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Hawkins, Struggling Buffs Can't Escape Criticism

ARNIE STAPLETON - AP Sports Writer

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — The Colorado Buffaloes, who started the season with losses to underdogs Colorado State and Toledo, can't escape the scrutiny even in the classroom as they prepare for Wyoming's visit on Saturday.

Senior linebacker and captain Marcus Burton said he was put between a rock and a hard place this week when his geology professor called him out in class for the team's poor play.

"He was saying (geology) is not as interesting to some people, kind of like how we've been playing is what he said pretty much," Burton recounted.

"People are going to say what they want to say. Everyone has an opinion. All I can do is go to school, play football," Burton said. "He made a statement and was like, 'Marcus, you're a captain, what's going on?'"

Burton said he didn't respond to the professor's jab. He said some students broke out in laughter, others sympathized with him.

He's run into this sort of censure on campus before, just not in the classroom.

"When Coach (Gary) Barnett was getting fired, there was a lot of stuff about the sex scandal and that stuff. Then, when we were 2-10 (in 2006), there was more stuff being said, so I've been around the block," Burton said. "There's not much you can do."

Burton said a couple of his teammates in the same class wondered why he didn't respond to his professor. "But you have to blow that off," Burton said. "If you do, you give him what he wants."

The head of the department is looking into the professor's remarks.

The Buffs find the questions and criticism everywhere they go.

Fans, alumni, boosters, and yes, even professors, wonder what's wrong with them.

Dan Hawkins, who is 13-26 as Colorado's coach, raised expectations sky-high this offseason by declaring, "Ten wins, no excuses."

They were favored to beat the Rams at home and Toledo on the road but instead dropped both games to the non-BCS schools, including a 54-38 loss to the Rockets.

Wyoming (1-1) visits Folsom Field on Saturday coming off a 41-10 loss to second-ranked Texas in a game in which they led the Longhorns 10-6 in the closing minutes of the first half before succumbing to Colt McCoy & Co.

If the Cowboys beat the Buffs, Colorado will be 0-3 heading into the meat of its schedule, which includes a visit to Austin, Texas, in three weeks.

Exacerbating the Buffaloes' stumbling start is the nature in which they've lost. Although they were favored in both games, they fell behind early and couldn't recover. Against Colorado State, they trailed 20-3 at the half. They were down 30-3 at the break against Toledo.

Athletic director Mike Bohn is standing staunchly behind his coach, saying Hawkins isn't on the hot seat. Last year, Hawkins received a two-year contract extension through 2012, meaning it would cost more than \$3 million to replace him.

Despite a dearth of talent and upperclassmen, Hawkins insists he has enough talent on his roster to succeed this season.

"Are we good enough? Yeah, we are," he said. "We're good enough. But that also gets both fueled and tainted by confidence and momentum. ... We just need to keep going, get a little bit better, get a win, get a little wind underneath our wings."

Hawkins said his quarterback son, Cody, is recovering nicely from a blow to the head last week and is expected to start against the Cowboys.

That isn't sitting well with the critics who are calling for Tyler Hansen to replace him under center. Cody Hawkins has thrown four interceptions so far.

But the biggest problems are on defense, where Colorado has allowed 16 plays over 20 yards and nine plays over 35 yards so far. Toledo had three plays of 60 or more yards against the Buffaloes.

Colorado coaches simplified their defensive sets this weeks in a move they hope will jump-start their season — and curb the criticism.

"Well, their head coach is from Missouri and you know what Missouri has done to us a couple of times, so we're expecting those guys to come out gunning," Burton said. "I think we're going to do a better job of just flying around. The defense is a lot simpler, guys don't have to do as much thinking, guys can just play."

On offense, the Buffs expect to get a boost from the long-awaited debut of wide receiver Markques Simas, who redshirted in 2007 and was ruled academically ineligible last season. He sat out the first two games this season while serving a suspension for violating team rules and also has been dealing with a sprained knee.

If he can go, he could be just the spark the Buffs need to break out of their offensive doldrums.

The Buffs also shuffled their offensive line this week, moving Ryan Miller from right guard to right tackle to replace Bryce Givens, who missed practice time for personal reasons. Blake Behrens or Matt Bahr will play right guard.

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Head coach Dan Hawkins of the Colorado Buffaloes directs his team against the Kansas Jayhawks at Folsom Field October 20, 2007, in Boulder, Colo.

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Wideout Simas ready to make impact in debut

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/19/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT



Markques Simas is known for making circus catches in practice; today he will get a chance to display his skills against Wyoming. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — After languishing on an unintentional hiatus since joining the Colorado football program in 2007, Markques Simas is eager to grab the attention of Buffaloes fans — and Wyoming defensive backs — today when he finally makes his college debut.

"I've got these big mitts," the third-year sophomore wide receiver said this week of his hands. "I've always been able to catch the ball."

Several Colorado players on both sides of the ball have said with a straight face that Simas can

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THE DENVER POST

catch the ball better one-handed than most receivers using two hands. Trouble was, Simas made all those circus catches in practice.

Senior tight end Patrick Devenny said Simas' circus grabs in practice have become

Colorado Football

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legendary.

"You see him make a one-handed catch and you walk away in shock," Devenny said. "He will make explosion plays. That's going to be huge for us."

Sturdy and strong at 6-feet-2 and 215 pounds, Simas was ranked as a four-star recruit when he signed with the Buffs out of Mira Mesa (Calif.) High School. Simas picked the Buffs over several Pac-10 programs and much was expected. But he redshirted in 2007 and then was declared academically ineligible before the 2008 season.

A two-game suspension for breaking an undisclosed team rule during the winter kept Simas off the field against Colorado State and Toledo. Having suffered a slight MCL strain to his right knee during August drills, Simas probably would not have been available for those games anyway. He says he will definitely play today.

After being a two-year disappointment, Simas knows he has much to prove — to fans, coaches, teammates. And to himself.

"I don't want to hear, 'He could have been this, he could have been that,' " Simas said. "I want to be that guy. I want to be one of the best receivers at Colorado."

CU junior cornerback Jalil Brown said he feels sorry for opponents who must try to cover Simas. Although not a sprinter, Simas loves to show off dunks when playing pickup basketball and is regarded as one of the best athletes on the roster. He knows how to use his body to shield off defenders.

"His routes are very crisp, and he has unbelievable hand-eye coordination with those big hands," Brown said. "If the ball is in his vicinity, he'll go make the catch."

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Bzdelik empathizes with coach Hawkins

Colorado men's basketball boss in midst of own rebuilding project

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/19/2009 12:24:18 AM MDT

Jeff Bzdelik has plenty to focus on down at the Coors Events Center.

Entering his third season at Colorado, the veteran head coach understands that expectations for the 2009-10 Buffs will be much higher this winter.

There will not be a "20 wins and no excuses" speech, but Bzdelik is confident that his young roster will be able to provide fans with tangible evidence that the program is on track.

If anyone on campus can relate to the struggles Dan Hawkins is going through right now after a dreadful 0-2 start to his fourth season as CU's football coach, it's Bzdelik.

"Coaching is a very tough business. The most important thing is to keep believing in yourself, believing in your players, believing in your fans, believing in the administration, and to stay the course," Bzdelik told the Camera after working out some of his players on Friday morning. "That's what is important. I can tell you one thing: Our basketball staff and team will be there wire to wire cheering for the Buffs (today)."

CU hosts Wyoming today at Folsom Field. Hawkins desperately needs his first victory of the season and to start improving the abysmal 13-26 record he has compiled since taking over the program in Boulder.

Last year, in the midst of a disappointing 5-7 campaign, athletic director Mike Bohn gave Hawkins a contract extension through the 2012 season.

Does the men's basketball coach expect similar support in his third season at CU?

Refreshingly, not if the Buffs — who were 21-42 during the first two seasons of Bzdelik's rebuilding project — don't start demonstrating progress on the scoreboard.

"I only want an extension if I deserve it," Bzdelik said. "When I say deserve it ... we're doing everything right as a basketball program with our APR, GPA, the citizenship, the work ethic. All that is exactly where it needs to be. The final piece is to win and to get to postseason play. If I don't do that, I don't deserve (an extension)."

Bzdelik's original contract would allow him to leave the Buffs for another coaching position without a buyout penalty if CU does not break ground on a basketball/volleyball practice facility by the end of his third year. Bohn and senior associate athletic director Tom McGrath have been working hard on the planning and fundraising while insisting that the much-needed facility upgrade will be delivered.

"I don't spend time or energy worrying," Bzdelik said when asked if he was concerned that the financial impact another losing football season would have on the athletic department might delay plans for the basketball practice facility.

After each of his two seasons at CU, Bzdelik's name has surfaced in connection with vacant jobs, including the Chicago Bulls head coaching search in 2008 and as a possible assistant with the Minnesota Timberwolves this summer. The former Denver Nuggets head coach and longtime Pat Riley assistant could certainly leave the college game and return to his NBA roots as a top assistant if he so desired.

But after suffering through a pair of painful 20-loss seasons, Bzdelik says he's determined to start enjoying the fruits of his labor.

"I've always been committed," Bzdelik said. "We've worked extremely hard over the last two years to put the pieces in

place in terms of facilities, creating the culture that we need, and putting these young players together as a team. And I really believe this is going to be a fun group for our fans to watch.”

The Buffs open the season against Arkansas-Pine Bluff on Nov. 13. The team will compete in the EA Sports Maui Invitational for the first time, opening the prestigious non-conference tournament against Gonzaga on Nov. 23.

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Bufs aim to reverse fortunes

With two-game losing streak in hand, CU hosts Wyoming

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/19/2009 12:35:11 AM MDT

There might come a day when Colorado football fans look back on the beginning of the 2009 season and are thankful coach Dan Hawkins remained steadfast, calm and professional in the face of tremendous pressure closing in on him.

There might also come a day when he has 50,000 volunteers offering rides to the airport because of the results his team is producing on the field. In fact, today could be that day if the Buffaloes lose to Wyoming at Folsom Field (1:40 p.m. Fox College Sports) and start the season 0-3.

The cacophony erupting around the program over the past two weeks and two devastating losses has caught some on the inside by surprise. Athletic director Mike Bohn was quoted this week saying the program is "under attack" after starting the season looking shabby in losses to Colorado State and Toledo.

The cliché responses from fans have already been set in motion. Websites and Facebook pages urging the school to fire Hawkins have been created just as they have been numerous times for coaches in crisis at other schools. Discussions have started about possible replacements and threats to boycott the program until improvement arrives have been promised.

The decibel level of this particular uproar might be something new for Hawkins, but the 48-year-old coach says he's been through this all before. During his first year as head coach at Boise State in 2001, the Broncos started the season with losses to South Carolina and Washington State. They won two games before an ugly 45-15 loss at Rice. They were 2-3 following a 10-win season the year before under former coach Dirk Koetter. "I think at one point we were, gosh, .500 or thereabouts, and they wanted to burn the wagons and run you out of town," Hawkins said. "That was the year that Fresno had beaten Colorado here and we beat Fresno when they were ranked, and all of a sudden it was, 'Oh, OK. We got it.'

"You understand that's part of it. The highs and the lows are part of it. That's why as a coach you've just got to try to hang in the middle there and level it all out."

Hawkins and his staff have taken some steps this week to take pressure off a young defense that has been torched to the tune of 1,000 total yards from scrimmage and 77 points in its first two outings. Coaches have simplified the game plan, hoping to free players to play with more confidence and less on their minds.

There are also hopes an influx of talent on offense in the form of sophomore running back Rodney Stewart returning from a hamstring injury and sophomore wide receiver Markques Simas returning from a two-game suspension can make the attack more explosive. The Buffs have scored just three points in the first half of both of their games.

Another point of interest will be watching how well junior quarterback Cody Hawkins rebounds from a concussion suffered eight days ago at the end of the Toledo game when he dived for a touchdown and was hit helmet-to-helmet by a defender. Hawkins has practiced this week and is scheduled to start.

A CU loss today could lead to an even more disastrous start. The next two games are on the road against powerhouse programs in difficult venues at West Virginia and Texas. The Buffs could be staring at 0-5, and even with a win would be hard pressed to do better than 1-4 before hosting Kansas in mid-October.

"I think you do the things you believe in," Hawkins said. "I think you do the things that close to 30 years of experience have taught you, and you keep hammering away at that."

The Buffs will wear throwback uniforms. Gold jerseys, silver pants and silver helmets meant to honor the 1930s era in the program when players such as Byron "Whizzer" White and Kayo Lam led the nation in rushing.

Plugging holes in the foundering levy that is the CU defense is crucial so the offense can doesn't have to play from behind

and can finally stick to its running game and wear down its opponent in the second half.

But Ron Collins' defense hasn't shown the ability to stop much to this point, and in previous matchups with first-year Wyoming coach Dave Christensen, it has been downright ugly for CU defenders.

Christensen spent the past eight years at Missouri, where he went 4-4 against Colorado, but 3-0 against the Buffs coached by Hawkins. The past two outings against Missouri have ended in Tigers' victories by the combined score of 113-10. Christensen has brought the same scheme that produced those results with him to Laramie. He doesn't yet have players as talented as former Missouri stalwarts Chase Daniel, Jeremy Maclin and Chase Coffman, but the Cowboys play hard and have shown signs of improvement already in the young season.

The Buffs can count on seeing two quarterbacks today in junior college transfer Robert Benjamin and true freshman Austyn Carta-Samuels. Both are capable runners as well as passers. Those dual-threat skills have given the Buffs trouble in the past.

Wyoming also gets a wide receiver back from suspension this week to help an offense that has struggled to find the end zone. Senior Greg Bolling, one of 27 Colorado players on the roster, is hoping to beat the biggest school in his home state. Doing so would make the squeeze on Dan Hawkins even tighter.

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Woelk: Aim for Buffs today should be improvement

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/19/2009 12:36:14 AM MDT

Mark me down as belonging to the group -- OK, make it the handful-- of folks who believe the Colorado Buffaloes will play well today.

For starters, the odds have to be in my favor. After two weeks of putting forth a sub-par effort for the better part of two games, it stands to reason that Dan Hawkins' team would display at least a modicum of improvement. Certainly, it will not take much for the Buffs to put forth a better effort than their first-half performances against Toledo and Colorado State.

But I'm also still among the folks who believe CU's talent level is much better than the performances we've seen thus far. While their efforts have been a disappointment (a kind description), you have to think that sooner or later they will at least play up to their level of talent.

Sooner would be preferable. Sooner as in today, starting at about 1:30 p.m., when they kick it off against visiting Wyoming.

But there are other reasons to think the Buffs might at least show signs of righting the ship today against the Cowboys.

Maybe tops on the list is that they've been embarrassed. CU players have spent two weeks hearing about their woeful performances from classmates, the media, fans and even professors. Everywhere they turn, they hear just how bad they are.

The guess here is that maybe -- just maybe -- their pride has been injured to the point that they'll come out with a chip on their shoulders today.

That wouldn't be a bad thing. Two weeks in a row, CU has started slowly. While Hawkins has said he believes his team's emotions have been at the correct level for both games, the view from the outside is that a little fire and brimstone wouldn't hurt. Putting a little pent-up anger and frustration to a good use might just prevent the Buffs from spotting their opponent a big lead.

You also have to think that CU's younger players will have finally started to settle into their roles. An offensive line that has one junior and four sophomores should be improving. Ditto with a defensive line that has two sophomores and a freshman. Those have been trouble spots the last couple of weeks; they should be starting to mesh in Week 3.

When the season began, this was a game most folks had marked down as a "W" (that's win, not Wyoming). A program that had struggled for the last couple of years has a new head coach and was expected to struggle again.

Not the case anymore. What's become clear is that there are no more givens with this team. Nothing can be taken for granted.

What the Buffs need to aim for today is simply playing well rather than worrying about a win or a loss. Limit mistakes and make progress in all the areas that have struggled. They need to set their sights on being effective.

If they do those things, the winning part of the equation will take care of itself.

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Bufs-Cowboys matchups

Camera staff
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/19/2009 12:38:01 AM MDT

CU RUN OFFENSE VS. UW RUN DEFENSE -- The Buffs haven't played a game yet in which they were able to stick with the running game the way they would like from start to finish. If the defense can calm down, this could develop into a real strength. Tailback Darrell Scott will be a handful for any defense that has to tackle him 15-25 times a game and Rodney Stewart and Brian Lockridge are a nice change of pace that will fluster opponents. The Buffs were forced to make adjustments to the offensive line this week while right tackle Bryce Givens deals with personal problems. How the unit reacts could go a long way in deciding this game. Wyoming is giving up 140 yards a game and five yards per carry. **Edge: CU.**

CU PASS OFFENSE VS. UW PASS DEFENSE -- The changes in the offensive line are bound to lead to a few protection problems, which could put Cody Hawkins in jeopardy of another hard hit this week. Hawkins and his receivers found a rhythm last week once they down and were forced to throw. They need to find that same confidence earlier from now on. The Buffs hope this is finally the week talented wide receiver Markques Simas gets on the field. Simas has great hands and knows the offense and should be a big boost for the Buffs. The Cowboys are allowing 335 yards a game and allowing a 63 percent completion rate, but they have managed to make some interceptions. **Edge: CU.**

UW RUN OFFENSE VS. CU RUN DEFENSE -- The Cowboys ran for nearly 250 yards against Weber State but only 85 against Texas. It's tough to tell how good they might be in this area, given the vast disparity in level of competition they have faced. We do know this, both quarterbacks are capable runners and tailbacks Darius Terry and Alvester Alexander can take it the distance if they find daylight. It's also clear the CU defense is closer to Weber State than Texas at this point. It will be interesting to see how a simplified approach helps the Buffs this week. CU has given up too many big plays and too many points to earn any edge on defense. **Edge: UW.**

UW PASS OFFENSE VS. CU PASS DEFENSE -- There is no way to sugarcoat it. The Buffs have been a disaster against the pass this season, making the two quarterbacks they've faced look much better than they are. CU has allowed nine passing plays of 20 yards or more. CU has sacked the quarterback just three times and none of them have been by a defensive lineman. The quick release aspect of the Wyoming passing game won't help that. The Cowboys are using two quarterbacks this year, though Robert Benjamin, a junior college transfer, is getting the bulk of the work. Benjamin gets senior wide receiver Greg Bolling back this week. Wyoming is ranked 112th in passing efficiency but we're guessing this defense will help the Cowboys improve that number. The Buffs dead last in pass efficiency defense. **Edge: UW.**

SPECIAL TEAMS -- One of the most interesting sidebars to this game is found here in the kicking game. CU place-kicker Aric Goodman began his career at Wyoming and is not popular among Cowboys fans because of a missed extra point that robbed Wyoming of a potential victory at Virginia during his freshman season. Goodman has been inconsistent at CU, too. These teams are pretty even in the punt teams. The Buffs have been doing well with both kickoff returns and defending those returns. Wyoming is allowing more than 30 yards per return, which might mean more big all-purpose yardage numbers for Darrell Scott. **Edge: CU.**

COACHING -- Dan Hawkins and Co. have been outcoached in the first two games this season and given their history against Dave Christensen during his days at Missouri, that could continue this week. Hawkins and his assistants announced a plan to simplify things this week on defense. That should help the Buffs, but it probably gives Christensen some ideas, too. For a coaching staff so on edge throughout offseason practices about what information is getting out, the CU staff sure didn't seem to mind tipping its hand this week. **Edge: UW.**

PREDICTION -- Colorado 31-28

-- Kyle Ringo

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Longmont, Colorado
 Tuesday, September 29,
 2009

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Bufs facing an old nemesis

Former Missouri coach now at the helm in Laramie

By Patrick Ridgell
 © 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Last week, the Colorado Buffaloes felt they just needed to be more sound on assignments and fix minor glitches, and things would be cool.

We know how that turned out.

Today they face a coach who has used CU's defense as his own personal piñata the past two years. Wyoming's Dave Christensen is in his first season in Laramie after spending the previous eight coordinating Missouri's offense. We also know what the Tigers did to the Buffs in 2007 and 2008, winning by a combined 113-10.

The Buffs have had plenty to worry about, not the least of which is quieting the uproar from their fans that bad losses to Colorado State and Toledo sparked. But coaches and players continue to cite poor execution as their biggest problem. Today they face an offense that has baffled them.

Resolve and defiance permeated their attitudes when discussing what's gone so wrong.

"We're just waiting for things to connect," right tackle Ryan Miller said, echoing several teammates. "Things are going to click and ... when they do, everybody's going to be like, 'What's going on?' Well, it wasn't anything big; we just execute."

If CU does not execute on defense today, things could be ugly — again. Defensive coordinator Ron Collins said the offense Christensen is using at Wyoming is "exactly" the same kind of spread he used at Missouri.

"He's an innovator with that offense," Collins said about Christensen. "Different athletes, of course. Missouri had great players. But Wyoming's got great players. To us, they're the best team in the United States.

"They're a very difficult team to prepare for."

Christensen coached quarterback Chase Daniel, receiver Jeremy Maclin and tight end Chase Coffman at Missouri. His take on his current athletes was different than Collins', and more believable.

"It's one thing to play with a guy that's been at the Heisman (ceremony), an all-American receiver, the leading all-time receiver at tight end, first-round draft picks," Christensen said.

Countdown to Kickoff

Wyoming (1-1) at Colorado (0-2)

When: 1:30 p.m. today

Where: Folsom Field in Boulder

TV/Radio: FCS-C/760-AM

The series: CU leads 23-2-1. The programs haven't met since a 20-19 CU win in Boulder in 1997.

In the spotlight:

• **CU** — WR Markques Simas: We've been wondering what Simas can do for two years. If his knee and/or behavioral problems don't bench him again, we'll finally see.

• **Wyoming** — WR Greg Bolling: Wyoming's leading receiver in 2008, Bolling served a two-game suspension to open 2009 for violating team rules. He's back, and he's one of 27 Wyoming Cowboys who are from Colorado. He's one of the few the Buffs recruited.

When CU has the ball: The Buffs scored 35 points in the second half at Toledo. Cody Hawkins threw 64 passes. RB Rodney Stewart is expected back while Darrell Scott has a bruised knee. The line is shuffling. Wyoming was physical against Texas before the Longhorns' athletes finally proved too much. Wyoming is plus-four in turnover margin, having already forced six.

Advantage: Even.

When Wyoming has the ball: Wyoming plays two quarterbacks: Robert Benjamin and freshman Austyn Carta-Samuels. Fortunately for the Buffs, neither is Chase Daniel. Given the 1,000 yards CU has allowed, including 16 plays of 20

“There’s no comparison right now between the two teams (Wyoming and Missouri).”

Last week, the Toledo Rockets looked great. Big 12 programs are not supposed to let MAC programs run wild, but the Buffs did, and they faced questions about how fast their players are.

CU coaches insist they have better athletes than they’ve shown. They believe simplifying the defense will prove it.

Linebacker Marcus Burton said the Buffs planned to hold a players-only meeting Friday at the team hotel to discuss “passion, having fun versus just worrying about an assignment or worrying about a fan or a coach or anything of that nature.” He said the Buffs must be more assertive before they can regain confidence.

Another loss today and the speculation about coach Dan Hawkins’ future will grow louder, and questions about talent will become more demanding. If there’s a solution, now’s a good time for the Buffs to implement it. Or, as Burton said, to wake up.

“These two games were kind of like a smack in the face, like, ‘Hey, wake up,’” Burton said.

Read Patrick Ridgell’s [CU sports blog](#). He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

yards or more, the Buffs will have to show something they haven’t in 2009.

Advantage: Wyoming.

Special teams: CU kicker Aric Goodman faces the team for which he played as a freshman in 2007. If Scott plays, he gives the Buffs an edge at kick returner.

Advantage: CU

Key matchup: CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins vs. Wyoming coach Dave Christensen. Is simplifying things the answer, or is it merely making it easier for Christensen?

Prediction: Based on what we’ve seen, how can we pick CU? Wyoming 35, CU 28

Patrick Ridgell



Contract extension, losses pressure CU's staff, players

Bufs sense a season of change

ERIC SCHMOLDT - Star-Tribune staff writer | Posted: Saturday, September 19, 2009 12:45 am

With a 13-24 record at Colorado coming into this season, it's safe to say some Buffaloes fans were already having some reservations.

Now, Dan Hawkins' seat is getting warmer by the week.

And while Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn has stood behind the Buffaloes fourth-year coach, boosters and fans haven't been so kind.

"We don't read the papers or pay any attention to that," Colorado linebacker Jeff Smart said. "We just have to worry about ourselves and this team and that's what we do.

"We're just trying to win each week."

Thus far, the results haven't matched that mentality.

The Buffaloes dropped their season opener at home to Colorado State, then followed that with an embarrassing 54-38 loss at Toledo on Friday.

"We obviously haven't done the things we want to do and aim to do and have worked hard to do," Colorado kicker Aric Goodman said. "This week, I know we've dedicated ourselves to that work ethic and just cinching up the small things.

"It's just the little details here and there that haven't gone the way we want it to."

It could be bigger details that help Hawkins -- now 13-26 in three-plus seasons in Boulder -- keep his job.

While the critics are multiplying -- and probably won't back off even if the Bufs top the Pokes today -- the Boulder Camera and Denver Post reported this week that firing Hawkins would cost the school in excess of \$3 million.

Then again, if Colorado drops to 0-3 today with a loss to UW, the detractors may be too loud to muffle.

"We're dedicated to what is going on here," Goodman said. "We all know we're doing the right things. ... Everything is going the right direction. Everything is happening around here the way that we want it to, we just haven't quite finished some of the details on Saturday."

If there's a team that understands what the Buffaloes are going through, it's the Cowboys.

Last season, then-coach Joe Glenn was publicly issued the challenge of taking UW back to six victories, putting the Pokes in the position of playing for their coach.

"Me, personally, I didn't [play any differently]," UW left tackle Ryan Otterson said. "I came out and played how I'm supposed to play, and it wasn't on my head.

"But I'm sure there were some guys that had that on their mind. 'What do we have to do this week [to save Glenn's job]?"

Most of the veteran Pokes said the situation didn't change the way they approached gameday.

But with such a pressure-packed situation, it was hard to keep it completely off of their minds.

"I think some of them probably played a little bit harder because they had a connection with the coaches," UW running back Darius Terry said. "I think [the Buffaloes will have it in their minds]. I think they'll come out with a little bit of a chip on their shoulder."

The Buffaloes, however, have said the coaching situation will be the furthest thing from their minds.

To some of the Pokes, that was the only way to approach it.

"It's hard to play like that," UW defensive tackle John Fletcher said. "When you go out there and you're thinking too much, you don't play as well. I think, for them, they're probably just going to keep going out and do what they've been doing.

"Things just haven't fallen their way. They're a great team, a Big 12 team, and I'm sure they'll pull it out sometime soon."

If the Buffaloes don't escape their funk today, the calls for change will certainly get louder.

Contact Laramie-based UW sports reporter Eric Schmoldt at eric.schmoldt@trib.com. Check out his blog at tribtown.trib.com/ESchmoldt/blog.

HAWKINS TRACKER

EYES ON HAWK: After going 53-11 at Boise State, Colorado hired Dan Hawkins in December of 2005. Three-plus seasons later, some boosters and fans are calling for his firing.

THE GOOD: Hawkins has the 16th best winning percentage among all active Division I coaches and last year was awarded a contract extension through 2012.

THE BAD: That contract extension could come back to bite the Buffaloes, who are now 0-2 this season and 13-26 under Hawkins.

THE UGLY: After a 54-38 loss at Toledo last Friday, online Web sites and petitions began circulating, calling for the firing of Hawkins. The Denver Post even reported one student-athlete was called out in class by a professor for the Buffaloes' slow start.

HE SAID IT: "We're just trying to win each week." -- Colorado linebacker Jeff Smart.



UW vs. Colorado: 2-Minute Drill

the Star-Tribune staff | Posted: Saturday, September 19, 2009 12:00 am

WYOMING COWBOYS

Record: 1-1 overall, 0-0 Mountain West Conference.

Head Coach: Dave Christensen (1-1 at Wyoming, first year; 1-1 overall, first year).

Offense/Defense: Spread/3-4.

Last Time Out: It looked like the upset of the year ... at least for 28 minutes.

The Pokes took a 10-6 lead on the No. 2 Texas Longhorns Saturday at War Memorial Stadium, only to give up 35 unanswered points in a 41-10 loss that saddled Christensen with his first loss as a head coach.

The UW defense kept Heisman candidate Colt McCoy at bay for nearly the entire first half, but wound up giving up more than 500 yards of total offense, including three touchdowns from more than 20 yards out.

The offense never got rolling, amassing less than 300 yards and accounting for just three points -- the Cowboys' lone touchdown came off a blocked punt.

Next: Let the real games begin.

UW returns home next weekend to host UNLV in the Mountain West Conference opener for both teams.

The Rebels topped the Cowboys 22-14 last year in Sin City in a game that ensured the Pokes of a losing record. UW trails the all-time series 9-8.

Statistical Leaders

Passing: Robert Benjamin, 46.2 completion pct, 103.5 ypg, 0TDs, 0 INTs.

Rushing: Darius Terry, 58.5 ypg, 3.9 ypc, 2 TDs.

Receiving: David Leonard, 64 ypg, 9.8 ypc, 0 TDs.

Tackles: Chris Prosinski, 22 total, 11 solo, 1 TFL.

Sacks: John Fletcher, 2 sacks, minus-43 yards.

Interceptions: Shamiel Gary, 3 INTs, 4 return yards, 2 breakups.

COLORADO BUFFALOES

Record: 0-2 overall, 0-0 Big 12 Conference.

Head Coach: Dan Hawkins (13-26 at Colorado, fourth season; 66-37 overall, ninth season).

Offense/Defense: Multiple/4-3.

Last Time Out: Colorado only needs 10 consecutive victories to follow through on Hawkins' prediction of 10 victories.

The Buffaloes followed a loss to rival Colorado State on opening day with a romp of a road loss at Toledo. The Rockets jumped on top 30-3 and went on to win 54-38.

Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins threw for more than 350 yards and four touchdowns, but was intercepted three times and suffered an injury late in the game.

The Buffaloes defense surrendered more than 600 yards of offense and is now giving up exactly 500 yards per game.

Next: Colorado closes out non-conference play next week with a trip to West Virginia.

Kicker Aric Goodman, a Wyoming transfer, booted an field goal in overtime last season to give the Buffaloes the 17-14 victory over the No. 22 Mountaineers.

It was the first meeting between the two teams.

Statistical Leaders

Passing: Cody Hawkins, 51.9 completion percentage, 298 ypg, 5 TDs, 4 INTs.

Rushing: Darrell Scott, 43 ypg, 6.6 ypc, 0 TDs.

Receiving: Scotty McKnight, 75.0 ypg, 10.0 ypc, 2 TDs.

Tackles: Jeff Smart, 22 total, 15 solo, 1 TFL.

Sacks: Smart, Cha'pelle Brown and Marcus Burton, 1 each.

Interceptions: Smart and Benjamin Burney, 1 each.



UW vs. Colorado: Keys to the Game

ERIC SCHMOLDT - Star-Tribune staff writer | **Posted: Saturday, September 19, 2009 12:00 am**

WYOMING

OFFENSE

BALANCING ACT: The Pokes attempted 50 passes against Texas for the first time since a double-overtime loss to Syracuse in 2006.

It didn't translate to more success on offense.

UW, which had two running backs with at least 80 yards in its season opener, will try to get back to a more balanced attack today.

TURNING THE CORNER: Freshman running back Alvester Alexander fumbled the ball early in the third quarter against the Longhorns, but it was just the second turnover by the Pokes this year and is the only one by an offensive player.

The Cowboys need to continue to show that they've proved themselves of the turnover bug.

BOLL BOUND: Senior wide receiver Greg Bolling returns today from a two-game suspension for violating team rules.

His speed and ability to make highlight-reel grabs should make him an instant threat as soon as he takes the field.

DEFENSE

SACK LUNCH: The Pokes could have sacked Colt McCoy half a dozen times, but wound up with just one.

Colorado's offensive line has allowed seven sacks in two games and could be in for a long day if hungry linemen Mitch Unrein and John Fletcher have their way.

GO WEST: Senior linebacker Weston Johnson has been everywhere in the Pokes' first two games.

He has 16 tackles, 2.5 tackles for loss, two interceptions and a pass breakup.

The Colorado native needs to have another big day against a slow-starting offense.

LESS IS MORE: Junior safety Chris Prosinski totaled a career-high 17 tackles against the Longhorns, but it was mostly because Texas found its way into the UW secondary with a handful of big plays.

The Pokes will be better off if that number is back down around 10 this week.

SPECIAL TEAMS

BIG MAC (PART ONE): UW punter Austin McCoy, mostly using a rugby-style kick, has helped the Pokes win the field-position battle for much of the first two games.

Eight of his 17 punts have landed inside the 20-yard line and he's averaging more than 43 yards per boot, numbers that need to continue at Folsom Field.

BIG MAC (PART TWO): With many expecting a close game today, it wouldn't be a surprise if the game came down to a field goal.

McCoy is the man there, too, but hasn't been asked to attempt a kick further than 25 yards out.

That said, he is 4-for-4 on the year.

DIMINISHING RETURNS: The Longhorns didn't allow a kick to be returned last week, and the Pokes are still looking for their first kick return of longer than 21 yards.

Marcell Gipson should get a chance to increase that mark today and needs to take advantage of it.

COLORADO BUFFALOES

OFFENSE

START ME UP: A first-half touchdown would be nice. Even a couple of field goals would be an improvement.

Colorado has been outscored by a combined margin of 43-6 in its first two games, tallying just a single field goal in the first 30 minutes of each.

An earlier start would mean a boost in confidence.

BALL CONTROL: The Buffaloes have turned the ball over six times already this season and have put the ball on the ground two other times.

Against a team that's created six turnovers, if Colorado wants its first win, it will have to take care of the rock.

SCOTTY KNOWS: Colorado receiver Scotty McKnight, despite suffering an injury on a devastating hit against Colorado State, has been the Buffaloes biggest weapon.

He's caught 15 passes for 150 yards and figures to be a factor all day long against the Pokes.

His return from the Rams' punishing hit won't deter him from going over the middle, forcing sound tackling from UW.

DEFENSE

GET SMART: Senior linebacker Jeff Smart leads Colorado in just about every defensive category.

He has 22 tackles (15 solo), a sack and an interception in two games.

UW players and fans will probably get sick of seeing No. 45.

CHA'PELLE SHOW: Cha'pelle Brown sure plays bigger than his 5-foot-7, 170-pound frame would indicate.

The senior cornerback has 17 tackles, a sack and two third-down stops already, though he'll have to prove he can handle UW's collection of big-framed receivers.

IN THE TRENCHES: Opposing quarterbacks have had virtually all day to make decisions against the Buffaloes this year.

Colorado's front three needs to create some pressure against an offensive line that has looked penetrable and gave up five Longhorns sacks.

SPECIAL TEAMS

ALL GOOD (PART ONE): Colorado kicker Aric Goodman -- a transfer from Wyoming -- won the College Football Performance Awards National Kickoff Specialist of the Week award in Week One.

He booted all three of his kickoffs into the end zone, forcing one touchback and an average starting position of the 14-yard line.

ALL GOOD (PART TWO): Goodman, also the Buffaloes field goal kicker, set a school record with eight consecutive misses during a stretch last year.

This year, he's 2-for-3, including a career-best 54-yarder against the Rams.

Goodman is best-known for his time at UW for missing an extra point in overtime, saddling the Pokes with a one-point loss to Virginia.

DARRE' YA: Colorado kick returner Darrell Scott already has 13 returns under his belt this season and will get a few more from a kickoff unit that rarely finds the end zone.

Scott is averaging more than 26.3 yards per return and has a long of 44 yards.

He could boost those numbers against a coverage unit that's still working out the bugs.

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Even as 7-point underdogs, Wyoming Cowboys look scary

By [Kyle Clark](#) on September 18, 2009 · [Comment](#) · [Email This](#) · [ShareThis](#)



Wyoming head coach Dave Christensen argues a call during the first quarter of the Cowboys' loss to Texas on Sept. 12 in Laramie, Wyo.

What can you say about this game after the Toledo loss was built up as “the most important of the Hawkins era yet”?

“Be afraid. Be very afraid.”

The reasons lie with Wyoming coach Dave Christensen. Last year he was the offensive coordinator for Missouri, which put up a 58-point shutout on Colorado in 2008. The year before that, he came into Folsom and crushed the Buffs 55-10. Now he has Wyoming ready to play another Big 12 team after hanging in with No. 2 Texas through the first half last week.

It's a must win as much as the last game was or Colorado could be looking at 0-6 before its next chance for a victory. Here are three things it can do to start salvaging the season:

GET TO THE 20

Believe it or not, the Buffaloes are tied for first nationally in one statistic. No, not losses smartasses. It's red zone efficiency. They're 100 percent when inside the opponent's 20-yard line. The Buffs have the order backward, knowing how to finish but not sure how to start. Sustaining drives is paramount against Wyoming, which appears much more dangerous offensively.

Even more surprising is that CU is six-for-six when inside the 10. Better yet, all of those conversions were touchdowns. If the offense can just visualize each possession as first-and-goal, third downs

won't be such an issue. Maybe even bringing in some plays from goal-line situations would help on critical downs.

SIMMONS, SIMAS AND SCOTT

It's time to showcase the big players. With the magnifying glass on coach Dan Hawkins, there has been a lot of talk about his recruiting choices. These three players have all been tagged as "the next big thing" offensively at some point, but for one reason or another, their field time has been limited.

Receiver Andre Simmons, who looked as fast as advertised against CSU, was on the field sparingly last week but didn't have a catch. He's a nice complement to the possession skills of Scotty McKnight and Jason Espinoza to stretch the field vertically. One has to think his limited snaps are a result of his familiarity with the playbook as he was held out until the last week of practice for academic reasons related to his transfer from community college.

Markques Simas is the other highly touted receiver, except his back story is much more sordid. After spending 2007 redshirting, Simas forgot about his other books in 2008 and was ruled academically ineligible. He made his other mistake over the summer, violating team rules and being suspended for the first two games of 2009. This week, Simas has done everything short of promising he'll be on the field, even though he is still listed on the injury report as probable with a sprained knee. It's been so long since Simas was signed that it's easy to forget he's a former four-star recruit.

Running back Darrell Scott has begun to show his talents, with an impressive start at Toledo. He managed to rack up 84 rushing yards without carrying the ball at all in the second half. Coaches say he suffered a knee bruise in that game but should be ready for Saturday. The hope here is that if CU does go down a couple of points early, offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau won't hit the pass panic button, taking Scott out of the game.

BACK TO BASICS

Defensively, Hawkins is scaling down the number of packages and looks CU will be using this week. Although he still claims the problems with preventing the big play boil down to "one or two small adjustments," this week will see significant change in complexity.

While this may help with preventing blown assignments, the adjustment the Buffaloes need to focus on is tackling. Missed tackles were responsible for many of the big runs Toledo put on CU last week, including that 61-yard QB scramble that stopped any hope of a Buffs comeback late in the game.

Defenders need to be in the mindset of a quarterback who "manages the game." Nothing fancy, no need to knock a guy's helmet off or strip the ball when risking losing your grip. Just square up, wrap up and take the man down.

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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Sports

Cowboys vs. Buffaloes

By **BOB HAMMOND** Boomerang Sports Editor

Published: Friday, September 18, 2009 10:43 PM MDT

[Print Page](#)

When: Saturday.

Where: Boulder (Colo.) Folsom Field (53,750).

Kickoff: 1:30 p.m. (MDT).

Expected Crowd: 45,000.

Special Occasion: Legacy Day (recognizing CU teams of the 1930s).

Weather: Mostly clear. High in the upper 70s.

Captains: Colorado — MLB Marcus Burton, WLB Jeff Smart and TE Riar Geer. Wyoming — DT John Fletcher, OLB Weston Johnson, OC Russ Arnold and RB Darius Terry.

Television-Radio: The game will be televised regionally by Fox College Sports Central with Sean Farnham providing the play-by-play and Yogi Roth handling the color commentary. The sideline reporter is Samantha Steele. The telecast will be available in the state of Wyoming through Bresnan Cable's Sports Entertainment Package and may be seen on DIRECTV (channel 617). It won't be televised on FOX Sports Rocky Mountain.

The game will also be broadcast by the 25-station Cowboy Sports Network and may be heard in the Laramie area on KOWB (1290 AM) beginning at 12:30 p.m. with the pregame show. Dave Walsh handles the play-by-play duties with Kevin McKinney serving as the color analyst. The sideline reporter is Randy Welniak.

ODDS: Colorado is a 7-point favorite.

All eyes on Hawk

How important is today's game with Wyoming for third-year Colorado coach Dan Hawkins and his Buffs?

Hawkins, who is 13-26 in his time in Boulder, said during the offseason that Colorado had the talent to win 10 games this season.

That being the case, the Buffs are going to have to win out after opening the season with back-to-back losses to Colorado State (23-17) and Toledo (54-38), both members of leagues outside the so-called BCS major conferences.

With West Virginia, Texas and Kansas looming on the horizon, a loss to the Cowboys would mean Hawkins' Buffs would be staring a probable 0-6 start right in the face.

So, is Hawkins on the hot seat in Boulder? Probably not because the school can't afford to buy him out after seeing his contract extended through the 2013 season following the 2007 campaign by CU athletics director Mike Bohn.

If Colorado were to fire Hawkins after this season, the buyout could approach \$3 million.

The CU athletics department paid former coach Gary Barnett around \$4 million for his buyout and remains in debt. The majority of an \$8 million loan the department received from the CU system in 2006 remains outstanding.

A Buffalo stampede

Although Colorado and Wyoming met on the football field for the first time in 1900, the two schools have only played 26 times over the last 118 years.

And the series has been one-sided to say the least with the Buffaloes having a 22-3-1 lead.

Wyoming's only two legitimate wins came in 1935 by a score of 6-0 and in 1982 by a 24-10 margin. The third win came as a result of a forfeit in 1997 when CU had to relinquish a 20-19 victory after it was discovered that the Buffs had used an ineligible player in that game.

The 1997 game was the last time the two teams met. In that game, the Cowboys had a 19-10 lead with 4½ minutes remaining. But a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown, followed by a UW fumble that ended in a CU field goal, allowed the Buffs to sneak away with a 20-19 win.

Here and there

n Colorado, which has given up 77 points in its first two games, is on pace to allow 462 points, which would top the record of 451 set in 1980 by a Buff team coached by Chuck Fairbanks.

n Colorado secondary coach and defensive passing game coordinator Greg Brown was the defensive backs coach at Wyoming for two seasons (1987-88) under then-Cowboy head coach Paul Roach.

n Wyoming is 15-57-1 all-time against Big 12 Conference schools, while Colorado is 139-56-7 versus Mountain West Conference schools.

n Although the Wyoming-Colorado series has been a limited one, it's interesting to note that the Cowboys were the first opponent to visit Folsom Field after the stadium surface was outfitted with its first application of AstroTurf back in 1971. It was a good thing because there had been a September snowstorm the previous evening and school officials said it was possible the game would have been cancelled had it not been for the artificial surface. UW was also CU's first opponent at Folsom after the completion of the Dal Ward Center in 1991.

n Wyoming's 2009 roster currently has 27 players from the state of Colorado. Of those 27, 15 have seen playing time so far this season, including eight that have started. UW's four captains — Russ Arnold, Darius Terry, John Fletcher and Weston Johnson — are Colorado natives. Meanwhile, Colorado has no players on its roster from Wyoming.

Hospital ward

n Colorado: QB Cody Hawkins (mild concussion), probable; WR Markquis Simas (leg), TB Rodney Stewart (hamstring, thigh), both questionable.

n Wyoming: OT Ryan Otterson (hip pointer), SLB Weston Johnson (knee), NG Alex Stover (unknown), FS Keith Lewis (unknown), all are probable; TE Spencer Bruce (shoulder), OLB Devyn Harris (knee), neither will play.

Quotebook

n Wyoming coach Dave Christensen, on what he will tell his Cowboys about playing Colorado at Folsom Field in Boulder from his past experiences at Missouri: "Nothing really. It's just another road game in a big stadium. The majority of our guys have played in pretty big stadiums before, so we don't put that much into it. It's the same size football field as the one we play on here, and that's the way we handle it."

Bob Hammond's e-mail address is bobh@laramieboomerang.com

Sports

'Pokes take on Buffs

By **ROBERT GAGLIARDI** For the Laramie Boomerang

Print Page

Published: Friday, September 18, 2009 10:43 PM MDT

Dave Christensen isn't interested in past games he's coached against Colorado.

As Missouri's offensive coordinator from 2001-08, the Tigers beat the Buffaloes each of the last three seasons by a combined score of 141-23, including 55-10 in 2007 and 58-0 in 2008.

As the University of Wyoming's first-year coach, Christensen was asked about that a lot this week leading up to today's 1:30 p.m. game against Colorado at Folsom Field.

"(UW) is a completely different football team," he said. "We have all different players. There's no comparison right now between the two teams. I don't see too many similarities between what I did at Missouri and what I'm able to do at Wyoming as far as playing Colorado."

UW (1-1) hopes to get its offense going against a Colorado (0-2) defense that has allowed 77 points and an average of 500 yards of offense in its first two games.

The Cowboys were stymied last week by No. 2 Texas with just three offensive points and 273 yards of total offense.

"You've got to be the team to throw the first punch and get something going," UW junior quarterback Robert Benjamin, who will make his third start but also will share time with true freshman Austyn Carta-Samuels, said.

Throwing that first punch, or in this case getting off to a good start, hasn't been a problem for the Cowboys.

But finishing has. UW has been outscored 43-13 in the second half.

Conversely, good starts have been a problem for Colorado, as it has fallen behind 43-6 in the first half of its games.

That has taken the Buffs out of what they want to do offensively, and that's run the ball behind a big offensive line with talented runners in sophomore Darrell Scott and junior Demetrius Sumler.

In last week's 54-38 loss at Toledo, the Buffs trailed 23-3 at halftime.

"We started slow defensively, so the score got away from us a little bit," coach Dan Hawkins said. "I thought offensively we did a nice job of controlling things early on, but we gave up some big scores and we had to change our approach."

Colorado has given up four runs of 26 yards or longer and seven passes of 35-plus yards. Six of Toledo's touchdowns were on plays of 23 yards or longer.

"We need to quit thinking so much out there and just play," Colorado senior linebacker Marcus Burton said.

Despite the contrasting play from both teams in both halves, UW isn't reading much into it.

"I don't think it really means anything," senior defensive tackle John Fletcher said. "Each week is a new week, and you never know what's going to happen. I think they're probably addressing the same issues."

Talk is out about Hawkins' job security, and criticism of the team is high after the way the Buffs played in their first two games. Hawkins downplayed all that this week, and Christensen doesn't expect Colorado to come out feeling sorry for itself.

"First of all, they have good football players," Christensen said. "Their backs are to the wall, and they're wounded a little bit, but I guarantee you they're competitive kids, they're a competitive staff and they're going to come out fighting. It's going to be a challenge or us."

That's something Christensen can take from past games with Colorado.

Extra points

This will be one of three games this season that UW will play on natural grass ... UW will try to block a kick for the third straight game. It blocked a field goal in the season opener against Weber State and blocked a punt last week against No. 2 Texas ... UW is 16-56-2 against teams from the Big 12 Conference ... Dating back to 2007, the Cowboys have lost nine of their last 11 road games.

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