

## Woelk: It would be nice to see 'right way' be a success

By Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

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Barring a complete and total turnaround -- one bordering on miraculous -- it doesn't seem like a good bet that Dan Hawkins will be around for a fifth season at Colorado.

Actually, I'm not even sure a dramatic reversal in CU's final two games would save Hawkins. In the last three seasons, the Buffs have slowly but steadily declined in too many areas. The evidence simply leans too heavily in the direction of a change, no matter what happens against Oklahoma State and Nebraska.

That's too bad. I wanted Hawkins to succeed -- but not for the reason folks may think.

It's nothing personal.

I wanted Hawkins to succeed because he attempts to do things the right way.

Hawkins doesn't cheat. He insists that his players go to class. He does his best to teach accountability and responsibility, and he tries to teach that practicing such traits will reap long-term rewards.

Simply, he tries to teach the same things that all of us expect from our co-workers, our employers and our employees. The fact that many sports fans are willing to accept far less from "their" teams and coaches is a sad commentary on society.

Those are also the reasons CU athletic department officials and administrators across the campus wanted him to succeed. They want to believe that doing things the right way can still produce the right results in college sports.

Thing is, we should all be tired of cheaters. We should be sick of coaches who break the rules and call it a matter of business, who embarrass their universities and families but are forgiven because they win. We should be tired of programs that make a mockery of the term "student athlete." Tired of programs who use up a kid's eligibility, then send him out into the real world with no degree, no skills -- and no chance of ever getting hired by one of the rich alums who patted him on the back on Saturdays.

Neither should we continue to tolerate coaches -- and fans and media and administrators -- who look the other way when a player beats hell out of his girlfriend on Wednesday and still plays on Saturday. We should not think it's OK for coaches to simply say they will "handle discipline internally."

But we do. All too often, simply in the name of winning, we accept behavior from coaches and players that we would never -- ever -- permit in our little corners of the world.

It is hypocrisy at its zenith.

That being said, I also realize that while Hawkins has tried to do the right thing at Colorado, he has failed to do the one thing that coaches must do to keep their jobs:

Win. He has lost roughly twice as many games as he has won in his tenure here. His teams have never shown the ability to improve as the seasons have progressed; rather, they tend to regress. Doing it the right way is terrific -- and it can be done -- but the bottom line in the business of college sports is that no matter how you do it, you'd better win.

And so, a change appears to be on the horizon.

Where to go from here?

If there is a change, the list of candidates will be a large one. Expect athletic director Mike Bohn to aim high and go from there.

How high? We're guessing Bohn will begin by testing former Bronco coach Mike Shanahan's temperature.

Despite rumors to the contrary, the two have not spoken. Neither have they had discussions through intermediaries.

But it's an intriguing possibility. Shanahan has two more years of being paid \$7 million by former boss Pat Bowlen, meaning money wouldn't be a major issue in Boulder -- for at least a couple of years.

The positives? Along with an immediate bump in ticket sales and a couple of Super Bowl rings, Shanahan would bring to CU a high-profile, high-powered list of donors who could fill CU's donations coffers in a hurry. Such a hire would put CU back on the map immediately.

(We interrupt this dream, however, to inject a little dose of reality. CU has traveled this road before. We mention Chuck Fairbanks only as fair warning.)

It's also difficult to imagine Shanahan developing an interest in recruiting. He's a man who loves studying football -- not poring over lists of prep stars. Game plans, salary caps and free agency are his areas of expertise, not selling a program to 18-year-olds and their parents.

But it is nevertheless a fascinating thought.

Other names you are sure to hear if Hawkins is indeed on the way out?

Former head coaches such as Phil Fulmer (Tennessee) and Tommy Tuberville (Auburn) are sure to be mentioned. Oklahoma defensive coordinator Brent Venables usually finds his name in the mix when jobs open up.

Then there are current head coaches who might be ready to move up to a BCS school.

Houston's Kevin Sumlin is a hot commodity this year. A year ago, the man on lots of folks' list was Buffalo's Turner Gill. One guy we like is Air Force coach Troy Calhoun, who has a solid pro background (Broncos) as well as the proven ability to pick up and win in a hurry, as he did in his first year at AFA.

And, of course, there will be the names that hard-core CU fans favor: Jon Embree. Eric Bieniemy. Dave Logan.

Certainly, all have their positives -- and negatives.

But if indeed the 2010 Colorado Buffaloes are destined to have a new coach, I hope for one thing:

I simply hope he does things the right way.

Just to prove it can still be done in Boulder.

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