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Former CU fullback making his move in UFC

Schaub a budding (TV) star

By Mike Chambers
The Denver Post

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Brendan Schaub, top, and Shane Carwin practice at Grudge Training Center. Schaub is on the "The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights" TV show. (Andy Cross, The Denver Post)

WHEAT RIDGE — Brendan Schaub likens his burgeoning Ultimate Fighting Championship career to making the lead block on a fourth-

and-goal from the 1.

He's going to crush somebody, just as he's been trained.

The former University of Colorado fullback is three years removed from Folsom Field but is scoring points on his own in the octagon. One of the top young heavyweights in the world of mixed martial arts, the 6-foot-4, 244-pound Schaub has an unofficial professional record of 5-0 overall and 4-0 in UFC matches, all by first-round technical knockouts.

"I loved playing football, but I always knew I wanted to be a fighter," said Schaub, who trains 6 to 8 hours a day, six days a week. "I have my work ethic from football and my dad, who is a black belt in karate and taekwondo, and that's carried me as far as I've gone so far."

Schaub is one of 16 heavyweights competing on a reality TV show, "The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights," which aired for the first time Wednesday night on Spike TV.

"The guy is a freak athlete. His strength is unreal," said Trevor Wittman, Schaub's trainer and owner of Wheat Ridge's Grudge Training Center.

The 10-week Spike TV series was filmed from May 27 to July 9 at a house in Las Vegas. The group trained and fought together. No television or telephones, and no trips outside the house. Sixteen big tough guys just wondering who was going to walk away with a UFC contract, cash

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prize and a national name.

So how did Schaub fare?

"I can't tell you," he said with a smile. "All I can tell you is I represented Colorado well."

Football training paid off — with light feet

Schaub attributes his cage-fighting success to mental toughness learned from playing football, dating to his days at Overland High School in Aurora. He grew up learning karate and taekwondo from his father, and later took up boxing. He captured the 2008 Colorado Golden Gloves heavyweight boxing title though he had little formal training.

"I grew up on martial arts, and at CU I'd do boxing and some jujitsu just to stay in shape," Schaub said. "Ever since my brother and I saw that movie 'Bloodsport' with Jean-Claude Van Damme, it was a matter of time before I got into it."

After CU, Schaub played for the Utah Blaze of the Arena Football League and spent some time on the Buffalo Bills' practice squad before returning to Colorado. He won the state Golden Gloves title, then started to focus on mixed martial arts.

He walked into Aurora's High Altitude Martial Arts, and caught the attention of owner Nate Marquardt, a UFC fighter, and other pros. Among them was 265-pound heavyweight Shane Carwin of Greeley, who is now Schaub's primary training

partner.

Carwin (11-0) will fight Brock Lesnar on Nov. 21 in UFC 106 for the heavyweight championship at Las Vegas' Mandalay Bay.

"He could be better than me," Carwin, 34, said of Schaub. "He's young. He's hungry. He's super athletic and loves to learn. He's the future of the heavyweight division."

Among the primary MMA/UFC disciplines — jujitsu, judo, karate, boxing, kickboxing and wrestling — the latter is what Schaub lacks in experience. But he's working on it.

"He's really mobile for a heavyweight, (with) great speed and agility, and that's rare because big guys are flat-footed," said Justin Wren, a contestant on the reality show and a Texas native who moved to Colorado to train with Schaub. "Brendan's always on the balls of his feet, and you can tell that comes from football."

Said Schaub: "I'm kind of known for my footwork and elusiveness. A lot of heavyweights are big, heavy guys, and I pride myself on technique. I definitely got that from all the footwork drills from football."

Hard worker, and also coy and tight-lipped

Schaub said former CU coach Gary Barnett helped shape his "combat" competitiveness.

"I'm a Barnett guy," he said. "Playing football at CU, Barnett instilled toughness in us. That's one

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of the biggest things in fighting is your mental game, and it's huge in MMA."

Schaub was a walk-on at CU after transferring from Whittier (Calif.) College, where he landed after a lacerated liver cost him his senior season at Overland High School. Trailblazers coach Tony Manfredi remembers Schaub as "a tall and gangly freshman" who worked harder than anybody else. By his senior year at CU, he had been put on scholarship.

"He's just one of those guys that says, 'Let's just see how good I can be,' " Manfredi said. "You wish every kid had that kind of work ethic and aspirations. I'm not surprised by what he's doing because I know his work ethic."

Schaub said his next professional UFC fight is booked but won't be announced until after the last episode of "The Ultimate Fighter."

He hinted that it could be "a big one," given that he has "never lost a fight."

"Including the reality series?" he was asked.

Schaub just smiled, looking like a champion.

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Cleared of wrongdoing

League says call against Harris bad

By [Tom Silverstein](#) of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: Sept. 17, 2009

Green Bay — Packers cornerback **Al Harris**' illegal contact penalty should not have been a penalty at all, according to the NFL.

Mike Pereira, vice president of officiating, exonerated Harris for a penalty that kept alive Chicago's go-ahead drive late in the fourth quarter, saying that Harris was within the 5-yard bump zone when he made contact with receiver **Devin Hester** at the Chicago 45.

"We don't want this for illegal contact, period, because it's at 5 yards," Pereira said in the NFL's weekly official review. "That contact, which is pretty easy to recognize in terms of the ball being snapped at the 40, he can make that contact at 5 yards and that's still legal.

"Sometimes it's tough for that official to make that call 20 yards downfield, but that's too technical to call."

Defensive coordinator **Dom Capers** said he felt the same way as Pereira when he saw the play on video the day after the game.

"I thought it was at such a critical time in the game," Capers said. "It didn't affect the play and it enabled them to continue the drive at a critical point in the game. We know where the zone is where we're able to contact them. We'll disguise and try to move to it late. I was surprised when I saw the flag come out."

Harris came back and sealed the 21-15 victory for the Packers when he stepped in front of receiver **Johnny Knox** and intercepted quarterback **Jay Cutler** with under a minute left. It was a play that has been overshadowed to some degree by the 50-yard touchdown pass quarterback **Aaron Rodgers** threw to receiver **Greg Jennings** to give the Packers the lead for good.

"Al's had a lot great years here, and I feel like people have overlooked him, or were just hesitant to believe in him," said linebacker **Nick Barnett**, who earlier in the week posted a message on his Twitter account wondering why Harris wasn't getting his due for his interception. "I think people respect him, but they still overlook the stuff that he does."

Barnett said it would have been nice if people would have recognized that the defense did something as

rare as Rodgers did, which is finally stop someone at the end of the game after being unable to do it last year. But he said it will be a process for the defense to get the respect it wants.

"We weren't perfect in that game," Barnett said. "But we played a hell of a game. I just want people to respect us as a team. I want them to look at us as a team, defense and offense. For so many years, it was a **Brett Favre** situation. We could hold them to zero and Brett would score 7 and it would be, 'Awesome game.'

"I want everybody to feel like *we* won the game."

It takes guts: Kicker **Mason Crosby** has been taking it easy this week because of an abdominal pull he aggravated Tuesday lifting weights.

The injury has bothered him since training camp and is partially the result of doing so much kicking. Crosby had to work through an early camp slump and then a temporary change in holders and may have kicked more than normal.

At this point, he doesn't seem in danger of missing any time.

"Mason, I think he's fine," special teams coach **Shawn Slocum** said. "This is precautionary. He went through the training camp and the beginning of the season and he's kicked a lot of balls, so it's not surprising for him to get a little fatigued. We're being very careful with (him) so he's ready to go."

Crosby did not kick Wednesday or Thursday.

The dropsies: The Packers had five drops against the Bears, two each by receivers **Donald Driver** and **Jordy Nelson**.

Driver at least made good on four other throws to him, but Nelson dropped the only two passes thrown his way. It was a fairly surprising development given he did not have a dropped pass all of last season and had a very solid training camp.

"It's out of the ordinary for our guys in general, but it happened," receivers coach **Jimmy Robinson** said.

One of the passes Nelson didn't come up with had a high degree of a difficulty. He was running a go-route between two defenders and had to stretch out both arms to snare Rodgers' tight throw. Nelson got both hands on it, but it slipped through his fingers.

"Jordy told me he kind of lost the ball early in the lights and when it came out of the lights he didn't get a great bead on it," Robinson said. "It was a good throw. It was extending him out and stretching him out, but Jordy knows in this league you have to make that play. That's a big play in the game that could have changed the whole nature of the game."

Many happy returns: Nelson did contribute on special teams with a very solid day returning kickoffs, averaging 31 yards on four attempts, including a 46-yarder to open the game.

However, he probably won't be back there this week because starter **Will Blackmon** is expected back from a thigh bruise that kept him out of the opener. Blackmon also will take over the punt returning duties from Nelson.

"Well, he's shown that he can take the ball to the end zone," Slocum said in sticking with Blackmon. "We did it against Houston last year and it was called back. But he's demonstrated that and he's obviously done it on the punt returns."

Slocum said Nelson proved he could be an effective returner and would be available anytime he needs him.

Injury report: Guard **Daryn Colledge** (foot) was the only addition to the injury report for the Packers. Running back **Brandon Jackson** (ankle) and safety **Atari Bigby** (knee) both missed practice and won't play this week.

For the Bengals, cornerback **David Jones** (foot), guard **Nate Livings** (knee), quarterback **Jordan Palmer** (illness) and tackle **Andre Smith** did not practice. Running back **Brian Leonard** (chest) was a limited participant.

Greg A. Bedard of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.

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