

CU Buffs sophomore becoming veteran on CU's D-line

Cunningham is Buffs' seventh leading tackler

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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He's 17 games into his college career and sophomore Curtis Cunningham already is the old man in the middle of the Colorado defensive line.

The only fellow defensive lineman on the roster with more experience is defensive end Marquez Herrod, who came into the season with roughly 100 or more snaps under his belt.

Cunningham is off to a good start as the starting defensive tackle. He is the Buff's seventh leading tackler with 22 stops in five games. A solid total for a player often stuck battling multiple 300-pound offensive linemen on every play.

Cunningham doesn't look like a defensive tackle on a Big 12 team, let alone a starter and key contributor.

But CU coach Dan Hawkins and his staff saw something in Cunningham three years ago when they began recruiting him from Columbine High School. Cunningham is generously listed at 6-foot-1 and he weighs just 275 pounds.

His spirit and attitude allow him to succeed as much as the speed and quickness he uses to get by bigger, slower blockers.

"I think they are not used to going against such a shorter guy for a defensive lineman," Cunningham said. "I give up probably half a head height and 40 pounds to each of them. They're not used to playing against a smaller guy. I think that's where I excel at."

Hawkins said he likes that Cunningham brings a wrestler's mentality to his job in the trenches, though Cunningham wasn't a wrestler growing up.

"He's very strong, he's got great leverage and he's got great hands and he's real smart," Hawkins said. "I think he understands the nuances of the game."

Coaches had hoped veteran players such as Taj Kaynor and Eric Lawson would grow into more prominent roles this season after the departures of George Hypolite, Brandon Nicolas and Maurice Lucas following last season.

But that development didn't occur and coaches have been using three true freshmen on the defensive line along with Cunningham and Herrod, especially in the past two games.

The increased playing time for those youngsters, Nick Kasa, Nate Bonsu and Forrest West, has coincided with an improvement in the overall performance of the defense.

Cunningham said the group is doing a good job of taking advantage of the opportunity when others might shy away from it.

Cunningham smiled this week when he was asked about being the old man on the line at such an early point in his career.

"I like filling that role," Cunningham said. "It's almost like a leadership role on the defensive line. It looks out for a bright future because if we have a lot of young guys playing now, that means we'll have a lot of experience in the future."

"Sometimes I wish I was the young guy and other times it's great to be the veteran and having people look up to you and watch how you play."

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Kansas' Reesing has always been a little big man against CU

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Three years ago this month, a star was born in Lawrence, Kan.

Looking more like a ball boy than a quarterback, 5-foot-11 Todd Reesing pulled off his redshirt and joined the Kansas huddle for the second half of a game against Colorado. The Jayhawks trailed the Buffaloes 9-0 and needed a lift. Weighing no more than 180 pounds at the time, and probably an inch or so shorter than his purported height, the skinny freshman made a Herculean rescue.

Reesing burned Colorado with two touchdown passes. He also ran for a score. He danced. He scampered. He scrambled. And he threw spirals. By the time the final gun signaled a 20-15

Kansas victory, Reesing had completed 7-of-11 passes for 106 yards and rushed seven times for 90 yards.

And Kansas defeated CU for the first time in six years. The Jayhawks had themselves a quarterback.

"He was dynamic, right off the bat," Colorado defensive backs coach Greg Brown recalled. "He's Houdini back there. You're like, 'Wow. This guy is going to be good.' "

Some Jayhawks followers contend that head coach Mark Mangino might have been let go after the 2006 season if Kansas had not defeated Colorado. KU was reeling, having lost five of its previous six games, including four in row, and the heat was growing on Mangino.

Thanks to Reesing, Kansas salvaged a 6-6 season by winning three of its last four, beginning with that comeback victory. Reesing became the team's starting quarterback the following year, and he enters Saturday's game in Boulder with a record of 25-6 as a starter, including 3-0 against CU.

With Reesing at the controls, Kansas won bowl games in consecutive seasons for the first time in school history, beginning with a 24-21 victory over Virginia Tech in the 2008 Orange Bowl that capped a KU-best 12-1 record for the 2007 regular season.

Not what you know, but who

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And to think that Mangino basically stumbled upon the undersized and unheralded quarterback from Lake Travis High School in Austin, Texas. As the story — now legend — goes, a family friend of the Reesings happens to be the daughter of a former Jayhawks football coach. She tipped off a KU assistant about Reesing, and the prospect was invited to Lawrence for an official visit.

"He came into my office and he wasn't very big, but there was something about the kid," Mangino has said, never tiring of the tale.

Mangino's instincts were spot on. Reesing has established numerous Kansas passing records and is also a running threat.

Trying to keep an eye on Reesing is enough to give defensive backs a stiff neck.

"Sometimes, you have a tendency to cover a guy until he stops," CU junior cornerback Jalil Brown said this week. "That's OK with most quarterbacks. But with Todd Reesing, you have to stay with the receivers for the entire play.

"The problem is, Reesing *knows* you have to stay with the receiver the entire play. So he can start running downfield and pick up a first down before you even realize he's doing that. If you have your back to him, it's too late."

Extreme Jayhawk makeover

It's the passing game where Reesing does most of his damage, however. He throws to perhaps the top receiving duo in the Big 12. Senior Kerry

Meier and junior Dezmon Briscoe already have combined for eight touchdown catches. Both stand 6-3 and do not shy away from contact.

"Meier, being an ex-quarterback, has high-level skill. He's scary," Colorado's Brown said. "And Briscoe. You're talking about a big man right there. That's a horse."

Before Reesing suited up, Kansas had posted only one winning season among its previous 10. His playmaking and moxie changed the culture of the entire program.

"It seemed like overnight Kansas became a ranked team of national prominence," CU senior linebacker Marcus Burton said. "I think the biggest thing they developed was confidence. They don't necessarily have all the marquee guys at all positions. But they have a swagger to them. Todd Reesing is a big part of that."

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Times doubly difficult for CU football wife and mother

By Anthony Cotton
The Denver Post

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Colorado head football coach Dan Hawkins, left, walks off the field with his wife Misti, after the Buffalos defeated Texas Tech 31-26 in a football game, Saturday, Oct. 27, 2007, in Lubbock, Texas. (AP | Joe Don Buckner)

When Misti Rae Ann Hokanson decided to say "I do" to Dan Hawkins 27 years ago, promising to have and to hold, for better, for worse, she admits that the worse that she's facing these days isn't quite what she had in mind.

"If I had had my way, we would have stayed in Weed, Calif., where we met and fell in love," Hawkins said recently. "That's where I wanted to live forever. I thought he'd be a high school coach and we'd stay there forever like the way I grew up.

"Apparently, Dan didn't have the same agenda."

To be fair, not long after the wedding, Misti

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Hawkins made another vow, to not be a spouse who prevented the budding coach from pursuing his dreams. So began the odyssey that has taken Misti from the impossibly named Happy Camp, Calif., to the bubbling coaching caldron in Boulder that has her husband and her son Cody the focal points of fans angry with the program's lack of progress.

The first time Colorado gets the football Saturday versus Kansas at Folsom Field, the quarterback Dan Hawkins will send onto the field will be Tyler Hansen, not Cody. Hawkins' decision to switch quarterbacks came in the third quarter of last week's 38-14 loss at Texas, after Cody threw an interception that turned the game around.

The defeat dropped the Buffs to 1-4 this season, 14-28 overall in Hawkins' four years at CU, and further inflamed the emotions of fans and alumni, some of whom, having gotten one Hawkins benched, wouldn't mind seeing the other deposed as coach.

While Misti Hawkins isn't immune to the latest turn of events, she hasn't been devastated by it either.

"I feel very strongly that there's a reason why we're in Colorado, and if that reason includes going through this struggle right now, then I accept that," Misti said. "There's negativity on the outside, but (Dan and Cody) aren't negative with each other. Our family is not negative about it."

"When Cody decided to come here, Dan told him, 'If it's good, it's going to be really good, but it could be very hard if things don't go well.' If they have to go through struggles and trials and go through the fire, I'm sorry for them, but I know they'll be strengthened by it and they'll come out winners."

Lifetime of experience

Misti Hawkins comes by her experience honestly. The daughter of a legendary high school basketball coach in Oregon, the wife of a major college football coach and the mother of a probable future coach in Cody, she jokes that she has been praying for his future wife from the time her eldest son was born.

One day last week, Misti traveled from Boulder to Centennial to buy an antique rocking chair, "a fixer-upper," she said, planning to strip it and refinish it, along with reupholstering it. The skill set necessary for the endeavor is one of many Hawkins says she has picked up from "many years of having to do things by myself."

"When your husband's a coach," she said, "he's not home very often and you have to run the house. When we were in Oregon, we had a water well and there was a leak in the pipeline to the house, so I dug a trench 3 feet wide by 4 feet deep by 20 yards long — out in the rain. I'm not intimidated by any job that needs to be done."

For which her husband is forever grateful.

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put up with it," Dan Hawkins said. "Everybody in Section 210 wants to be a coach, but there's a lot more to it. My kids have been to a lot of different schools and lived in a lot of different towns, and we've taken a lot of chances and a lot of risks.

"Some have paid off, and some haven't, but that's the lifestyle."

One of those risks was having Cody sign to play for his father at Colorado, a decision the younger Hawkins made after his dad left Boise State to take the CU job. (The Hawkinses' youngest son, Drew, is a sophomore at Boise State who quit the football team last summer because of recurring concussions.)

Asked whether she wished Cody had gone elsewhere, Misti emphatically says no. Regardless of wins and losses, the shared experience between father and son has made it worth it.

"I wanted Cody to be where he felt he was supposed to be," she said. "If Dan had stayed at Boise State, Cody would have gone there."

She points out that because of the time commitment her husband has given coaching, he hadn't really spent much time with Cody around the game until he ended up coaching him.

"I know it's been a great experience for Cody and Dan to share something," she said. "Football is so integral in both of their lives, and it's something they never really got to share before because of Dan's time commitment to college

and Cody's schedule being so different."

Misti Hawkins has worked as a nurse for most of the past 25 years. These days she spends much of her time doing volunteer work in health care and with her church.

In many ways, the controversies surrounding her husband keeping his job, and her son, a three-year starter, keeping his job, haven't affected her. While Dan Hawkins calls his wife "a great sounding board," he's quick to add that there isn't much football talk at home.

"Not nearly as much as people might think," he said.

And that's fine with Misti, who wants her four walls to be "a safe haven" from the current storm around the program.

"I'm not going to have a defensive environment at my house," she said. "I don't read the newspapers, I don't peruse the Internet. What hurts me is the negativity; I've struggled with that. I don't like thinking negative thoughts about people, I don't like spreading negative words about people, so I don't want to become part of that.

"I don't want to read it, I don't want to participate in it. It's not going to give me any information that's necessary for me to live my life."

"The spark we need"

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By all indications, should Tyler Hansen come out Saturday and throw for 300 yards in leading Colorado to an upset win over Kansas, the second-happiest person on the Buffs' sideline will be Cody Hawkins.

"Tyler will give us the spark we need," said Cody, who has been supportive of Hansen throughout the past year, even when Hansen was called upon at midseason a year ago to take over for him. Cody also praised Hansen during spring ball, even though Cody emerged with the lead for the starting job and kept it during fall camp, at which point Dan Hawkins announced Hansen would be red-shirted. That all changed Saturday night in Austin.

The happiest Hawkins on Saturday, should CU defeat KU, would probably be the team's coach, who would gain some semblance of high ground in the battle for the hearts and minds of a restless CU fan base.

But if Dan Hawkins were sitting in the stands at Folsom, one wonders if there might be a pang of regret at the fact that, for whatever reason, his kid wasn't the one to turn things around.

Dan Hawkins, father/coach, insists not.

"Here's where I'm different," he said. "What we're missing in this world is that not everybody can start, not everybody can play. There's value in being a role player, through learning through adversity. There's gotta be a backup quarterback, but the way we've got things going today, it's 'If my kid isn't playing, then I'm calling the coach to

complain about it.'

"Well, how about using this as a learning experience for the kid? How about teaching him about unselfishness, how about teaching him to work harder to get better? If he's the backup quarterback and he's supporting Tyler and we're winning, I'm good with that. I see the value of working through the struggle, so I don't care, and I know that Cody doesn't care and Misti doesn't care."

Not one iota, she confirms.

"My parent's philosophy was, 'I love my children for who they are, not what they do,' " Misti said. "So I love Cody as a person and as my son, not because he's a football player. I feel bad if he doesn't play well, and I hurt as a mother would hurt, but it doesn't affect my relationship with him. The love we have for each other, our health, those are the things that are important.

"No, I'm not happy that they don't have a better record, but Cody is going to learn things from this that will make him a great coach; it hurts me that he has to go through this, but that doesn't mean I would change it."

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CU's Smith welcomes spotlight at corner

By Patrick Ridgell

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BOULDER — Opposing offenses may or may not be avoiding Colorado junior cornerback Jimmy Smith in 2009. It seems at times they are; CU coaches won't really say.

What they will say is that when their own offense avoids him in practice, Smith grows annoyed.

"He gets mad at us in practice sometimes if we don't throw the ball his way, so sometimes we just have to call a couple plays and throw it his way just to make him happy," head coach Dan Hawkins said.

Said Smith: "You get lulled to sleep. It gets boring sometimes. But I always just stay on my toes in the game because I know they're going to come my way."

Texas went at Smith some last Saturday. Jordan Shipley had 11 catches for 147 yards, but most of his work came away from Smith.

Smith said he thought Texas threw his way twice when he was on Shipley, and Shipley caught one. Smith had his hands on another for a possible interception, but the receiver knocked it away.

Smith's battle with Shipley last Saturday grew feisty at times. Safety Ben Burney noticed it, saying, "That was exciting over there." It was something Hawkins called "awesome to see."

"I think our team is that way and he is that way, relishing the experience of going against the great guys," Hawkins said. "I always tell them the great competitors hope when it's third-and-8 that they throw it to your guy. That's what you should want. I think he has that mentality."

No. 17 Kansas, with Dezmon Briscoe and Kerry Meier setting program receiving records, will take shots Saturday against Smith and the Buffs (5 p.m., FSN). Meier leads the program with 167 career catches; Briscoe is second with 165.

It wouldn't be a surprise if things become intense as CU's defenders try to stick with Kansas' receivers while Jayhawks quarterback Todd Reesing scrambles. Smith said that'd be fine with him.

"It's fun being in the spotlight," he said. "I love going against all-Americans and all the people who get all the hype, because that's what I came here to do: to go against that caliber of players.

"This week, again, we have Briscoe, same thing. Our matchup is going to be one to watch."

Colorado State coach Steve Fairchild said Smith will play in the NFL when his college days are over. CU coaches like Smith's athleticism, long arms and size — he's listed at 6-foot-2, 205 pounds.



Colorado's Jimmy Smith, left, makes a tackle against Colorado State on Sept. 6 at Folsom Field in Boulder. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

CU Athletes of the Week

Sebastian Heisele, So., golf

Heisele tied for sixth at the Alister MacKenzie Invitational on Tuesday in Fairfax, Calif.

Laura Thweatt, Jr., cross country

Thweatt set the 5K course record Saturday during the Fort Hays State Open in Hays, Kan., with a time of 17 minutes, 5.27 seconds.

CSU Athletes of the Week

Riley Arp, Sr., golf

Arp tied for eighth, out of 75 individuals, at the Alister Mackenzie Invitational in Fairfax, Calif.

Tessa Nelson, Sr., volleyball

Nelson posted a season-high 10 kills and a match-high eight blocks in a 3-

Is he that “lock-down” corner, the one opposing offenses avoid for fear he might make them pay? Not yet.

0 win at Air Force.

Defensive backs coach Greg Brown said Smith lacks the experience for such a label. Brown added that teams are especially trying to throw fades on Smith, and it's up to Smith to stop them.

“Jim has a lot of talent and a lot of skill, great physical size and tools,” Brown said. “But how many games has he actually started? I think it's somewhere around eight.”

Saturday will be Smith's ninth start.

We'll revisit the question after his 19th.

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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Hansen looks to capitalize as starting QB

CU sophomore will lead charge against No. 17 Jayhawks

By Alex K.W. Schultz on October 16, 2009

The 19-year-old has waited — patiently.

He's faded in some people's memories, but not in others.

On Saturday, sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen will get the chance to ensure he won't be forgotten by anyone.

Colorado Buffaloes football coaches said Hansen, who was originally ticketed to redshirt this year, will make his first start of the season at 5 p.m. Saturday against the 17th-ranked Kansas Jayhawks at Folsom Field.

"I want to do whatever I can to win," Hansen said. "If that means throwing for 50 yards and rushing for 300, then I'll do it. I want to get a victory and get a couple of numbers in that win column."

Hansen said he "definitely" has something to prove against KU, but he realizes it will take more than a game to make believers out of some.

"I thought I had a good camp, and I thought I was ready to start," Hansen said. "They went with [Cody] Hawkins, and I was okay with that. But I definitely want to prove that I should've been the guy from the get-go."

Hansen exhausted his redshirt last weekend against the Texas Longhorns when he was inserted into the game early in the fourth quarter of a 38-14 loss.

Hawkins threw two interceptions, one of which was returned 92 yards for a touchdown, and CU coaches quickly began tossing around the idea of giving the nod to the sophomore from Murrieta, Calif.

"We were kind of talking about it and saying, 'Well, what are the things we need to do?' It was a big decision," CU offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said. "It's not just, 'Oh, pull the guy and put the other guy in.' We were trying to preserve Tyler's redshirt, so we kind of talked about it. [Head coach Dan] Hawkins had some input, and he felt it was right to do. So we did it."

Hansen went 3-of-5 for 17 yards against the Longhorns.

Kiesau said it's still possible Cody Hawkins will also take snaps this weekend. It will be a matter of how effective — or ineffective — Hansen is.



While playing Kansas State on Oct. 18, 2008 at Folsom Field, quarterback Tyler Hansen makes a pass before being hit. The Buffs narrowly defeated the Wildcats 14-13. Hansen will face Kansas on Saturday, starting as quarterback for the first time this season. (CU Independent file/Morgan Hofmann)

“Tyler’s going to start the game, Tyler’s going to play the game,” Kiesau said. “You never know if Cody’s going to get in or not. If Tyler gets in and starts rolling and stays hot, then we’ll roll with Tyler.”

Hansen, a 6-foot-1, 205-pounder, is two inches taller and 15 pounds heavier than Cody Hawkins. Despite his larger frame, Kiesau said that Hansen has a “knack” for tucking the ball and scrambling when plays break down.

Hansen’s added dimension of mobility can give opposing defenses fits, said junior wide receiver Scotty McKnight.

“He’s very accurate, he’s got a big arm and he can run around a little bit,” McKnight said. “I’m excited for him, as his friend and as his teammate, to get this opportunity.”

Hansen, who was supposed to redshirt last season as well, didn’t play in CU’s first six games in 2008. He appeared in Game 7 against the Kansas State Wildcats when he and McKnight hooked up for a touchdown midway through the second quarter. The touchdown proved to be the game-winner as the Buffs held off KSU 14-13.

“Tyler and I are going to make some plays together,” McKnight said. “We showed that last year.”

Hansen completed 34-of-65 passes for 280 yards and a touchdown in five games last season. His scrambling ability was evident as he also rushed for 261 yards.

The past doesn’t matter to Hansen, though. Now, it’s all about 2009 and showing where he feels he belongs — behind center.

“I have to prove myself against Kansas State, Missouri, all of those teams,” Hansen said. “It’s going to take a few games, but I’m excited for it and I’m up for it.”

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Alex K.W. Schultz at Alexander.schultz@colorado.edu.

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CU has a chance to topple overrated Kansas

By [Kyle Clark](#) on October 16, 2009 · [Comment](#) · [Email This](#) · [ShareThis](#)



Quarterback Todd Reesing confers with Kansas coach Mark Mangino.

Lately, seeing Kansas on the schedule has made Colorado fans cringe.

Not because the Jayhawks are ranked 17th or because they have lost only six games since 2007, or even because their third-best offense in the country has scored at least 34 points in each of their five wins. No, the reason is mostly because Kansas has had a Buffalo killer under center.

Since coming into a game late in 2006, quarterback Todd Reesing has never lost to CU. A KU win Saturday in Boulder would mark the first time Kansas has won four straight against Colorado.

The Buffaloes hope to thwart Reesing's plan and continue trying to salvage the 2009 season. It could happen. Kansas is overrated in the polls. Although 5-0, it hasn't faced a tough opponent. Iowa State gave the Jayhawks a scare last week, proving their vulnerability.

Kansas has the a big soft spot with its pass defense, which ranks last in the Big 12. That's why the first of this week's three keys to the game is what everyone has been talking about recently.

LEAVE TYLER HANSEN IN THE GAME

At Tuesday's media luncheon, the change at quarterback was the main subject of discussion. Coach Dan Hawkins started by clarifying what that change could mean for both players:

"I think there is a chance that both those guys will play. There are positives to it. You have two guys ready, you can kind of go with the hot-hand theory. I do think sometimes for a guy to step away and look and see the game from another perspective gives him a better angle of the game."

Hawkins also said if Hansen were to get hot, Cody Hawkins might not see the field again. "Tyler is the guy right now," Hawkins said. A smart move, giving the staff wiggle room depending on which scenario plays out. But the really smart move would be to try to stick with Hansen as long as possible. The redshirt is gone, and the timing with two freshmen quarterbacks probably wouldn't allow for another chance to use it.

Two-quarterback systems work for most teams when they have streaky players. With this young offense, consistency seems to be more important. Cody Hawkins had been consistently sub-par, so it was time for a change. He hasn't shown much of anything this year that would make anyone think he could come off the sidelines and change a game. Hansen deserves time to develop. Let him play the entire game against Kansas.

Hansen seems confident he can take over and keep any quarterback controversy from brewing.

"They named me official starter, and I'm a year older. People are expecting me to do better things and be more into the offense, as opposed to looking for the run first," Hansen said. "The only thing you can control is yourself. I just need to go out and ball out, be the man for a bit, and everything will pan out the way I want it to."

RUN SMARTER

According to running backs coach Darian Hagan, the 42-yard rushing total against Texas wasn't so much a result of the Longhorns' speed but of plays being run incorrectly. Rodney Stewart seemed anxious to try and take over in that game, looking for big runs on the outside, instead of making one cut and turning upfield. All that running around produced only 1.9 yards per attempt.

"They were his fault, every last one of them," Hagan said. "He was bouncing plays he shouldn't have been bouncing. He was supposed to read the defensive end and go inside on those losses."

Stewart may need to slow down behind the line a little to read the gaps, and learn to settle for the short and medium gains, especially if he's going to be the featured back in this offense. Fans still hope for the emergence of another back, and again we're told Darrell Scott is healthy and will play more.

"He's been getting his knee drained, and they've been taking stuff out of there. I don't think he's at 100 percent, but a lot of people aren't at 100 percent," Hagan said. "We had the intention (to play him more), but Speedy (Rodney Stewart) starts and gets so dang hot, then Texas started clogging up the box, where Speedy can find those holes that Scott would just put his head down on."

DOUBLE TROUBLE

The Buffs' defense has been making strides in their past three games. Pass coverage last week was solid, giving up only one long scoring play, and that was against the famed McCoy-Shipley tandem. The secondary needs to be twice as good, though, against Kansas, which has two receivers who can put the same kind of hurt on CU.

Dezmon Briscoe is second in the nation in receiving yards per game, with 129.3. His counterpart, Kerry Meier, is fourth in the category for receptions per game at 8.6. Both are halfway to 1,000-yard seasons, and both are big enough to give the Colorado cornerbacks problems. Each is 6-foot-3 and over 200 pounds.

Containing these two receivers will be critical or Kansas could repeat the offensive success it generated last week, when it had over 500 yards combined.

Editor's note: Comments have been turned off on football stories involving CU to meet the university's requirement for giving media credentials to Web site reporters and photographers.

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Posted on Fri, Oct. 16, 2009

Colorado hopes Hansen can put charge in offense against KU

LAWRENCE | Colorado coach Dan Hawkins is hoping that sophomore quarterback Tyler Hansen can give the Buffaloes' stagnant offense a spark.

Hawkins took the redshirt off Hansen and benched his son, former starting quarterback Cody Hawkins, during the second half of last week's 38-14 loss to Texas.

Kansas coaches said this week that they will prepare for both quarterbacks. Any spark that Hansen can bring Colorado will probably come from his legs. In limited playing time last season, Hansen rushed 63 times for 261 yards, an average of 4.1 yards per carry.

"There's no question they'll play to his strengths," KU coach Mark Mangino said, "and what they are right now we're really not sure. There's just limited footage of him. He has a strong arm, he seems to be a smart guy, in control. I know he has a lot better speed probably than Cody Hawkins. You could see him running the ball a little more. We have to be aware of his speed as well as his ability to throw the football."

The Jayhawks are coming off a bad defensive showing against Iowa State in which they allowed Cyclones quarterback Austen Arnaud to rush for 67 yards. Hansen should challenge KU in a similar fashion today.

KU co-defensive coordinators Clint Bowen and Bill Miller both said they didn't expect Colorado to drastically change its offense with Hansen under center.

"I think basically they're going to run their offense," Miller said. "I don't see them coming out in a super different kind of attack to play Kansas, that's for sure."

No. 17 Kansas at Colorado

•**WHEN:** 6 tonight

•**WHERE:** Folsom Field, Boulder, Colo.

•**TV/RADIO:** Fox Sports KC; KCSP (610 AM)

Other story lines

•**WILL KU RUNNING BACK JAKE SHARP RETURN?** Sharp hasn't played since the Duke game on Sept. 19 because of an undisclosed injury. Mangino said Sharp is day to day but hasn't healed as quickly as expected.

•**WILL THE JAYHAWKS' DEFENSE STOP THE RUN?** Colorado running backs Rodney Stewart and Darrell Scott are talented enough to hurt the Jayhawks, and quarterback Hansen is a running threat as well.

•**WHICH KU RECEIVER WILL HAVE THE BIGGEST DAY?** Entering the game, Kerry Meier holds a 167-165 advantage over Dezmon Briscoe atop the KU career receptions list.

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Posted on Thu, Oct. 15, 2009

Kansas-Colorado football preview

•**When/where:** 6 p.m. Saturday at Folsom Field in Boulder, Colo.

•**TV/radio:** Fox Sports KC; KCSP (610 AM)

•**Series:** Colorado leads 41-24-3

•**The line:** Kansas by 9 1/2

What's at stake

The confidence of the Kansas defense heading into the teeth of its 2009 schedule. The Jayhawks rebuilt their confidence last year against the Buffaloes after a tough game against Iowa State, and they'll need to do the same this year. Oklahoma and Heisman Trophy winner Sam Bradford are next.

Cheers if ...

KU forces Colorado to beat it through the air. The Buffaloes will be starting a new quarterback, Tyler Hansen, who is a much better runner than Cody Hawkins, and Colorado's most talented offensive players are its running backs. The Buffaloes don't have the playmakers on the outside to hurt KU, so the Jayhawks must stuff the run.

Jeers if ...

The Jayhawks don't put up 450 yards of offense. Colorado is giving up 390 and 30 points per game. The Buffaloes appear to be improving defensively, staying competitive in road losses to West Virginia and Texas. But KU's offense appears to be hitting its stride just in time for its Big 12 South slate, and the Jayhawks can't afford to lose momentum.

Three things about Colorado

1 The Buffaloes have the No. 1 high school prospect in the country from 2007, running back Darrell Scott, but he has just 20 carries for 94 yards through five games.

2 Colorado has turned the ball over 12 times in five games but has created 11.

3 The Buffaloes have lost three straight to KU. They have never lost four straight.

Key matchup

KU's linebackers vs. Colorado quarterback Tyler Hansen. The Jayhawks' young group of linebackers had a tough time last week keeping track of Iowa State quarterback Austen Arnaud, who rushed for 69 yards. Hansen has that ability, too, which means KU's linebackers have to be more disciplined.

J. Brady McCollough's pick: Kansas 31-28

The Jayhawks are the better team, but crazy things happen at Folsom Field. Colorado will rally behind Hansen and keep it close. Still, the Jayhawks survive and advance.

KANSAS OFFENSE

P	No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
WR	80	Dezmon Briscoe	6-3	202	Jr.
WR	81	Johnathan Wilson	6-3	189	Jr.
LT	72	Tanner Hawkinson	6-6	285	Fr.
LG	76	Brad Thorson	6-3	290	Jr.
C	77	Jeremiah Hatch	6-3	311	So.
RG	59	Sal Capra	6-3	295	Jr.
RT	74	Jeff Spikes	6-6	314	So.