes that the new offensive coordinator has jotted on dry erase boards remained clear. Papers lay about. Chairs circled a television screen on which hours of film had been reviewed. Kiesau and other Colorado coaches are trying to fix what went wrong with the offense in 2008. It's a big job.

"The biggest thing for me is I've been in this office all summer, doing paperwork and getting the playbook right and meeting with (offensive line) coach (Denver) Johnson," Kiesau said. "I just can't wait to get out on the field and just start coaching. It's been nuts."

As the Buffs open fall camp today, starting head coach Dan Hawkins' fourth season in Boulder and Kiesau's first as offensive coordinator, Kiesau knows the offense might not be the only story, but it's certainly a key one.

The Buffs entered 2008 with a no-huddle approach that piqued curiosity, not to mention hopes. After it finished last in the Big 12 in yards (318.5 per game) and points (20.2 per), CU went back to the drawing board. New coaches are implementing new strategies. Former offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich left the program following spring drills, an awkward time for any program to lose a coordinator. And Johnson succeeded Jeff Grimes, who left in February for Auburn.

Things are going to be different. Better? Kiesau hopes improvement stems from lessons learned a year ago.

"I think we started looking around, going, 'Wow, Big 12, you have Texas Tech, Oklahoma, Missouri, all these high-powered offenses; we should do what they do,'" Kiesau said. "That's not our strength. That's not who we are. That's not the players we recruited.

"I have a very clear vision of what I want it to look like. It'll be very different from the rest of the Big 12, and that's going to be another advantage that Colorado is going to have."

Kiesau told the rest of the staff that CU should not compare its offense with others in the conference, which boasts some of the nation's best. CU, obviously, would like to post video game-like numbers, too. But it can't see a play that works for Texas and assume it'll work for CU. The Buffs want to



Colorado running back Rodney Stewart, left, is upended by Florida State defenders during a September 2008 game in Jacksonville, Fla., that Florida State won 39-21. The Buffaloes' coaching staff will focus on trying to fix what went wrong with the team's offense in 2008 during this year's fall camp. **Phil**

Coale/AP file

10 questions

10 questions to be explored during the Colorado Buffaloes' August camp:

1. Who are the playmakers? **The Buffs are high on their running backs. Inexperience at receiver might temper that excitement. No matter what happens with the running game, a bad passing game will make rushing the ball difficult, maybe impossible.**

2. Who are the leaders? **The senior class is small — 17 total, only 12 of whom are on scholarship. The best programs say senior leadership is pivotal.**

3. What about that defensive line? **Replacing those three departed starters will go a long way toward determining how good the whole defense is.**

4. Who's the quarterback? **Cody Hawkins' experience makes him the favorite. Tyler Hansen will push**

forge their own identity.

"I think that's the trap we fell into, quite honestly," Kiesau said. "I want to concentrate on us and focus on us and just get us better. We have to work to get our players and our system to its full potential."

Kiesau said he has tried to place himself in every player's shoes to understand how to best explain each change. Some things won't be that different. He said the power-running attack CU stressed in spring before Helfrich left remains an agenda.

Kiesau, like CU's incumbent quarterback Cody Hawkins, is shy of 6 feet tall, and he, too, played the position in college. Cody Hawkins may or may not beat out Tyler Hansen for the job this fall. Regardless of who starts, Kiesau said there will be more timing routes, quicker protections and deeper drops to cut down on passes batted at the line.

Kiesau also said CU will work on having its quarterback "shuffle" in the pocket to find passing lanes. Kiesau said Cody Hawkins didn't really have a feel for that. Kiesau expects those changes to help Hawkins, who's had 11 of his 25 career interceptions tipped by pass rushers.

"I think all of those things will help Cody," Kiesau said. "The reason why I know that is because it helped me."

Cody Hawkins said the offense will be more pro-style but use terms similar to last year's. Hawkins said there will be "more on the quarterback's plate" as far as putting playmakers in the right spots.

Cody Hawkins added there'll be an "out" on every play, an audible the quarterback can call to get the offense out of a bad play. He said the offense had something similar last year, but it was more of a "generic check."

"I'd say we'll have something more intricate," he said.

Kiesau insists that the quarterbacks have the ability to put the offense in the right play. Intelligence is pivotal, he said.

"Everybody wants the 6-foot-4, 6-5 quarterback, and I think there is some merit to that," Kiesau said. "You can have a 6-4 or 6-5 quarterback, but if he can't read coverages or if he doesn't know when a blitz is coming, all that talent he has is wasted."

Kiesau said the first week of camp will be used to install the offense. Over the next 10 days, they'll evaluate players and see where they fit best. As coaches have done since spring, Kiesau lauded the tailbacks but voiced concern over the wide receivers, where the Buffs return only one — junior Scotty McKnight — with much experience.

"I think the mystery of this whole offense right now is nobody knows what's going to happen on the outside (with the wide receivers)," he said. "To me that's encouraging, because opposing teams, they don't know what's going to happen on the outside. What if one of our 6-3 or 6-4 freshman receivers figures it out and now you have a big, tall target out there to throw to?"

That's taking a optimistic approach. Considering CU's luck last year with attrition, which included 121 player games lost to injury or illness, making things even tougher on the offense, maybe the Buffs are due for some better luck.

It'll take more than luck, though.

"I think if you work on the process, the end result will take care of itself," Kiesau said. "I think sometimes we, as an

him, and Hansen's athleticism could mean the difference.

5. Are the new receivers ready? **They'd better be.**

6. Does greatness await Darrell Scott? **After struggles as a freshman, fans expect Scott to rebound. His health is key; his talent is clear.**

7. Will B.J. Beatty make us forget Brad Jones? **Jones was the best pass rusher; Beatty appears most likely to succeed him. Don't forget Doug Rippy, a redshirt freshman who had a nice spring. A strong pass rush in the Big 12 is mandatory.**

8. What will Ben Burney provide? **After a year off to heal from multiple surgeries, Burney brings experience to a secondary that lost both safeties.**

9. Is Nate Solder ready for stardom? **Quiet and unassuming, Solder is a big, strong and athletic offensive tackle expected to lead what's expected to be the team's strength: its offensive line. Solder, according to some, is an NFL-quality talent.**

10. Is the coach feeling some heat? **Dan Hawkins is 13-24 in three seasons at CU, and he's adding wide receivers coach to his chores this fall.**

Patrick Ridgell

offensive staff, were so concerned with the end product (in 2008) that we forgot some of the steps on how to get there. That's what I'm trying to reverse."

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WR recruit Simmons OK to play

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BOULDER — The Colorado football program reported Thursday that wide receiver recruit Andre Simmons has been academically cleared to play. He is expected to be with the team today when camp opens.

CU also reported offensive lineman Sione Tau has been “excused” for the 2009 season due to an undisclosed violation of team rules. Tau signed with CU in 2007. He redshirted in 2007 and was suspended due to grades in 2008. He’s expected to return to the active squad in January.

Simmons, who was on his way to Boulder on Thursday, according to offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau, was CU’s lone junior college signee in its 2009 class. Coaches hope the 6-foot-3, 210-pounder provides depth and talent at a position where CU returns only one player — junior Scotty McKnight — with much experience.

Simmons played at Independence Community College in Kansas in 2007 and 2008. He was first team all-Jayhawk Conference in 2008, when he caught 31 passes for 318 yards.

Simmons had to complete nine courses, including three on-line courses this summer, since January to be accepted to CU.

Receiver Will Jefferson is also expected to be with the team today. Jefferson is a late addition to the 2009 class.