

Woelk: If Hawkins knows future he's not showing it

Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/24/2009 12:03:17 AM MST

If you believe in numbers, history and trends, Friday's Colorado-Nebraska game will turn out to be bad news for one of the coaches involved.

It's not hard to make an educated guess as to which one that might be.

Since 2003, every Colorado-Nebraska game in Boulder has proven to be the last regular season game for one of the coaches involved:

In 2003, Nebraska's Frank Solich coached the Huskers to a 31-22 win in Boulder to improve NU's record to 9-3. Nevertheless, he was fired soon thereafter.

In 2005, Colorado's Gary Barnett's Buffs fell 30-3 to the Huskers at Folsom Field in the regular season finale. Barnett did coach in one more game -- a 70-3 loss to Texas in the Big 12 championship game -- but he also was fired a few days after that.

And, in 2007, Bill Callahan brought the Huskers to Boulder, where they absorbed a 65-51 defeat. A couple of days later, Nebraska was again looking for a new coach.

Which, of course, brings us to 2009 and another game at Folsom Field.

Bo Pelini's Huskers have already clinched the Big 12 North title and they're currently ranked No. 23 in the coaches' poll. That would suggest that Pelini's immediate future looks good (although Bo might want to start worrying about the 2011 game in Boulder now).

Anyone who follows Colorado football knows that Dan Hawkins' position at CU is tenuous at best. Hawkins will finish his fourth straight losing season Friday at Folsom, with the number of victories on the decline rather than the upswing.

Thus, if you believe in trends -- and given the evidence at hand -- it's not hard to imagine Hawkins somehow scratching out a win on Friday and still being asked to clean out his office the following week.

But if Hawkins is feeling the pressure, he's not talking about it. Asked several times Monday morning about the speculation surrounding his future, Hawkins would only say, "We're excited about playing Nebraska. Mike's been great. Phil's been great. Bruce has been great. The big donors have been great."

In order, that would be CU athletic director Mike Bohn, chancellor Phil DiStefano, president Bruce Benson and whoever qualifies as a "big donor" at Colorado.

But while declining to discuss his future specifically on Monday, Hawkins took the opportunity to talk about the program's past and future.

Yes, he admitted it was a mistake bringing his son Cody to Colorado to play quarterback. "If I had to do it over again, I probably wouldn't, because it's not fair to him," Hawkins said.

He said that attrition -- players who have left the program for a variety of reasons -- has hurt "in the short term." But, he added, his steadfast insistence upon adhering to standards he established, standards that probably chased some of those players away, will pay off in the long-term.

"We're doing it right by the faculty, the alums and the community," he said.

And, he reiterated that a few plays here and there could have greatly changed CU's record over the past four years.

As for the future, Hawkins at times sounded as if there were no doubt that he'd be back. He talked about continuing to improve CU's talent base. He talked about adding more speed, and noted the improvement made by some of CU's young players this year.

"I believe in this place," he said, "I still believe in this place."

But there were also moments when it seemed as if he'd seen the writing on the wall -- and that writing didn't include his name. Moments when he talked about next season in the abstract rather than the definitive. Moments when he referred to next year's team as "they" instead of "we."

But if Hawkins knows what his future holds, he's not saying. Rather, he sounds like a man who is comfortable with whatever happens.

Comfortable that if given the chance, he'll win next year -- and comfortable that if CU has a new coach in 2010, that man will have a solid foundation from which to work.

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Ringo: CU's Hawkins admits '10 wins' was too optimistic

Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/23/2009 11:54:26 PM MST



Guess it was just one of those days for Dan Hawkins on Monday. He has them occasionally, days when he decides to be a little more forthcoming and straightforward than usual.

There weren't a lot of "We'll see," answers to questions when he met with reporters at the Dal Ward Center.

Not only did Hawkins say he would not bring his son, Cody, into the Colorado program if he had it to do over, but he also acknowledged that he might have been a little too optimistic in the preseason when he challenged his team to win 10 games.

Hawkins pointed to signposts that were there at the beginning of the season that he should have recognized as significant hurdles for the team just to get to the postseason, let alone win 10 games. He pointed to the overall youth of the roster and inexperience on the offensive and defensive lines as being the biggest problems that should have led him to a more cautious approach. Inexperience at wide receiver was another.

But that's not Dan Hawkins.

He called himself a "pie-in-the-sky guy" Monday and "a glass-is-half-full guy" as well. He was speaking to his nature as an optimist, which is what led him down the 10-wins path in the first place.

"I think probably some of that got into my vision," he said. "I think what I try to do is try to force them over the edge a little bit just by my force of will and my belief in them, which I really do."

Colorado football fans have heard about how young their team is for three years now and they've grown tired of the excuse. Turns out, so have a few of the Buffs.

There is no doubt the team is young in a lot of areas. A simple review of the depth chart proves that, but going into the 12th and final game of the season, plenty of experience has been gained and at least a few members of the program are ready to put the youth argument in the rear view.

Wide receiver Scotty McKnight was a little annoyed when the topic came up Monday as he sat with a group of reporters in the varsity room at the Dal Ward Center.

"For me personally, I'm pretty embarrassed with the amount of games we've won," he said. "I know that alumni and fans and all those people that live Colorado football, they're not happy about it either. That's part of our job is to make these people happy with the football program. So I'm going to do everything I can this offseason to make sure we're going in the right direction."

Dan Hawkins and McKnight both mentioned a lack of confidence among players as being a season-long problem. McKnight was asked if the coach setting the bar at 10 wins might have put too much pressure on players and was a mistake in hindsight.

"I don't think it was a mistake," McKnight said. "When he said that, I was like, 'OK, why aren't we going to win 12? Why aren't we going to win 13?' That's one of those things. He's got confidence in us, and quite frankly, in a lot of areas this year, it would have helped if we had more confidence in ourselves."

McKnight and many of his teammates spent last winter, spring and summer talking about how well the offseason went and how dedicated the team had been. McKnight said he still believes last offseason was the best he has experienced in the program, but the bar probably still needs to be set even higher.

"That just means you have to work that much harder," McKnight said. "What you thought was a great offseason, maybe in retrospect wasn't as great as you thought. So we need everyone to be fully invested into this."

Kasa in then out

Hawkins announced during his Monday morning press conference he expected freshman defensive end Nick Kasa to be available for Friday's game. Kasa has been recovering from mononucleosis and an enlarged spleen and has missed the past three games.

But following the afternoon practice, Kasa told reporters he has no intention of playing against the Cornhuskers and he still hopes to receive a medical redshirt season from the NCAA. Hawkins said he believes a medical redshirt is doubtful because Kasa played beyond the midway point of the season.

Between the hashes

Texas quarterback Colt McCoy, Nebraska safety Larry Asante and Nebraska place-kicker Alex Henery were named conference players of the week. ... In his last three games, Missouri wide receiver Danario Alexander has caught 34 passes for 578 yards and five touchdowns. ... Kansas State running back Daniel Thomas finished the season with 1,265 yards, the fourth-most in KSU history. ... Texas safety Earl Thomas has seven interceptions and could set a school record if he steals one against Texas A&M this week. ... The longest streak of bowl eligibility in the conference belongs to Texas Tech. The Red Raiders have been eligible for the postseason for 16 years running.

Who's hot? The Nebraska defense has allowed more than 17 points to be scored against it once all season. The Cornhuskers lead the Big 12 in scoring defense allowing 10.3 points per game.

Who's not? The Baylor offense in the first half of conference games has been outscored 153-26. The Bears have scored a touchdown in one of their first seven conference games in the first half.

On the tube

Colorado's season finale Friday against Nebraska will be televised at 1:30 p.m., on ABC. Here is a look at the rest of the television lineup this week in the conference.

Thursday: Texas at Texas A&M, 6 p.m., ESPN; Saturday: Oklahoma State at Oklahoma, 10:30 a.m., FSN; Missouri vs. Kansas at Kansas City, 1:30 p.m., ABC; Texas Tech vs. Baylor at Arlington, Texas, 4 p.m., FSN.

Heisman watch

A Daily Camera staff member has been voting in the Heisman Trophy selection process every year since the mid-1970s. I

just received my ballot in the mail. Normally I have a pretty good idea who I'm going to vote for when the ballot arrives, but this year I could still be swayed in several different directions pretty easily.

Colt McCoy, QB, Texas -- He's finishing strong. Over his past five games, he has completed 77 percent of his passes for 1,487 yards with 14 touchdowns and two interceptions.

Mark Ingram, RB, Alabama -- He played sparingly against Chattanooga and averaged 9.3 yards per carry on 11 attempts. I just don't see the outing helping his cause when others are competing against much better teams.

Case Keenum, QB, Houston -- He has completed 70 percent of his passes for 4,600 yards and 36 touchdowns with just six interceptions. With Oklahoma State, Texas Tech and Mississippi State on his schedule he has to be in this conversation.

Toby Gerhart, RB, Stanford -- He is a very impressive running back with eight 100-yard rushing games in his last nine outings, but I'm not sure his team has won enough to suggest he deserves consideration as the best player in college football.

Tim Tebow, QB, Florida -- Well, 216 passing yards and 102 rushing yards in the same game would be impressive if it didn't come in November against Florida International.

Others in the mix: Dion Lewis, RB, Pittsburgh; C.J. Spiller, RB, Clemson; Ryan Mathews, RB, Fresno State; Kellen Moore, QB, Boise State; Jordan Shipley, WR, Texas.

Big 12 Power Rankings

(Previous week's ranking and team's record in parentheses):

- 1. Texas (1st/11-0, 7-0)** -- Playing a rival on short rest on Thanksgiving won't be a picnic for Mack Brown and the boys. Shame to spoil that undefeated record before even getting to the conference title game. I think they will come through.
- 2. Oklahoma State (2nd/9-2, 6-1)** -- A nice season for the Cowboys could become a BCS bowl season with a win over in-state rival Oklahoma, provided Texas gets into the national title game.
- 3. Texas Tech (3rd/7-4, 4-3)** -- The Red Raiders proved they belong in the top three with a convincing victory over Oklahoma.
- 4. Nebraska (7th/8-3, 5-2)** -- The Cornhuskers are playing some wicked defense. They might be good enough to give the Longhorns some trouble, but I don't think the Nebraska offense can play at that level, too.
- 5. Oklahoma (4th/6-5, 4-3)** -- A young offensive line a loads of key injuries. Wait, the Sooners are having Colorado's 2008 season.
- 6. Missouri (8th/7-4, 3-4)** -- I know I'm repeating myself here, but the Tigers choked away a third straight Big 12 North title when they allowed Nebraska to come back and beat them back on Oct. 8. OK, I won't mention it again.
- 7. Kansas State (5th/6-6, 4-4)** -- A very good comeback season for Bill Snyder falls one win shy of magical. The Wildcats lose a lot of experience. It will be interesting to see what they become next season.
- 8. Iowa State (6th/6-6, 3-5)** -- The Cyclones ought to be thrilled with being in the top eight in this conference. Now they need to finish the year with a bowl win and a winning record.
- 9. Texas A&M (11th/6-5, 3-4)** -- The Aggies are a dangerous team no one is going to want to play in a bowl. The Longhorns won't be happy seeing them on Thanksgiving.
- 10. Kansas (9th/5-6, 1-6)** -- What in the world happened to this team? Wasn't this program just in the Orange Bowl? Next up, a date with its oldest rival.
- 11. Baylor (10th/4-7, 1-6)** -- If the Bears lose this week, and the Buffs win, Baylor will finish the year at the bottom of these rankings, familiar territory for the program.

12. Colorado (12th/3-8, 2-5) -- Buffs fans are starting to understand how Chicago Cubs fans feel. Somehow 10 wins and no excuses (whether it was a direct quote or not) became 3-8 and wait 'til next year.

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CU Buffs coach Dan Hawkins says he regrets bringing son Cody to Colorado

Hawkins: Cody attacked on Facebook, calls to cellphone

By Kyle Ringo, Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/23/2009 12:06:58 PM MST



If he had it to do over again, Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins says he would not have brought his oldest son, Cody, to Boulder with him to play quarterback for the Buffs.

Dan Hawkins said his son has been attacked by angry fans on his Facebook page and in messages on his cell phone this season as the Buffs have produced a 3-8 record. Cody Hawkins also was booed several times by the home crowd at Folsom Field earlier this season.

"It's not fair to him," Hawkins said. "I mean, here is a guy who is trying to do his best to win games and help his team and does everything right and is a good student, and he's getting killed on Facebook and he's getting killed on his cell phone."

"The great thing about this job is you meet some unbelievable people, great people. But then you also see another side of humanity that is not real fun."

Hawkins was hired in December 2005 and his son signed a national letter of intent two months later as a surprise addition to the 2006 recruiting class. He redshirted that year and became the starting quarterback in 2007, a position he kept for most of the 2008 season and the first five games this season before he was benched in favor of sophomore Tyler Hansen in the second half at Texas in early October.

In that game, Cody Hawkins became the all-time leader in touchdown passes at Colorado, but he also established the Colorado record for career interceptions thrown, which led to his benching.

"He has handled it great," Dan Hawkins said. "He has been awesome with the whole thing. That guy has been great for our team and great for us."

Cody Hawkins has declined interview requests in recent weeks

Dan Hawkins said he is a glass-is-half-full guy, which is why he chose to take the Colorado job when peers around the country advised against it. Hawkins' job security is uncertain as the Buffs prepare for the season finale Friday at Folsom Field against rival Nebraska.

Dan Hawkins' optimism also led him to believe he and his son could overcome criticism he knew would come occasionally with his son playing quarterback for the team he coached. Dan Hawkins said he doesn't know if his son's presence in the program has led other quarterbacks to shy away from coming to CU.

"So we're looking around the country as I'm looking for my first recruiting class and I'm looking for a quarterback," Dan Hawkins said. "I'm looking for a man's man. I'm looking for a guy with some integrity. I'm looking for a guy with some leadership skills. I'm looking for a guy who can win football games. And I'm looking around the country, and I've got a lot of these quarterback gurus going, 'Hawk, why don't walk down the hallway and knock on your kid's door and beg him to come to school there."

"And I thought twice about it. I did. Cody was well aware of it. But again, it's me being glass-half-full. I'm looking at what's the best possible scenario? I'm looking at, 'Hey, here's a kid that is a good player, that other people have offered, that other people want. And he is going to come to our place and I know what kind of kid he is and what kind of player he is and how bad we need a quarterback in this class. So it was probably selfish on my part."

While the experience has been tough on Cody Hawkins, his father believes it will ultimately help him down the road. Cody Hawkins wants to follow in his father's footsteps and become a football coach.

Dan Hawkins said having been involved in a quarterback controversy at times in his career in Boulder will help Cody when he is one day making decisions about who plays and doesn't play for him.

"He will have more empathy for those kids in that situation than any coach will," Dan Hawkins said. "Like I told him, I said, 'I think you're going to grow from it as a man, and you're going to grow from it as a coach. You're going to understand all the parameters of this job and what you go through."

Dan Hawkins said the hardest part about taking his son out of the starting role earlier this season was not that the decision involved his son, but that he was "basically telling the whole world that it's one guy's fault. And it's not. It's not one guy's fault."

Notable

Hawkins said freshman defensive end Nick Kasa will be available to play against Nebraska. Kasa has missed the past three games fighting mononucleosis and an enlarged spleen. ...The Camera asked Hawkins if he wants to be here beyond this season to see the program he has built over the past four years succeed. "Well totally. Yeah," he said. "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."

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dave krieger

Krieger: Father-son gig impossible to win

By Dave Krieger
The Denver Post

Posted: 11/24/2009 01:00:00 AM MST



"It was probably selfish on my part. But he's been great with it. And I think it's been harder on him than it is on me." - Dan Hawkins, Buffs coach, on bringing his son Cody (above) to play at Colorado (Karl Gehring, Denver Post file photo)

BOULDER — Even Dan Hawkins now thinks it was a mistake to bring his son Cody with him to CU. That makes it pretty close to unanimous.

Which is no reflection on Cody Hawkins, one of the most level-headed college kids I've met. In fact, I think he's more level-headed than his dad — and more accountable too.

But as the wolves bay ever closer to Dan Hawkins' door, he has a father's regret that he dragged his son into this.

"It's not fair to him," the elder Hawkins said Monday. "Here's a guy that's trying to do his best to win games and help his team and does everything right, and he's a good student and he's getting killed on Facebook and getting killed on his cellphone.

"The great thing about this job is you meet some unbelievable people. Unbelievable, great people. But then you also see another side of humanity that's not real fun."

His harshest critics, and they are ubiquitous now, will immediately label this whining, so I should mention that he was talking about this only because I asked him to. And I asked him to because one of the enduring criticisms of his four years in Boulder is that Cody's presence deterred any big-time quarterback prospects from signing with CU.

After all, who wants to compete with the coach's kid?

"Did it deter us? I think it didn't deter Tyler (Hansen)," the elder Hawkins said. "The other

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guys we recruited, it didn't deter them. Now, guys that we didn't get? How do you ever really know? You don't know. Because everybody's going to negative recruit you every way they can anyhow. I mean, they're going to use everything they got against you."

But why give them the weapon? Hawkins explained it this way:

"We're looking around the country as I'm coming into my first recruiting class and I'm looking for a quarterback. I'm looking for a man's man, I'm looking for a guy with some integrity, I'm looking for a guy with some leadership skills, I'm looking for a guy

CU Football

[View slide show of CU coach Dan Hawkins with his son Cody, a quarterback for the Buffs .](#)

that can win football games. And I'm looking around the country.

"And I've got a lot of these quarterback gurus kind of going, 'Hawk, why don't you walk down the hallway and knock on your kid's door and beg him to come to school there?' And I thought twice about it. I did. Cody was well aware of it.

"Again, it's me being glass half full. I'm looking at what's the best possible scenario. I'm looking at, here's a kid that's a good player, that other

people want and he's going to come to our place, and I know what kind of kid he is and what kind of player he is and how bad we need a quarterback in this class.

"So it was probably selfish on my part. It really was. But he's been great with it. And I think it's been harder on him than it is on me."

As the father of a son a year younger than Cody, I found myself admiring and wincing at the high-stakes gamble at the same time. If it works — by which I mean, if they win — it's a TV movie, a warm, intergenerational tale of common purpose and triumph. If it doesn't — by which I mean, if they lose — it turns into what it's turned into, an ugly soap opera in which frustrated fans turn them both into whipping boys on every message board and social networking site they can find.

Even at the youth level, where outcomes aren't supposed to matter, coaching your kid is complicated. If he's in and another kid is out, that kid's parent thinks favoritism. If he's out to avoid the appearance of favoritism, he thinks he's being penalized for being the coach's kid.

But at that level, these complications are navigable. After all, somebody has to coach.

Coaching your kid in major-college football, especially when he's a quarterback, is something else again.

"When you win, everything's good," Dan Hawkins said. "When you lose, then everything's wrong.

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And that just becomes even a bigger lightning rod."

Which is why nepotism is banned in so many organizations. Did Cody start for so long because his dad was the coach? Did Hansen have to surrender consecutive redshirt years while playing the equivalent of a single season because he was backing up the coach's kid?

All this comes up again because Hawkins' bosses seem to be distancing themselves as the season's final game approaches. From votes of confidence earlier in the season, now we have an approaching "evaluation." I asked Hawkins about this apparent change in tone, but he just smiled and said he was focused on Nebraska.

Whether Cody's presence prevented CU from signing a star quarterback is impossible to know now, but that criticism was inevitable if the team of Hawkins & Son didn't win enough games.

So, Hawkins is right. It was a mistake. Not only for the son, who had to endure the charges of favoritism, but for the father, whose dream gig might not survive the experiment.

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colorado football

Players seek success for CU coach Hawkins

The Buffs plan to help by beating Nebraska on Friday.

By Chris Dempsey
The Denver Post

Posted: 11/24/2009 01:00:00 AM MST



CU sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen says "you can't go two steps out of the door without hearing some talk about" the future of coach Dan Hawkins. "You're going to be playing for your coach's job." (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — The calls for Colorado coach Dan Hawkins to be fired from irate fans, talk-show callers and message board posters have become too much for even his players to ignore.

"You can't go two steps out of the door without hearing some talk about it," quarterback Tyler Hansen said.

Can they do anything about it?

"The only thing we can do to help him, if his job is in jeopardy, is to go out and win on Friday," senior cornerback Cha'Pelle Brown said of the Buffaloes' home game against Nebraska.

"I don't think he's doing a bad job," running back Rodney Stewart said. "I think he's doing a great job. I don't think Coach should go anywhere."

Added wide receiver Scotty Mc-Knight: "It's kind of crazy to think about. If we're affecting so many people, we should take it as a pride thing and say if we're going to affect people, let's affect them in a good way. So let's win football games."

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boxscores, Big 12 standings,
team leaders and more .

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Visit Tom Kensler's All
Things Buffs blog for a
behind-the-scenes look at

- CU sports .

Well, there's only one football game left — against Nebraska, which has already clinched the Big 12 North title.

McKnight said CU should be able to focus on the task at hand, despite all the speculation about Hawkins' job.

"I try not to focus on that situation too much and just worry about the game and worry about my

team and all the players," McKnight said. "I think that's hard when you start playing for other people, when you start playing for coaches and anyone like that. That takes away from focus. One of the reasons why the game is supposed to be fun is you play for you and play for your teammates. That's pretty much what it boils down to."

Said Hansen: "It's never good to have the coach that recruited you here to have talk about him leaving. That's never good. So obviously there's going to be more added to it this Friday. You're going to be playing for your coach's job and the coaches around him. You never want to think of it that way, but it is what it is. You can only control what you can control."

Hawkins dodged most questions concerning his future at Monday's news conference, but did say he hoped to stay at Colorado and build a winner. The Buffs are 16-32 under Hawkins in four years, including 3-8 this season.

"When I came to Colorado there were a lot of guys going, 'Don't go there, man, are you kidding me? Don't go there,' " he said. "But you know what? I believe in this place. I still believe in this place and I believe in me."

Without a bowl to play for, Hansen said CU should look at Friday's game as a head start on next season.

"This is the preview for the 2010 team," he said. "We didn't make a bowl game. This year can't go

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on past Friday, so the way I'm looking at it is 2010 is starting on Friday."

Said McKnight, a junior: "For me, there's not too much longer of a future here left. Quickly, this is going to be my senior year coming up. I've instilled a lot in this program personally. I have a lot of attachment. I'm looking to go out with a bang. So like Tyler said, start my senior year early this week and show everyone that we've got a good team."

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cu football

Hawk regrets having Cody be his QB

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Buffaloes head coach Dan Hawkins with his son Cody on the sidelines during a scrimmage Aug. 17, 2008 (Denver Post file photo)

"I wouldn't do it, and I'll tell you what, it's just because it's not fair to him," Dan Hawkins said at his weekly news conference. "It happens like this everywhere around the country. When you win, everything's good. When you lose, everything's wrong."

A fourth-year junior, Cody Hawkins ranks first on the school career chart in touchdown passes (46) and is fourth in total offense (5,745).

But, with the team losing, Dan Hawkins benched his son during the Texas game this year after a critical turnover in the second half. The elder Hawkins also benched his son a year ago. Tyler Hansen is now starting at quarterback for CU.

BOULDER — If he had to do it over again, he wouldn't have had his son as his quarterback, Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins said Monday.

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Playing your son at quarterback, when the team is losing, "becomes even a bigger lightning rod," Hawkins said.

Cody Hawkins declined to comment.

*Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or
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big 12 football

Nebraska coach Pelini not looking past Colorado

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 11/23/2009 01:04:08 PM MST

Updated: 11/23/2009 04:37:27 PM MST



Bo Pelini (AP file photo)

LINCOLN, Neb. -- Bo Pelini's biggest worry isn't third-ranked Texas in the Big 12 Championship Dec. 5. It's Friday's game at Colorado and his Cornhuskers looking toward Texas in the Big 12 Championship Dec. 5.

Pelini, in only his second year, forgot this is a rivalry. His worries may be unwarranted.

"It's Colorado," senior center Jacob Hickman said during today's weekly press conference. "We want to beat Colorado every chance we get."

Pelini is happy to hear that. He's trying to maintain calm in the euphoria of Nebraska's first league title game in three years. Nebraska hasn't won the Big 12 crown since 1999.

"Everywhere I go I hear Texas, Texas, Texas," Pelini said. "I'm sure (coach) Mack (Brown) is down there in Texas hearing the same thing about the A&M game. The same with coach (Nick) Saban (of Alabama) and coach (Urban) Meyer (of Florida), the people who have these games coming up."

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-

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Things Buffs blog for a
behind-the-scenes look at

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"I see a team that's very capable," Pelini said.
"They have some good talent. At times they've
played real well. They've struggled with some i
nconsistency. It's their last game of the year.
They've got a lot to play for. It's a challenge. We
have a short week; they have a long week."

*John Henderson: 303-954-1299 or
jhenderson@denverpost.com*

"You've got to take care of your business. You've
got to take care of the here and now. It's very
easy to buy into the distractions."

The Cornhuskers (8-3, 5-2 Big 12) face a
Colorado team (3-8, 2-5) that nearly won at
Nebraska last year before Alex Henery's 57-yard
field goal in the final two minutes led to a 40-31
win. This Buffaloes team has struggled more.

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Coach regrets recruiting son

Says Dan Hawkins: 'It's not fair to him'

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Speaking Monday during what might be one of his final days at Colorado, Dan Hawkins sounded more like a father than a head coach.

Hawkins, whose future remains to be seen following CU's finale Friday against Nebraska (1:30 p.m., ABC), discussed his program's quarterback situation Monday. He revealed that if he had it to do over again, he would not recruit his son, Cody, to CU. His explanation was long, but it included his belief that Cody took too much of the blame when things went wrong.

"It's not fair to him," Dan Hawkins said. "Here's a guy trying to do his best to win games and help his team, and he does everything right and he's a good student, and he's getting killed on Facebook and he's getting killed on his cell phone.

"The great thing about this job is, you meet some unbelievable people, great people. But you also see another side of humanity that's not real fun.

"He's been such an inspiration to me. He's been flipping awesome through the whole thing. When we took him out of the Texas game, people said, 'I bet that hurt that you had to bench your kid.' It didn't. What hurt to me is you're basically telling the whole world it's one guy's fault. It's not, but that's the implication. That, to me, was the hardest thing."

Cody Hawkins did not speak to the Times-Call after Monday's practice. He also declined an interview request Sunday. A member of CU's sports information department said that Cody said on Sunday he has been "told not to speak." He has one year of eligibility remaining after 2009.

Cody started CU's first five games of 2009. In the fifth, the Big 12 opener at Texas on Oct. 10, coaches pulled him in the second half after he threw an interception that was returned for a touchdown. That night, Dan Hawkins said the throw Cody failed to make is one a quarterback must make. Cody has played sparingly since. He took three series last Thursday at Oklahoma State when Tyler Hansen, his successor at quarterback, hurt his thumb. On the final one, Cody led CU to a touchdown in the first half's final minute.

Wide receiver Scotty McKnight said Cody has remained a leader. McKnight said that even with his non-starter status, Hawkins still delivered a pep talk to players just prior to Thursday's game. McKnight said the talk had some effect, too.

"I know, coming out of high school, Cody had some good offers," McKnight said. "I think the University of Oregon had offered him, Wisconsin, there were some good schools in there. ... He was pretty highly regarded.

"I think the father-son thing, that's always a tough thing to deal with. I dealt with it on a much younger level when I was in Pop Warner. Even there, it's tough at times. I can't imagine having to deal with it at the college level. And Cody, quite frankly, has handled it great."

Cody Hawkins leads CU with 45 career touchdown passes. He's second in completions and attempts, 526-of-949, and third in passing yards with 5,698. He has also thrown the most interceptions — 36.

CU is 11-17 in games he has started. He did not start against Iowa State in 2008, but came off the bench and helped rally the Buffs to a win. He also defeated No. 3 Oklahoma and Nebraska in 2007.

The old story goes that Cody went to school on signing day 2006 with letters of intent from CU and Boise State that his mother signed. He signed CU's and faxed it in, surprising his father.

Cody won the starting quarterback job at some point last August. Coaches told him he would have to perform well in order to keep it. Fans started booing him during CU's season-opening loss to Colorado State.

Dan Hawkins knew it could come to that. It didn't deter him.

"So we're looking around the country as I'm coming in for my first recruiting class (in 2006), and I'm looking for a quarterback," he said. "I'm looking for a man's man, I'm looking for a guy with some integrity. I'm looking for a guy with some leadership skills. I'm looking for a guy who can win football games.

"And I got a lot of these quarterback gurus going. 'Hawk, why don't you walk down the hall and knock on your kid's door and beg him to come to school there?' And I thought twice about it, I did. And Cody was well aware of it.

"But again, it's me being glass-half-full. I'm looking at what's the best possible scenario. I'm looking at, hey, here's a kid that's a good player that other people offered and want and I know he's going to come to our place and I know what kind of kid he is and what kind of player he is and how bad we need a quarterback in this class.

"So it was probably selfish on my part, it really was. But he's been great with it, and I think it's been harder on him than it was on me."

Cody Hawkins can compete for the starting quarterback spot again next spring and summer. He intends to coach one day. His father believes this experience will only help.

"I've done this two-quarterback thing before, and he's going to be faced with this again," Dan Hawkins said. "And he'll have more empathy for those two kids and that situation than any coach will."

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