

# Pressure`s on Buffs in Glass Bowl

## Game vs. Toledo has big implications for Colorado

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

Posted: 09/10/2009 11:54:09 PM MDT

TOLEDO, Ohio ---- Tonight's game against the Toledo Rockets was just the second date on the Colorado football schedule a week ago. Now, it might be the most important contest in coach Dan Hawkins' tenure.

The backlash from losing to Colorado State to start the 2009 season after earlier proclamations of 10 wins has been intense. Woe to Hawkins and his Buffs if they fall once again.

The boos that rained down from the Folsom Field stands Sunday night have continued all week on talk radio, message boards and even a few e-mails to the coach and his boss. Preseason conjecture about Hawkins being on the hot seat has turned into serious conversations of who might be best suited to replace him at season's end if the Buffs continue to sputter.

But that is getting a bit ahead of this curve. In fact, a few wins might be all Hawkins needs to straighten things out.

"I think everyone feels really good about where we're at right now," quarterback Cody Hawkins said after several days of practice this week. "Our team is in a really good position. We're trying to stay confident and keep pushing forward because we know we had a mishap on Sunday, but we know where this team can go and we know we can get a lot better."

Dan Hawkins and his son have taken a business-as-usual approach to a short week of preparation while acknowledging that those inside the program are frustrated and hurting, too. Athletic director Mike Bohn's steadfast insistence that his head coach is safe hasn't waned, but even he was forced to admit after the CSU loss that the program cannot continue to endure such disappointments.

A loss tonight at the Glass Bowl against a middle-of-the-pack team from the Mid-American Conference would fall into that category.

"Kids on our team aren't stupid," quarterback Cody Hawkins said. "They know Toledo is good."

The Rockets are planning a Blue-out in the stands. Colorado fans would be comforted by a blowout on the field. That won't be an easy task. Dan Hawkins' Buffs have won just two true road games since he was hired and the Colorado program hasn't traveled well when it has ventured east recently. The Buffs' last win on this side of the Mississippi River came in the 1995 season opener at Wisconsin. Since then, the program is 0-7 in such trips.

Toledo has surprised visitors from BCS conferences before, and the Rockets were competitive in a loss to Purdue last week to start the season. They traveled to Michigan and won a year ago. The Buffs have their hands full to be sure.

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But the Rockets are in their second week under first-year head coach Tim Beckman, a former defensive coordinator at Oklahoma State. There is not nearly as much pressure to win as there is in Boulder.

The Buffs need this game more than the Rockets. Some might even say it's a must-win situation already for Hawkins and his program.

To go home wearing smiles tonight, the Buffs must correct several issues that led to the loss Sunday.

Offensively, they can't allow a speedy and athletic Toledo defense to stop them from running the ball. If anything has been proven over and over again in the past few years with the Buffs, it's that they are easily beaten when they become one-dimensional and are forced to pass.

The Rockets gave up more than 300 yards on the ground against Purdue. If the Buffs can't run on this team with four solid tailbacks, including the untapped potential of Darrell Scott, it will be tough to believe they will run on anyone this year. They produced just 29 yards on the ground against CSU.

Defensively, CU has to do better to limit big plays.

Toledo is an explosive offense several CU coaches compared with Missouri this week. Tonight's game, at least, will be a nice tune-up for all the versions of the spread offense the Buffs will see later this fall in Big 12 play.

Quarterback Aaron Opelt comes into the game leading the nation in passing, albeit after just one game. Wide receiver Stephen Williams caught 15 passes last week for nearly 200 yards and scored two touchdowns.

CU secondary coach Greg Brown said Williams is an NFL prospect. Brown ought to know after spending more than a decade in the league doing his best to stop players such as Williams.

"We're trying to scratch and claw and see what we can come up with," Brown said. "I mean, they're going to get their share of yards. They're



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# Woelk: Any kind of victory would be step forward

By Neill Woelk  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/10/2009 11:55:14 PM MDT

What Colorado fans had seen as a "trap" game before the season began has morphed into something far more important than that today.

The Buffs are no longer just wary of Toledo. The Buffs are worried -- or at least they should be. Tonight's game in the Glass Bowl is the start of a three-game stretch that could go a long way in determining not just how the rest of the season turns out, but also the long-term direction of CU's football program.

Simply, the Buffs need a win. A dominant performance would be nice, but it's by no means mandatory. A victory in any shape or form would build a little confidence and momentum in the Buff locker room, and at least temporarily convince a few of the more ardent Buff faithful to step away from the ledge.

It's certainly no slam-dunk. Despite the fact that it's a non-marquee opponent coming off a 3-9 season, tonight's game was never seen as a lock by anyone in Buff black and gold. The Rockets have a history of knocking off big names (Michigan a year ago, Kansas in 2006), and the mere fact that CU would have just four days to prepare for the game added to the concern.

But most folks assumed the Buffs would be coming off a win over Colorado State and in danger of suffering from an emotional letdown.

Now it's just the opposite. The concern level has been raised from orange to red, as the Buffs' wretched performance in the season opener has even the staunchest Dan Hawkins supporters questioning the direction of his team.

What the Buffs must show tonight is some improvement across the board. The list hasn't changed since Monday morning, but just to refresh your memory:

Some semblance of a running game. The Rockets gave up more than 300 yards on the ground a week ago to Purdue, a program that isn't known for its rushing attack. Nobody's expecting the Buffs to match that effort, but a substantial step forward over last week's 29 yards rushing against CSU would be a nice start. Lots of folks want to see more of Darrell Scott, but the bottom line is it doesn't matter who gets the yards -- as long as there are plenty of them.

An improved passing game. In the end, the Buffs had decent numbers in the opener, but those stats were padded by a late drive that did little more than make the final score look respectable. The Buffs need to offer better pass protection, drop fewer passes and be able to convert more often on third down (3-for-14). Dan Hawkins insists that quarterback Cody Hawkins is efficient in the offense; we'd like to see effective.

Fewer big plays allowed by the defense. CSU gained nearly 60 percent of its total yards last week on five plays. Too much too often.

After the game, Hawkins didn't endear himself to many folks when he insisted that CU's problems were not major, but rather small errors that could be fixed. While Buff nation spent the week panicking, Hawkins refused to change his demeanor, holding to the calm, steady course to which he has adhered since the day he arrived. Neither has that approach managed to calm the swell.

What is true is that CU did play slightly better in the second half a week ago -- albeit when CSU was doing its best to protect a lead rather than build one.

But the Buffs need to have a better performance than that to still take advantage of what was seen as an overall advantageous schedule when the season began.

CU still has a chance to take advantage of that schedule. Win tonight, and next week's game against Wyoming has a slightly different flavor (especially with the Cowboys focusing all their efforts this week on a visit from No. 2 Texas). Then

comes a Thursday night visit to West Virginia -- a game seen as a toss-up when the season began, but one that now appears to be an uphill climb.

Still, the Buffs have a chance to change direction.

Late last Sunday night, Dan Hawkins calmly said CU's problems could be fixed.

Tonight would be one heck of a time to begin proving it.

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cu football

## CU's defense getting baptism by fire

Bufs' young defensive linemen are having to learn on the fly

By Chris Dempsey  
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/11/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT



CU redshirt freshman defensive tackle Will Pericak, one of many youngsters in the unit, fights off a block in drills on Tuesday. (John Leyba, The Denver Post )

BOULDER — Will Pericak made his decision to commit to Colorado over a plate of food at the Dal Ward Athletic Center — when he was 7 years old. Or 8. The details are a little fuzzy in his mind.

What was always clear was his desire to play in a Buffaloes uniform, from the time he was a tyke at a CU football camp. The only variables were his talent and how hard he'd work to reach the goal.

Turns out, the former Boulder High standout had the talent and more than the required work ethic to play college football. Sunday, he became the

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first CU freshman to start the first game of his career on the defensive line.

"It's all pretty surreal," said Pericak, a 19-year-old who redshirted last season. "It means a

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ton to me. I've come a long way. It's an awesome feeling. It meant a ton being from Boulder, being able to get out there, along with (linebacker) Jeff Smart, being a Boulder High grad. It was pretty special."

Coaches said they liked how the 6-foot-4, 280-pound Pericak played, even though he and the defensive line struggled to get pressure on CSU quarterback Grant Stucker or stop the Rams' rushing attack. The Buffs had just two sacks, neither by a lineman. Pericak finished with three tackles, two solo, in the loss.

"He made some freshman mistakes, but he made some plays that made him look like a vet," Colorado line coach Romeo Bandison said.

Tonight, the Buffs will look to show improvement on the line against Toledo, which had 423 yards passing in its loss last week at Purdue.

According to Bandison, Pericak's play Sunday was an extension of what he has shown over the past year on the practice field.

"He goes 100 miles an hour," Bandison said. "He makes plays downfield. He came on the backside and made a tackle. So he's going to work hard, he's strong and will do what you ask him. He did some nice things because he goes fast all the time."

Still, Pericak's youth, and that of the entire defensive line, is a concern after CSU's experienced offensive line had its way.

Former Columbine All-Colorado player Curtis Cunningham, a sophomore, also made his first career start, at nose tackle. In addition, true freshman Nate Bonsu played in his first game. With four starts, junior Marquez Herrod has the

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most playing experience on the defensive line.

"With every game they get a little more experience, every practice they get more experience, and hopefully with that we get improved play," CU coach Dan Hawkins said.

Bandison said improvement on the defensive line comes at varying degrees.

"It all depends kind of on what you're doing on defense," Bandison said. "Some things, it doesn't matter how many times you rep it in practice, you have to see it in the game. Sometimes you've got to get hit by an O-lineman from the blind side before you figure out that when you're chasing the quarterback, you better look around.

"Some of the stuff, like the pass-rushing part, comes with age — how to rush them on the outside or inside half. And read and react to certain things."

A solid pass rush tonight figures to be vital. Last week, Rockets quarterback Aaron Opelt threw a school-record 67 passes, completing 41. His 423 yards ranks fourth on the school's all-time list. He was not sacked.

Bandison said he was encouraged by his line's play, despite CSU's ability to move the ball. The Rams had three big yardage pass plays that allowed them to build a lead.

"They did fine," Bandison said of his line. "We made some mistakes — we made a couple of costly ones, actually. There's some things we've

got to clean up. We had a couple of first-timers in there. So, there's going to be stuff that they don't know just based on experience alone."

*Chris Dempsey: 303-954-1279 or  
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## Three questions for CU

1. Can Colorado shake off the bitter loss to Colorado State and begin to regain some swagger? Coaches won't admit it, of course, but if ever there was a must-win, this would be it. If the Buffs lose tonight, it would be hard to imagine a winning record by season's end. Even a 6-6 mark (and a Texas Bowl or Independence Bowl invitation) might be a longshot.

2. Will tailback Darrell Scott become a focal point of the offense? CU fans did not picture the former high school All-American getting just one carry in the first game of his sophomore season. Yes, his blocking in pass protection still needs work. But it's not like Colorado's offense couldn't use a playmaker.

3. Can the CU defense avoid being beaten on big plays? Five Colorado State plays accounted for 215 of the Rams' 376 yards of offense. Three of those were receptions of 43 or more yards. That's a way to get beaten. And keep in mind, Toledo senior quarterback Aaron Opelt comes off a career-best 423 yards passing against Purdue.

*Tom Kensler, The Denver Post*

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*Colorado's defensive line must grow up quickly for the defense to reach its potential. A look at the main individuals who are trying to learn the trade as fast as possible.*

Name Age Class Career starts

Nate Bonsu 18 Fr. 0

Curtis Cunningham 20 So. 1

Eugene Goree 20 So. 0

Marquez Herrod 20 Jr. 4

Taj Kaynor 23 Sr. 0

Name Age Class Career starts

Eric Lawson 22 Jr. 0

Conrad Obi 20 So. 0

Will Pericak 19 Fr. 1

Lagrone Shields 21 So. 0

Forrest West 18 Fr. 0

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### [Colorado looking for quick redemption Friday night at Toledo](#)

September 10, 2009 4:21 PM

*Posted by ESPN.com's Tim Griffin*

After a demoralizing loss to start the season, Colorado tight end [Riar Geer](#) wanted to forget any reminders of that game as quickly as possible.

The Buffaloes' embarrassing 23-17 home loss to Colorado State was a downer to start the season. It's the main reason why Geer is excited about Friday's game at Toledo (ESPN, 9 p.m. ET) -- even as the Buffaloes have only five days between games and will use one of them to travel across the country.

"I wish we could have played the next night," Geer said. "Playing as badly as we did makes me want to play right now. The only way to get the bad taste out is by playing again quickly."

Shortly after the end of last season's 5-7 campaign, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins predicted to a group of Colorado boosters that his team would "win 10 games and [have] no excuses" in 2009.

Their early loss makes that bold prediction more difficult to fulfill. It also turned up the pressure on Hawkins, who has posted a 13-25 record since coming to Colorado from Boise State in 2006. His record at Boise was 53-11.

The Colorado fans appeared to be losing patience in Hawkins' program during Sunday's game. The Buffaloes fell into a 20-3 halftime deficit and were serenaded by catcalls as they left the field at halftime.

"The fans are dying, but we're dying too," Hawkins said. "We want people to care. But again, we have to be able to flush it. You can't let one loss become two losses or three losses, you have to strap it up and get back out there."

Geer heard the catcalls, but was more disappointed in his team's struggles than the fans' reaction to them.

"It hurt a little bit, but we played bad," Geer said. "They had a reason to boo. I was more (angry) with the way we played than anything else."

The Buffaloes will be facing a difficult challenge against Toledo, which has beaten a team from a BCS conference in each of the last three seasons. The last two teams from the Big 12 that visited the Glass Bowl -- Kansas in 2006 and Iowa State in 2007 -- both were defeated by the Rockets.

One question remains: What's the status of [Darrell Scott](#), the heralded running prospect who was the nation's No. 1 back in the 2008 recruiting class? Scott was barely used against Colorado State, producing only one carry and one reception as he was relegated to kickoff returns.

Scott failed to play much in the second half, presumably because of his difficulties in

pass-blocking. With Colorado passing on virtually every down, Hawkins opted to go with running backs other than Scott.

That decision disappointed Scott, who told the Denver Post he hoped to be used more regularly this season.

"I was warm. I was hyped. I was ready," Scott told the paper.

After meeting with coaches the following day, Scott said he's hopeful of seeing more action against the Rockets on Friday night.

"After the meetings, there were like, 'We're going to try to work you in,'" Scott said. "That kind of reassured me on everything. But we'll see on Friday. [Getting carries] is what I was recruited for. We'll see."

The Buffaloes' season may be on the brink after only one game, but Geer is confident that his team can pull back together after the short week of preparation.

"I don't think it will be difficult," Geer said. "Everybody is hungry to get back. We played terribly in that game and haven't made that many mistakes in a long time. But we've learned from it and we're anxious to go on."

[Colorado Buffaloes](#), [Iowa State Cyclones](#), [Kansas Jayhawks](#), [Riar Geer](#), [Darrell Scott](#), [Dan Hawkins](#)

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Longmont, Colorado  
 Sunday, September 27,  
 2009

Publish Date: 9/11/2009

## Toledo has familiar look

*By Patrick Ridgell*  
 © 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — The Colorado Buffaloes say today's opponent, Toledo, reminds them a lot of Missouri. Given CU's recent history with the Tigers, this might make its fans go, "Uh oh."

The past two dates with the Tigers have resulted in 55-10 and 58-0 defeats, embarrassments the Buffs need not relive after Sunday's loss to Colorado State and the wrath it provoked.

What the Buffs mean comparing Toledo and Missouri is the Rockets like to spread the field and throw a lot, like Missouri has in recent seasons. CU knows that to avoid another loss, it better devise a way to slow Toledo down.

"We'll try to scratch and claw and see what we can come up with," CU secondary coach Greg Brown said. "They're going to get their share of yards. ... Guys like that, like Missouri, Texas Tech, they're going to get theirs."

"But you say, 'Hey, if we can somehow come up with a couple of turnovers, that can help offset some of that offensive production they're going to get.'"

Toledo threw a program-record 67 passes in its season-opening 52-31 loss at Purdue. The Rockets probably don't want to throw the ball that much, but a big early deficit prompted their hand. Stephen Williams, a two-time, second-team all-MAC receiver, caught 15 passes for 185 yards.

Statistics can be misleading, and the numbers from Sunday can lead to different conclusions. CU gave up five plays of 20 yards or more, including four that ranged from 42 to 57 yards, for a total of 215. So take out those plays, and CSU's 376 total yards and 6.06 per play maybe wasn't so bad.

On the other hand, a CSU receiver dropped another one in the second quarter that would have gone for a big gain when he got behind the Buffs defense. CSU went conservative in the second half. If the game was closer, who knows what else they would have thrown at the Buffs.

We rehash Sunday only because of what it means for today. The Buffs know they have to contain what they call "explosion" plays. Obviously, they would not reveal game plans, like how they want to pressure Toledo senior quarterback Aaron Opelt. But they say they must be ready for "double moves" from receivers, and they must do their jobs.

"If you go back and look at the film from the defense's standpoint, we obviously didn't get in our gaps like we were supposed to, we didn't do our

### Colorado (0-1) at Toledo (0-1)

**When:** Today, 7 p.m.

**Where:** The Glass Bowl in Toledo, Ohio

**TV/Radio:** ESPN/760 AM

**The series:** First meeting between the programs.

**In the spotlight: CU** — RB Darrell Scott. After only one carry in last week's loss to Colorado State, fans want to see him. Whether Scott has a big game tonight or not, it'll be big news. Toledo — WR Stephen Williams. At 6-foot-5 and 200 pounds, his speed and size are a challenge for any defense. He caught 15 passes for 185 yards last Saturday at Purdue.

**When CU has the ball:** The Buffs struggled in the opener. The line and receivers were confused, and the Buffs asked too much of quarterback Cody Hawkins, who isn't a good enough playmaker to win games single-handedly. Expect Toledo to load the box. The Rockets gave up 52 points and 535 yards to Purdue. Someone has to get better, right? Advantage: Toledo

**When Toledo has the ball:** CU's success against spread offenses has varied. It handled Texas Tech's in 2006 and 2007, but Missouri's shredded the Buffs in 2007 and 2008. The Buffs said this week that Toledo reminds them of Missouri. Gulp. The Buffs must pressure Toledo QB Aaron Opelt. Advantage: Toledo.

**Special teams:** CU kicker Aric Goodman made his only FG against CSU, a career-best 54-yarder. Scott looked good returning kicks. Advantage: Even.

right assignments, which is why they got a lot of those plays,” linebacker Marcus Burton said. “I think just doing our job will eliminate a lot of those explosion plays.”

**LEFT AN IMPRESSION:** Brown couldn’t compliment CSU coach Steve Fairchild enough during a Wednesday interview.

“They were good,” Brown said. “They were well coached, had a well-conceived plan. It was no surprise what they did. Steve Fairchild is just really good. As far as having the whole package together with protection, route concept, anticipation of pressure, the guy is really good.”

**ON THE ROAD AGAIN:** Some ominous trends and numbers accompany CU to Toledo.

The Buffs have won just two true road games during coach Dan Hawkins’ tenure. They’re 0-2 in Ohio — losing at Ohio State in 1971 and 1986. Toledo beat Big 12 teams at home in 2006 (Kansas, 37-31 in two overtimes) and 2007 (Iowa State, 36-35).

Not only did the Buffs have just four days to prepare — Toledo had five — they also must travel 1,137 miles.

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at [pridgell@times-call.com](mailto:pridgell@times-call.com).

**Key matchup:** CU CB Jimmy Smith vs. Toledo WR Stephen Williams. Smith is turning into a star, and Williams is a star. Will CU have Smith shadow Williams all night?

**Prediction:** It’s hard to imagine, given their performance Sunday, that these inexperienced Buffs can go on the road — anywhere — and win. And first-year Toledo coach Tim Beckman had success against CU last season as Oklahoma State’s defensive coordinator.  
Toledo 28, CU 19.

*Patrick Ridgell*



Posted on Thu, Sep. 10, 2009

## Big 12 insider: Confusion reigns at Colorado

By BLAIR KERKHOFF  
The Kansas City Star

Tyler Hansen was locked in a battle with Cody Hawkins to become Colorado's starting quarterback this season. And then he wasn't.

So, Hansen will take a redshirt season. Or not.

Just like last year.

"It's kind of a little messed-up situation," is how Hansen explained it to reporters in Colorado earlier this week.

He could have been talking about the Buffaloes team, which departed Folsom Field to boos after Sunday's opening-game loss to Colorado State.

With an extra-short week to flush that one, Colorado plays at Toledo tonight and needs to get things fixed.

Cody Hawkins gets the start, and coach/dad Dan Hawkins said the plan is to play Hansen if his son is injured but left open other possibilities.

"Cody could break his arm today and (Hansen) would be in," Dan Hawkins said. "Or if Cody ends up just not getting it done, there are a lot of situations."

What?

Hansen went through something like this last year as a freshman. He took off his redshirt in the seventh game, against Kansas State, to juice the offense, and started the next two.

Colorado's disappointing 5-7 finish last season seemed to throw open the quarterback position, and Hawkins and Hansen were considered even.

But the decision to redshirt Hansen this year came three weeks before the opener, only nobody outside the small group knew of it until a day after the Colorado State loss.

Oh, and running back Darrell Scott is unhappy. One of the team's touted strengths got only one carry against the Rams, who held the Buffaloes to 29 rushing yards. "I was warm. I was hyped. I was ready," Scott told The Denver Post. "But if that's how it goes, that's how it goes."

In Hawkins' fourth season, a second game is not too early to declare tonight's game a must-win.

### All games Saturday unless noted

**1. IOWA AT IOWA STATE (11 a.m. on Fox Sports KC):** The Cyclones have more than held up their end of the rivalry, winning seven of 11, often as the underdog. Iowa has more to clean up after its one-point victory over Northern Iowa. The home team has won the last five in this series.

**2. HOUSTON AT OKLAHOMA STATE (2:30 p.m. on Fox Sports KC):** Georgia no longer on their minds, the Cowboys face a different kind of challenge in Houston. Cougars quarterback Case Keenum would feel right at home in the Big 12 with his numbers. He and Texas Tech's Graham Harrell were the only two in the nation last year to surpass 5,000 passing yards. It's a trap game only if Oklahoma State lets it be.

**3. KANSAS AT UTEP (6:30 p.m. on CBS College Sports):** The Jayhawks should cruise, but nobody on the squad has won a nonconference road game. The last one came in 2003. Dezmon Briscoe returns. UTEP coach Mike Price: "Kansas is really something. Todd Reesing is Fran Tarkenton. He's better than any quarterback who's ever played at Kansas." Perhaps. But David Jaynes and John Hadl were All-Americans.



**4. KANSAS STATE AT LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE (6 p.m., no TV):** Last week's Wildcats' victory over Massachusetts was closer than it should have been. Two special-teams blunders turned a comfortable K-State victory into something much closer. The Ragin Cajuns lost by eight in Manhattan last season.

**5. BOWLING GREEN AT MISSOURI (6 p.m. on PPV):** How different things are from the last time these teams played. The Falcons beat Mizzou in 2002 and 2001, Gary Pinkel's first two years, and Urban Meyer's only two at Bowling Green. Both teams won impressively on opening weekend.

**6. COLORADO AT TOLEDO (8 tonight on ESPN):** One thing to look for tonight is Colorado's start. The Buffaloes got buried by Colorado State, trailing 20-3 at halftime and had to scrap its plans to run. Toledo coach Tim Beckman knows the Buffaloes. He was Oklahoma State's defensive coordinator last season in the Cowboys' 30-17 victory.

**7. ARKANSAS STATE AT NEBRASKA (1 p.m. on PPV):** Not much to gripe about from either team's openers. The Red Wolves beat Mississippi Valley State 61-0, with the Cornhuskers taking down Florida Atlantic 49-3. Arkansas State beat Texas A&M last season and lost to Texas 21-13 two years ago.

**8. TEXAS AT WYOMING (2:30 p.m. on Versus):** New Cowboys coach and former Mizzou assistant Dave Christensen has his hands full.

**9. RICE AT TEXAS TECH (6 p.m., no TV):** Bad start for Rice last weekend, falling by 20 to Alabama-Birmingham.

**10. IDAHO STATE AT OKLAHOMA (6 p.m., no TV):** Sooners take it out on poor Idaho State, a 50-3 loser to Arizona State last weekend.

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## Colorado's McKnight is earning 'Tough Guy' cred

By Justin Williams  
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BOULDER — At least one good thing came from the bone-rattling hit laid on Scotty McKnight last weekend: The Colorado wide receiver hardly remembers a thing from one of the program's most embarrassing losses in recent history.

McKnight, by far the Buffs' most experienced receiver, went down in the third quarter of Sunday's 23-17 loss to Colorado State when safety Elijah-Blu Smith hit him going over the middle after a catch. The play was recently reviewed by the Big 12 and deemed an illegal, helmet-to-helmet hit. It resulted in the worst concussion McKnight has ever had, he said, yet he returned to the game.

"Scotty's the man. The guy's made of iron," Colorado offensive lineman Ryan Miller said. "He can take a hit, definitely."

McKnight said he planned to return to practice Thursday, preparing to play in today's game against Toledo (7 p.m., ESPN).

"I've made a lot of progress in the last day, so that's been huge," McKnight said Wednesday. "Just getting a lot of sleep, not using the brain too much, not watching TV, turning off the computer and the phone — just sleeping and relaxing in the dark."

McKnight said he remembers nothing of the play and very little from the game. But he said he doesn't regret the decision to go back in with his team trailing and in desperate need of its most reliable and proven receiver.

"The doctors checked me out, and I'm a competitor," McKnight said. "I felt like I could go in there and help the team."

"I think it was a good decision. Nothing bad came out of it."

McKnight also said he feels no ill will toward Smith.

"As a football player, I think it was a good football play, and that's what he's taught to do," McKnight said. "It's part of the game, and I understand that. It's a violent sport, and you have to be a tough person to play this game."

And don't worry about McKnight having a fear of going over the middle again. The toughness the junior displayed Sunday is well entrenched.

He said it goes back to his Pop Warner days in California, when his dad was his coach. He remembers getting his bell rung pretty good one time and the



Colorado's Scotty McKnight, left, runs with the ball during the game against Colorado State on Sunday at Folsom Field in Boulder. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

### A glance at some personal tidbits of Colorado junior wide receiver Scotty McKnight:

**Vitals:** From Coto de Caza, Calif. Stands at 5-foot-11 and weighs 185 pounds.

**All-time lists:** McKnight, a former walk-on, ranks 10th in career touchdowns (10), 13th in career receptions (93) and 21st in career receiving yards (1,043). He also has caught a pass in each of his 25 games (26 including postseason) and is just two games off the school record for consecutive games with a reception.

**First-round friend:** McKnight is close friends with New York Jets quarterback Mark Sanchez, a first-round pick in April. The two have known each other since the second grade, when they were ball boys for local California high school teams that included Carson Palmer and former Buffs receiver John Minardi. Sanchez was on the sidelines for Sunday's CU-CSU game in Boulder.

advice — make that the command — his father gave him.

“He was like, ‘All right, we’re going to get you back in there. You can’t be running scared,’” McKnight said. “So that’s going to be the biggest part: just forgetting about it and moving on.”

The Buffs will certainly need McKnight to be 100 percent. The former walk-on is quietly inching his way up the Colorado record books — his career 93 receptions, 1,043 yards and 10 touchdowns all rank in the top 20, and he’s caught a pass in 25 straight games, two off the school record.

But the options are thin beneath him, at least for now. Every other receiver used Sunday saw his first action at WR in a Buffs uniform.

“It’s not just his ability to catch the ball. It has a lot to do with his leadership and his confidence out there, just because he’s a guy that can get everybody else lined up, and he’s a guy who it’s always nice to have a safety valve out there,” CU quarterback Cody Hawkins said. “So not having Scotty in the game was a definite blow for us, but we’re looking forward to getting him healed up.”

McKnight said a win would go a long way in helping ease the pain — both physical and mental. A loss to the Rockets (0-1) would — well, that’s not even an option.

“People that know me know that I’m a very, very competitive person, and losing football games kills me. I’ve put a lot into this, and so has everyone else,” McKnight said. “Losing football games is unacceptable, especially at a place with so much tradition as the University of Colorado.

“We need to bounce back and get it done now.”

Times-Call staff writer Patrick Ridgell contributed to this report.

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**Family connection:** McKnight’s father, Scott McKnight, was a college teammate of CU head coach Dan Hawkins at UC-Davis.

*Justin Williams and CU sports information*



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## UT Athletics



Article published September 10, 2009

### Colorado coach's son struggled in opener

By ZACH SILKA

BLADE SPORTS WRITER

It's never an easy ride as a college quarterback, and it's gotten especially bumpy for Colorado's Cody Hawkins.

Hawkins, the son of Colorado coach Dan Hawkins, did not play up to expectations in a 23-17 loss to arch-rival Colorado State on Sunday after he was picked in front of sophomore Tyler Hansen for the starting job.

After he threw for 46 yards and one interception in the first half, Hawkins and the rest of the Buffaloes were booed by their home crowd as they left the field down 20-3 at halftime. The junior QB, who played the entire contest, finished 24-of-40 passing for 222 yards with one touchdown to mount a second-half comeback that ultimately fell short.

The road doesn't get any easier for Hawkins and his embattled father, who in his fifth season has compiled a 13-25 record at Colorado, as the Buffs face a quick turnaround and a long jaunt for a national TV matchup with the University of Toledo at the Glass Bowl tomorrow night at 9 on ESPN.

"We'll be OK," Dan Hawkins said Monday on the Big 12 teleconference. "Everything is always a learning experience. A play here or there always determines a game. Those are the things we're going to have to clean up. You get a few of those and you get a little momentum going and things happen the other way."

Asked if he plans to make a change at quarterback for the UT game, Dan Hawkins curtly replied, "No."

Although his son, Tyler, is a freshman quarterback at the University of Findlay, UT coach Tim Beckman said he can relate somewhat to what the Hawkinses are going through.

When Beckman's father, Dave, was an assistant at Iowa during the 1978 season, Bob Commings was the head coach and his son, Bobby Jr., was the Hawkeyes' starting quarterback.

Iowa ended up finishing 2-9, and Commings was fired at the end of the year.

"I can remember living through that as a kid," Tim Beckman said, "and the same scenario was happening there at the time. I think coach Hawkins is playing whoever he feels is the best player that can help them win. Just as I would do the same [whether] it's my son or it's not my son."

UT senior safety Lester Richmond said he sees plenty of positives from Cody Hawkins, despite what Colorado fans may think about him.

"He looks like a pretty accurate passer," Richmond said. "He looks solid, and I can see why he's starting. From what I hear, he's



Colorado coach Dan Hawkins talks with quarterback Cody Hawkins, his son, during their game against Colorado State.  
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an intelligent football player as well."

Richmond said the Rockets are preparing for Hansen too, just in case Hawkins decides to pull the trigger and bring in his backup at some point during tomorrow night's contest.

And the good news for the Buffs is the only booing they'll hear will be from UT fans, which is always better than taking abuse from your home crowd.

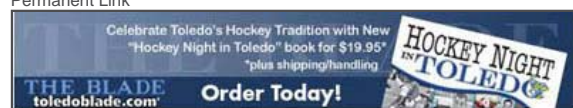
"Of course nobody, especially at home, wants to get booed by their own fans," Richmond said. "Our fans ultimately love us. They wouldn't boo us just because we [stink]. They'd boo us because they want to see better out of us. Our fans are our 12th man, and you have to understand why they do some of the things they do."

**FREE T-SHIRTS:** UT is offering a free Rockets T-shirt to fans who trade in Ohio State apparel from 6-7 p.m. Monday outside the Student Union during the Rocket Coaches Show.

Toledo director of licensing Matt Lockwood says the goal of the trade-in program is to get fans to show support for the Rockets and to get some Ohio State gear off campus. UT takes on OSU Sept. 19 at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

Contact Zach Silka at:  
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