

Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins` situation similar to Callahan`s

Ex-NU coach`s job was uncertain heading into CU game 2 years ago

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Job approval ratings change in a matter of days or weeks for coaches in major college and professional sports. This week`s Colorado and Nebraska football game provides a look at how much sentiment can change around programs in two years.

At the end of the Buffs` 65-51 triumph over the Cornhuskers at Folsom Field two years ago, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins trotted to midfield to shake hands with former Nebraska coach Bill Callahan, who was under heavy fire from Nebraska fans for running a foundering program.

The Cornhuskers had just missed a bowl game for the second time in four seasons under Callahan. The coach who came to Lincoln, Neb., after taking the Oakland Raiders to the Super Bowl had produced a winning record, but it was just 27-22 over four seasons and some of those losses included lopsided embarrassments.

Hawkins whispered in Callahan`s ear during that brief postgame conversation before heading off to the home team locker room to celebrate a win over a rival and the first and only bowl berth he has guided the Buffs to in four seasons.

"I have a lot of respect for him, and what he has had to endure and go through," Hawkins said of Callahan that day in his postgame press conference. "He has handled this tough situation with class. His starting quarterback goes down, and they gave Kansas a run, and got all over Kansas State. That is an extremely tough situation, and despite it all he showed a lot of class and resolve and saw it through. No matter what happens, I respect him, and he is a good guy and a good coach."

Callahan was fired the next day by Nebraska athletic director Tom Osborne and eventually replaced with Bo Pelini.

That snowy day might have been the peak of Hawkins` popularity in Boulder. He signed a top-15 ranked recruiting class a few months later and was given a contract extension a few months after that.

There have been plenty of rough days since. Hawkins has coached the team to an 8-16 record since, including a loss to Alabama in the bowl game that season.

The Buffs are 3-8 heading to Friday`s game in Boulder and Hawkins finds himself in hot water from Colorado fans dissatisfied with his performance. Meanwhile, Pelini has led the Huskers to the Big 12 North Division title, before even playing CU, and their second consecutive postseason appearance.

No one, except perhaps athletic director Mike Bohn, knows whether Hawkins will continue to coach the Buffs beyond Friday. Hawkins briefly addressed speculation about his job with his team during a team meeting after a loss at Oklahoma State last week.

"He has just told us, 'You will know when I know,'" junior defensive end Marquez Herrod said.

The Buffs practiced Sunday afternoon, but Hawkins did not stop to speak with members of the media afterward. He is scheduled to have his weekly press conference this morning. The Buffs will practice in midafternoon and will do their final pregame interviews afterward.

In the week leading up to the CU-Nebraska game in 2007, Hawkins found himself talking about the fragile nature of the coaching business. He was asked about Michigan coach Lloyd Carr announcing his retirement that week. Carr was under fire from Michigan fans at the time, despite having led the program to a national title during his tenure.

Some of Hawkins thoughts about Carr and Callahan might be circling through his head this week about his situation at CU.

"It is interesting, he obviously made the announcement this morning, you guys know this in this day and age with the media sea," Hawkins said. "It is going to be harder and harder to have the Bobby Bowdens, the Joe Paternos, the Bo Schembechlers. It is just going to get harder and harder for that to happen."

"Coach (Eddie) Crowder was telling me how, it may have been in the middle of (former Oklahoma head coach) Bud Wilkinson's tenure, they had a couple of off years where they had two wins and you think that in this day and age he'd be out, they'd run him out. I think he (Carr) is a real classy guy, his heart is in the right place, he loves Michigan, he loves the kids and he had a great run and it is sad to see those guys go. I was listening to somebody interview (former Minnesota Viking) Alan Page the other night and they made a big deal about how he didn't win a Super Bowl and I'm thinking 'How many Super Bowls did you win?' He was in four. That is the nature of it and that is kind of how it goes."

Farewell to Foster

CU outside linebackers coach Bob Foster will coach his final game with the Buffs on Friday.

Foster, a longtime mentor and friend to Hawkins and one of his former college coaches, agreed to join the staff late last spring when former offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich bolted for Oregon.

Foster will be replaced on the staff by Ashley Ambrose, who has been working as a defensive technical intern. The plan is for Ambrose to take over coaching wide receivers in the spring.

"I love the guy," defensive end Marquez Herrod said. "He has great character, great energy. He's out here every day just pumping us up. He makes me feel like a good player. I love that guy."

Tickets update

CU officials reported about 2,500 tickets remain for Friday's game.

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'The real test of character'

Hawkins' mentor defends program, coach

By Patrick Ridgell
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BOULDER — Bob Foster still gets fired up.

The 68-year-old former marine will conclude his one-year gig as Colorado outside linebackers coach Friday, when the Buffs conclude 2009 with their home finale against Nebraska (1:30 p.m., ABC).

Over the past four months, Foster has seen CU post a 3-8 record that has angered fans and made change possible. But to paraphrase what the excitable Foster said following Sunday's practice: Those clamoring for change just don't get it.

"I'm fired up," Foster said. "I think this has been a wonderful year in a lot of respects, a lot of respects. Not in the win-loss column. But in a lot of respects, it's been a wonderful season.

"And I'm not going to remember the wins and losses. I'm going to remember the faces of these players and how much they tried and how hard they played and how they stuck together and how they loved their coaches."

Athletic director Mike Bohn said last week that no decision has been made about head coach Dan Hawkins' future at CU, and that no timeline is in place for one. Hawkins did not talk to reporters Sunday. Following Thursday's loss at Oklahoma State, Hawkins answered a question about his future with: "I'm good, Mike's good, we're good. You guys are more focused on it than anybody else."

CU's media guide describes Foster as Hawkins' "former mentor." The two have a long history.

Hawkins was a fullback at UC-Davis when Foster coordinated its defense in the early 1980s. When Hawkins coached Willamette, he brought Foster out of retirement in 1995 to work as a defensive consultant for three seasons. Last summer, Foster said Hawkins was the main reason he was coming out of retirement again to work.

Foster said he normally doesn't read newspaper coverage, but that his wife was in town over the weekend, and she wanted to get a paper and a cup of coffee. He read coverage of CU's 31-28 loss Thursday at Oklahoma State. It prompted Foster to share some opinions.

"A lot of people think everything's based on ... whether you win or lose," Foster said. "See, I don't buy that. A lot of the press feels that way, but I don't buy that.

"I think it's a process. This team reminds me of my first year when I was in college. And we won one game that year, and we had a lot of freshman and sophomores, and we were young — but we were good guys. We were guys that worked hard. It reminds me of this team. We never gave up. We played hard every game, no matter what was going on. And then, two years later, we were playing for a championship.

FIRST LOOK

A quick glimpse at CU's next opponent:

Who: Nebraska (8-3, 5-2)

Where: Folsom Field, Boulder

When: Friday, 1:30 p.m., ABC

Notes: Nebraska clinched the Big 12 North with Saturday's 17-3 defeat of Kansas State. The Cornhuskers will face Texas on Dec. 5 in Dallas for the Big 12 championship. ... Nebraska received 126 votes in this week's AP poll, placing it two spots outside the top 25. ... Nebraska and CU have split their past eight meetings, but Nebraska has won three of the past four. ... Nebraska leads the Big 12 in scoring defense. It has allowed only 113 points, including 12 touchdowns, in 2009. It allows 281.3 yards per game, the second-fewest in the Big 12.

"That's what this team is like. I see a lot of similarities. Anybody can be (of) good character and be good players and be positive when we're winning. The real test of character is when things are tough, like they were this year.

"These guys have never stopped trying and working and playing and giving their best, and that's going to pay off in the future."

Foster said there's no question, for him, that CU will start winning soon, but said a lot of people don't have the patience to wait for it.

"How many seniors were on that team we played last week?" Foster said. "And we played them right to the ... bottom of the deal. With these young guys, at their place. And what do I read in the paper? A bunch of negative crap.

"Instead of taking the high road and saying, 'God, it was amazing how you did,' all I saw was a bunch of negative crap."

CU lists 17 seniors on its web site, 14 on scholarship. Six are regular starters.

Oklahoma State honored its 22 seniors prior to Thursday's game. Fifteen were starters, and eight were four-year letter-winners. (Senior quarterback Zac Robinson did not play Thursday due to injury.

Foster told his wife upon arriving in Boulder last summer that given CU's schedule and youth, it would take a "miracle" to earn a bowl berth. So to him, this year's struggles haven't been too surprising. Asked how Hawkins is handling things, Foster said, "You know what? He's gotten better and better and better.

"Coach Hawk is great with his coaches. He's the kind of coach you want your son to play for because you learn a lot more than just football. That's the part people don't understand, because they don't see that. They're not here day after day living every minute.

"He's wonderful. No question. I'd love to have my son play for him."

Foster walked to and from work this year. He said the hamstring he had pulled is now fine. He plans to return home to Oregon after the season.

EXTRA POINTS: Quarterback Cody Hawkins declined an interview request Sunday. A member of CU's sports information department said that Cody said he has been "told not to speak." Hawkins relieved starter Tyler Hansen for three series Thursday when Hansen hurt his thumb. ... Defensive end Marquez Herrod said Dan Hawkins mentioned his and his staff's future during a recent team meeting. "He just told us, 'You'll know when I know ... don't worry about it; worry about who we're playing,'" Herrod said. ... CU will hold its weekly media luncheon this morning. It'll close access to players and coaches following today's practice.

Read Patrick Ridgell's CU sports blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/ridgell. He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

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cu football

Hawkins wants to stay to see program thrive

By Chris Dempsey
The Denver Post

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Colorado head coach Dan Hawkins at Folsom Field on Oct. 31 when the Buffaloes fell to Missouri 36-17 (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post)

If it's up to the embattled coach, he'd continue to be here to see the fruits that four years of struggles can bear.

"Well totally. Yeah," Hawkins said during his news conference this morning. "This thing is a labor of love, man. I think you come to make a difference, you come to change things, you come to improve and you never know how long the journey is going to be.

"Sometimes you want the Good Lord to make it shorter than it is, but whatever reason it's not. But you hang in there long enough it'll happen. You've just got to do things right."

Though the team is only 16-32 during his tenure, Hawkins stressed that the program has done things right ever since he took over as coach in 2005.

BOULDER — Colorado coach Dan Hawkins' fate will be determined after Friday's game against Nebraska, the season finale for his 3-8 Buffaloes.

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and missed the first three games of the season. Then he missed four games with mononucleosis that contributed to enlarging his spleen. He only played in four games, but after some investigating, Hawkins said getting a medical redshirt would be unlikely. Hawkins is not sure how much Kasa can play.

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"Where we are at academically, socially, behaviorally, all that right now, I'm super proud of our guys," Hawkins said. "They are awesome. They're great and they are doing it right by the alums, faculty, the community and all of that, 100 percent."

Footnote Freshman defensive end Nick Kasa will be available for the Nebraska game, Hawkins said. He tore an MCL in August drills

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colorado vs. nebraska

Buffs' Miller set to tangle with Husker named Suh

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 11/23/2009 01:00:00 AM MST



Risking a holding penalty might be the best way to block Nebraska star Ndamukong Suh, a senior defensive tackle. "Let's go. Let's battle it out. I can't wait," says CU guard Ryan Miller, who lines up against Suh on Friday at Folsom Field. (Dave Weaver, AP)

Ryan Miller smiled Sunday as a reporter approached.

"Suh, right?" Miller said.

Miller figures to face the biggest challenge of his college career Friday when he lines up against Nebraska senior defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh (pronounced En-dom-ah-ken Soo), a 6-foot-4, 300-pounder who is a candidate for the Lombardi, Nagurski and Outland awards and undoubtedly will be a high first-round pick in the NFL draft next spring.

"The guy is a complete football player," Miller said. "He's a big, strong guy that uses his hands extremely well. If you use good technique against him, he's still a heck of an athlete and will give you a challenge. But if you don't have good technique, you're going to have a long, long day."

BOULDER — Having been requested for a post-practice interview, Colorado sophomore guard

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This will be the first time that Miller (6-8, 320) has knocked shoulder pads with Suh. Miller played offensive tackle in 2007 (and thus lined up against defensive ends), and he missed the last eight games of 2008 with a fractured fibula.

"I'm looking forward to it," Miller said Sunday. "Big stage. This guy is going to play on Sundays. It just represents what the sport is. Let's go. Let's battle it out. I can't wait."

CU offensive line coach Denver Johnson said the defensive tackle tandem of Suh (6 1/2 sacks this season against constant double-team blocking) and 6-6, 285-pound sophomore Jared Crick (nine sacks) may be the nation's best as a pair.

"They're big, strong, run well," Johnson said. "And the intangible things — they play extremely hard, they hustle, they don't take plays off."

Colorado sophomore guard Ethan Adkins, who lines up on the left side, will be matched against Crick. **Focusing on task at hand.**

CU junior defensive end Marquez Herrod gave a thumbs-up on team morale and the effort in Sunday's practice. "Guys are running around. Guys have a lot of enthusiasm," he said.

Herrod said coach Dan Hawkins told players to not let any talk about his future become a distraction.

"To a certain degree he said, 'You'll know when I know,' " Herrod said of his coach's future at CU. "We're focusing on beating Nebraska. That's all that matters right now."

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Eye on: The Cornhuskers

Nebraska at Colorado, 1:30, Friday, KMGH-7

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For the record: With a 17-3 victory over Kansas State on Saturday, Nebraska (8-3, 5-2 Big 12) already has earned the Big 12 North title and a spot against Texas in the league's Dec. 5 title game. Although the Huskers are unranked in the Associated Press top 25 poll, they're 23rd this week in the USA Today coaches poll.

Streaking: Under coach Bo Pelini, Nebraska has won six of seven games played in November.

Who's hot: Nebraska's bend but not break "Blackshirt" defense. K-State penetrated Nebraska's 33-yard line four times in the second half and came away with no points.

What's not: Nebraska's offense. This isn't a vintage Huskers attack. In total yards, Kansas State outgained Nebraska 293 to 267. It's a good thing junior I-back Roy Helu Jr. rushed for 95 yards, including a 14-yard touchdown.

Key stat: Nebraska leads the Big 12 (and ranks No. 3 nationally) in scoring defense, yielding just 10.3 points per game. That's a field goal better per game than undefeated Texas.

FYI: Nebraska will make its fifth appearance in the Big 12 championship game, but its first since 2006.

Coachspeak: "Good win. But this team hasn't played its best football yet. We will enjoy this . . . and move on to Colorado." — Pelini, following Saturday's victory in Lincoln over Kansas State

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