

# CU's Clemons out to make difference

## WR brings skill, competitive nature to Buffs

**By Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

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Colorado quarterback Tyler Hansen said last week he believes his team needs to play with more emotion and passion next fall to make dramatic improvement on its 3-9 performance in 2009.

Hansen repeatedly used the word fire. The kind of fire he was talking about is personified in wide receiver Toney Clemons, who is likely to be the biggest attraction for fans when spring practices begin Saturday morning in Boulder.

Clemons, a former four-star recruit, transferred to CU last summer from Michigan. He spent two unproductive seasons at Michigan after signing with the Wolverines out of Pittsburgh. Clemons was unhappy in Michigan after a coaching change in the program and a new offense in which he never felt comfortable.

Colorado is more his style. He brings size (he's 6-foot-2), speed, good hands and a self-confident nature to the CU offense. It's a skill set the Buffs haven't had on the perimeter at any time in coach Dan Hawkins four years on the job.

"The biggest thing he brings is energy," Hansen said. "He's always talking. He's always talking trash. He's always in your face. He always wants to win.

"We have competitions after our runs and he's always in there. He always wants to win, and he pretty much always does win. And he talks after. He taunts the guy he beats. He just brings this energy level that we've missed the past couple years. He brings a sort of swagger that we've needed."

Clemons said he never makes anything personal on the field, but he likes to get in his opponent's head. He said he has taken that approach to competition since he was young. He said he always has fun on the field and has been known to laugh during a play or while being pursued by defenders.

"I'm definitely one of those guys who is not the same in that bubble or on that practice field that I am walking through campus," he said. "... It's a sharp sword that you live on, but you've got to be built for that."

He has spent plenty of time in the past 18 months working out with his cousin, Arizona Cardinals' wide receiver Steve Breaston and other pro players. He caught passes at times last summer from Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb.

The talent, expertise and confidence from those pros has rubbed off on a player who never was lacking in any of those areas to start. Is he a difference maker for the Buffs?

"I tend to think so," he said. "Beyond athleticism and talent, I like to make a difference in the group and the team, period. From offense to defense, I like to make a difference with the (defensive backs) and with our group, with the staff and the people around the staff.

"So, I call myself a difference-maker on and off the field. Definitely."

The Buffs desperately need somebody to make a difference on offense. Some Buff fans might not be able to stomach another year sputtering.

The Buffs have finished in the bottom third of Big 12 offenses in almost all areas of production in each of Hawkins' four years at CU.

They were 11th in rushing, eighth in passing, 12th in total offense and 10th in scoring offense last year.

A variety of alibis have been offered up as explanations. None of them will carry any weight in 2010, especially after adding Clemons to a group of nine returning starters and seven other offensive players with starting experience.

Clemons spent last season on the practice fields and in the locker room and says the Buffs problems were more "on the attitude side of it" than the overall talent level of the team. He echoed Hansen in saying the Buffs need to play with more belief in themselves and much more emotion.

The coaching staff's "off the mountain tops and out of the valley" philosophy translated to a perfect flat line at times in 2009. It must be avoided this year.

"I want to develop a type of aura and swagger, understanding that we've got to win," Clemons said. "There is no more ifs. There were a lot of ifs, like, if we win this game, if we do that. It's when we do that. ... I want the younger guys to understand that we have to create an identity, not find one, and put Colorado back on the map."

Clemons said he has watched the great Colorado teams of the past on film and he noticed several common denominators.

"They knew who they were and they knew what they were playing for and they went out there and did it," he said. "As a team, we've got to find that and I think we made a lot of progress with that in the workouts. It's a different atmosphere. Guys are more excited. They're more confident in their abilities and they trust themselves and the staff and their teammates a lot more than they did in the summertime."

Clemons said when he joined the program last season, some players were allowed to get away with bad habits because the leaders of the team were not the type of guys to stand up and say something. He said they led by example. Clemons said more is needed.

"It's good to have guys who lead by example, but not everybody responds to that," Clemons said. "Some people respond to vocal emotional leaders. ... It's definitely something everybody has been working on. We're trying to get it together and make things right."

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## CU's Clemons ready to go

*By Patrick Ridgell*  
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BOULDER — Colorado football is about to learn what it truly has in Toney Clemons.

With spring drills starting Saturday, Clemons, a receiver, will begin preparing for the 2010 season, when he'll be a junior and CU will try to turn things around. Clemons doesn't see himself as some instant fix to what has ailed the offense in recent years. But he comes with some notable credentials — ones that enticed the Buffs to recruit him twice.

"I feel like I'm at the right place," Clemons said this week.

Clemons, whom CU lists at 6-foot-2 and 210 pounds, signed with Michigan out of Valley High in New Kensington, Pa., in 2007 after a prep career that prompted Rivals.com to rank him the state's third-best prospect. Growing up in western Pennsylvania, he followed Michigan and Big Ten football. He started receiving attention as a sophomore in high school, and talking to recruiters as a junior. He has a cousin — Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Steve Breaston, with whom he speaks everyday — who played at Michigan.

CU's Darian Hagan recruited Clemons, too. Clemons said he can remember hearing about CU as a young boy. Kordell Stewart's Hail Mary pass to beat Michigan in 1994, which happened when he was six, made him especially aware.

"CU, it was a little further away," Clemons said. "I had a trip set up after Michigan, and I wanted to come. We couldn't find a way to get my mom out here. And I just didn't feel comfortable with it.

"I loved Hagan, I loved Hawk (coach Dan Hawkins). I knew (offensive coordinator Eric) Kiesau was here and I knew what his résumé was, so I knew the staff was elite as well and they played in the best conference.

"I'm glad to be here now. I took a trip (in the spring), and like I tell guys all the time, if I would have taken a trip in high school, who's to say I'd end up at Michigan? I might have come here. Because I fell in love with it here the same way I did when I went to Michigan."

Clemons played in 19 games in 2007 and 2008 at Michigan, but said the fit wasn't right. He said Breaston encouraged him to weigh other options.

"He knows the business and the system and he knew what's best for me," Clemons said

### Colorado football spring glance

#### FIVE POSITIONS TO WATCH:

1. Quarterback: Every position is open. Can Cody Hawkins win the job back?
2. Wide receiver: Markques Simas is suspended, but others are eager to help.
3. Linebacker: Graduation left some holes.
4. Kicker/punter: Inconsistent in 2009.
5. Offensive line: Competition should be fierce.

#### FIVE SPRING SUBPLOTS:

1. What's the mood? This program has taken its lumps the past two years.
2. We're not so green anymore, are we? The Buffs can't play the inexperience card in 2010.
3. What difference will Robert Prince make? He succeeds head coach Dan Hawkins as the wide receivers coach.
4. Will the special teams improve? Despite a regular emphasis on them, CU was last in punting and punt returns in the Big 12 in 2009.
5. What about that O-line? The Buffs allowed the most sacks — 44 — and owned the smallest yards-per-rush average — 2.8 — in the Big 12 in 2009.

#### FIVE BUFFS TO WATCH:

1. QB Tyler Hansen: What's next in

"He still loves Michigan, but he understands we're family, and he loves his family more."

Clemons said he also has family at Ohio State in quarterback Terrelle Pryor and running back Jordan Hall, whom he called his "two little cousins." Clemons said he speaks with Pryor daily.

"When I was leaving, (Pryor) wanted to find a loophole for me to go there, but I had my chance to go to Ohio State out of high school, and it still wasn't a fit for me," Clemons said.

Clemons said the NCAA questioned him during an investigation last fall after allegations that Michigan had players spend time on football beyond allowable limits. Clemons said he believes he was the 10th person the NCAA questioned, and that he's glad it's over.

As for leaving Michigan?

"They're great guys, and I'd never sit there and say they weren't great guys or they didn't run a great scheme or stuff like that," he said about Michigan's current staff. "But the thing is, that's scheme's not for everybody, and I was just happy to be one of those players that left — that that scheme wasn't truly for. It didn't come down to playing time. Those guys gave me an opportunity to play, and I'm thankful for that to this day."

After transferring to CU, he redshirted per NCAA rules in 2009, working with the scout team. He said he spent Saturdays last fall watching the defensive backs work because those were the guys he faced in practice. He said he learned most of the offense in camp last summer, and has had teammates, especially Jason Espinoza, help him get its "ins and outs."

With receiver Markques Simas suspended and facing an uncertain future due to his recent arrest for suspicion of DUI, Clemons' presence has become more important. CU finished last in yards and 10th in points in the Big 12 last season. It has lacked playmakers at receiver in recent years.

Clemons said he likes to stretch the field and turn short gains into big ones. CU would like to see that, too.

"My whole thing is, I pride myself on run-after-the-catch abilities," he said. "I was a running back as a little kid. I kind of like to pretend I still have that type of running back abilities."

"I want to be used any way they want to use me. That's not a problem. I'm not looking to be used specifically. It's just wherever they feel there's weaknesses where I can fill in and use my strengths to balance it out, I'll probably get used that way."

Read Patrick Ridgell's CU sports blog at [www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell](http://www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell). He can be reached at [pridgell@times-call.com](mailto:pridgell@times-call.com).

his development?

2. LB Jon Major: Came on late in 2009.

3. WR Andre Simmons: Remember all that fuss over his delayed enrollment?

4. OL Max Tuioti-Mariner: Will his knees hold up?

5. DB Deji Olatoye: Buffs hope for big things from him.

#### **SPRING PRACTICE SCHEDULE(All are open to the public):**

Saturday: 10 a.m. to noon

Tuesday: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Thursday: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

March 12: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

March 15: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

March 16: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

March 18: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

(scrimmage)

March 29: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

March 30: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

April 1: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

April 2: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. (scrimmage)

April 5: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

April 6: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

April 8: 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

April 10: 1:30 p.m. spring game

**Schedule notes:** CU will take March 20 to March 28 off for spring break. Times are tentative.

*Patrick Ridgell*

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## A good season is determined by its spring

Players look ahead to upcoming spring practice

*By Michael Krumholtz on March 5, 2010*

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Tyler Hansen said he has big plans for this spring. If all goes according to plan during spring practice, which begins Saturday, the Buff's quarterback will be very pleased with himself.

"My goal is to not throw any interceptions the whole spring," Hansen said, before a slight smile appeared on his face. "Out of all the 15 practices and scrimmages, I don't want to throw one pick."

Hansen, who threw seven of them last season, is entering his first spring practice as starter. And it comes at a time when there are some intriguing storylines looming over Boulder.



Sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen dashes through an opening in Texas A&M's defense during their game on Nov. 7, 2009. (CU Independent file/Lee Pruitt)

The most obvious and most public of those issues is the question of head coach Dan Hawkins' job security. Hansen bluntly summed up how the manifestation of that topic rests in the hands of the players.

"We control [what goes on] on the field," Hansen said. "So if we do our job, he'll keep his job."

By fall, the new big-man-on-campus expects to be at 215 lbs on the field (about 15 lbs more than his playing weight last season) and expects to be a better passer overall.

"I want to get the ball out quicker and work on my footwork so I can get the ball to receivers faster," he added.

That is a must, considering that CU gave up 44 sacks last year. That number ranked 117th out of 120 D-I teams, making even Western Kentucky's offensive line— which ranked 114— look like a steel wall.

One man who has the job of securing Hansen and protecting the QB's physical and mental well being: offensive guard Ryan Miller.

Next fall, Miller will be a junior in his fourth year at CU (due to a medical redshirt in 2008). He is one of the five returning starters on the offensive line from last season. And to Miller, spring ball is seminal for him

and his big brothers on the line.

"There's a lot of competition battles," the 6-foot, 8-inch Miller said. "And the big thing is finding out who wants to play and compete for that top spot."

As a whole, the O-line has 16 scholarship players going into the spring, a necessary depth at such a crucial position.

"I believe we can be the strength of the team," Miller said. "We've finally got some depth and some health that we haven't had in a while."

Position coach Denver Johnson was in his first season with CU last fall and the spring will give the trench-laden behemoths more time to learn his schemes.

A position group with a polarized perspective heading into spring is the one that the offensive line will be making holes for. After the departure of running backs Darrell Scott and Demetrius Sumler at the end of last season, the tailback spot is a barren land.

The only two returning dwellers of this deserted position with meaningful playing time are Rodney Stewart and Brian Lockridge. Among the two, they return 210 carries, 857 yards and 10 touchdowns.

A concern leading into spring is whether these deflections will affect the offense's production. Lockridge, who is one of only three scholarship tailbacks on CU's roster this spring, said he isn't worried.

"It's football and that happens more than most people think," Lockridge said. "People quit and go all the time. That's the one thing that's not going to effect this team."

Of all the running backs, Lockridge may benefit most from these losses in terms of playing time. Fortunately, freshmen reinforcements will be arriving in the summer as the Buffs signed four running backs in the class of 2010.

But for the meantime, Stewart and Lockridge said they hope to create a two-headed monster at the position.

"We're both fast, speedy guys," Lockridge said. "[Rodney] is a shifty guy and I'm more of the cut guy."

Lockridge, who will be a junior next fall, acknowledged CU's problem with turnovers last year and insisted that protecting the ball will be stressed in the spring.

That problem on offense contributed to the Buffs 3-9 record, but even more disconcerting was the defense. The Buffs finished a woeful 80th in rush defense and 57th in total defense among FBS schools.

Their lone bright spot on that side was the secondary. But former defensive backs coach Greg Brown left in the winter to become Arizona's defensive coordinator. So for spring, not only is stopping the run a concern, but so is the oft-reliable secondary.

Though CU only loses two starters (Cha'pelle Brown and Benjamin Burney) from last year's group, the defensive backfield will be under the magnifying glass from March 6 to April 10, when spring practice concludes with the annual black versus gold spring game.

Ashley Ambrose, who played under Brown in the NFL and will be in his third year on the CU staff, has filled Brown's old job. Ambrose inherits six interceptions and 28 pass break ups with the return of DBs Jalil

Brown, Jimmy Smith, and Anthony Perkins.

Right in front of the secondary on the field, the linebacker spot will see some new jersey numbers this spring, but the same old coach is still entrenched in his familiar spot on the sidelines.

Associate head coach and linebackers' coach Brian Cabral is in his 21st season at Boulder. He is the only current member of the coaching staff present during CU's only National Championship in 1990.

When Cabral first came to CU in 1989, many of his current players weren't even born. The group is young and returns only one starter in B.J. Beatty. The Buffs are losing over 200 tackles at linebacker with the graduations of Jeff Smart, Shaun Mohler and Marcus Burton.

In what will probably be the most interesting position battle to watch this spring, the vacancies left at linebacker will be up for grabs. And besides Beatty, CU does not return much experience there as returnees Tyler Ahles, John Major and Bryan Stengel combined for all of 48 tackles last season.

When it comes to defending the run, they are not alone in their mission. The Buffs may not have been able to stop a blind man on a wooden peg leg from going over a hundred yards on them last year, but they do find relief among their defensive line.

Just like the line on the opposite side of the ball, every starter from 2009 returns. Defensive ends Marquez Herrod, Forrest West, Josh Hartigan and Nick Kasa are back. Lining up inside of them during spring will be Curtis Cunningham, Will Pericak, Conrad Obi and Nate Bonsu.

Retaining eight players who saw a legitimate amount of playing time will make it easier on the young linebackers to get a push. The defensive backs and their new supervisor will also benefit from the skilled pass rushers.

Herrod, who tallied a team-high of six sacks and ten tackles for loss in '09, is the best of the bunch. The modest defensive standout admits that even he has much to improve on this spring.

"Really I just want to work on my first step," Herrod said. "I want to work on getting after guys and perfecting my pass rush."

Herrod mentioned fellow defensive end Forrest West as a player that could turn some heads when spring comes. He, and the rest of the defense, will need all the help they can get if they expect to get to a bowl game.

"I'm a senior so this is my last time around," Herrod said. "I want to go out on top, leaving some kinds of mark on the university."

Going by that logic, last year's 3-9, (2-6) campaign would be considered a skid mark. Herrod went on to explain how so far this off-season he hasn't given up on his reps or quit on his run.

Herrod's attitude will have to become contagious throughout the spring if the Buffs hope for an improved season record.

Unlike his quarterback, who said it was his goal to not throw any interceptions this spring, the slightly superstitious Herrod said he didn't want to think that far in the future.

"I ain't going to make any predictions," said Herrod, as a grin grew across his face. "I don't want to jinx myself."