

Woelk: Financial sense trumps tradition for Buffs, Rams

Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/01/2009 12:19:25 AM MDT

I hate it when business trumps tradition. I hate it when the things you believed were rock solid as a kid suddenly find themselves at the mercy of the bottom line.

And I especially hate it when the business decisions make so much sense (and dollars) that tradition simply has to take a back seat.

Which, of course, is the case with the Colorado-Colorado State football game.

I'm a traditionalist. I believe college games belong on campuses. I know there are a handful of games out there that are played at neutral sites, and I know the list gets a little longer every year.

But there's something about college football and college stadiums that can't be replicated at a neutral site. You can have the bands, the cheerleaders, the tailgaters, everything -- but it's not the same. When God said, "Let there be college football," (Book of Gipper, 13:4), he meant it to be played on Saturday afternoons on college campuses.

Still, the Good Book doesn't say much about paying the bills, and in this day and age, the business side of college sports cannot be ignored. And thus, we have 10 years of Colorado and Colorado State playing at Invesco Field in Denver rather than at the homes of the respective teams.

It's a sound business move for all parties involved.

CU athletic director Mike Bohn estimates it could mean as much as an extra \$10 million for CU over the lifetime of the deal. For Paul Kowalczyk and CSU, the increased take will be at least that much, and maybe more.

Those are numbers neither school can afford to ignore. So much so, in fact, that when Colorado threatened to end the series if CSU didn't agree to play in Denver next year (rather than Fort Collins), Kowalczyk had no choice but to concede the issue. Kowalczyk could either look at 10 years of filling his non-conference schedule with games that would draw 20,000 to Hughes Field and a scant pay day, or agree not to play in Fort Collins next year in return for a decade of annual bonanzas.

Not really much decision to be made there.

In return, the Rams also ensured that they don't have to visit Boulder again anytime in the near future, and that's a plus for CSU. While the series has started to tilt back in CU's favor (the Buffs have won four of the last five), CU's edge in Boulder is even more pronounced. CU has won six in a row Boulder, with CSU's last victory at Folsom coming in 1986.

But CU also had to yield in the agreement. Colorado will now have to rearrange its schedule to ensure that Folsom Field still hosts six games every year. That will in all likelihood mean some home games against opponents CU once avoided. (Can you say Northern Colorado?)

That's a risk on CU's part. Colorado's attendance for non-conference home games has never been great, particularly against lesser opponents. If Dan Hawkins' team can turn the corner this season and generate more interest, the task of selling tickets for the future will be easier. Fans will be more likely to accept those home games against non-marquee opponents. If not ...

Overall, however, the deal is good for both schools -- not only monetarily, but in the big picture. College sports have never been front-and-center in this state, and playing the game on a regular basis in the state's biggest stadium should help on the exposure front. It means more television time, more print media and a larger audience, both in the stadium and around the state.

Meanwhile, fans of both schools will have the opportunity to see their teams seven times a year (or more), with each school now having at least six home games plus one in Denver.

Those kinds of things can only help sharpen the focus on college football.

There`s also the matter of sponsorship money (there`s that word again). Corporations can now sign on knowing the deal they`ve reached will be in place for years to come rather than having the game bounce back and forth between three different stadiums. Such stability should help attract those corporate dollars, particularly when those companies know their message will hit the maximum number of folks on an annual basis.

What do fans think? It`s difficult -- if not impossible -- to know for sure, but the judging from the e-mails and phone calls we get, the guess here is that a third of CU`s season ticket holders like the move, a third don`t like it and a third don`t care.

Put me down in the middle group.

I understand it. I know what the financial realities are at both schools, and I know how much they`ll benefit from the deal. I know that these days, business trumps tradition, and I can accept that.

But that doesn`t mean I have to like it.

[Close Window](#)[Send To Printer](#)

BIG 12 FOOTBALL

Big 12 North at a glance: Colorado Buffaloes

Tuesday, September 01, 2009

Colorado Buffaloes

Enrollment: 29,500

Coach: Dan Hawkins

2008: 5-7 (2-6 in the Big 12)

Returning starters: 13 (8 offense, 5 defense)

Key players: TB Darrell Scott, OL Ryan Miller, OL Nate Solder, LB Jeff Smart, WR Markques Simas

Top freshmen: WR Andre Simmons, DE Nick Kasa, LB Jon Major, QB Clark Evans

Key losses: DT George Hypolite, WR Josh Smith, FS Ryan Walters

Key games: at Texas, Oct. 10; Kansas, Oct. 17; at Oklahoma State, Nov. 19; Nebraska, Nov. 27

Bottom line: Injuries took their toll last year. The Buffaloes, who finished a disappointing fourth in the North, have a potentially dynamic rusher in Scott, the heralded California tailback who spurned Texas for Colorado. The Buffaloes had the Big 12's top-rated pass defense — impressive for a passing conference — and again should be among the league's best.

He said it: "It's not about the wins. I didn't guarantee anything. I didn't threaten anything. That was never part of it." — Hawkins, on his offseason "10 wins, no excuses" comment

Vote for this story!

[Buzz up!](#)

Find this article at:

<http://www.statesman.com/sports/content/sports/stories/other/2009/09/01/0901colcap.html>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

rocky mountain showdown

CU-CSU moves to Denver until 2020

By Natalie Meisler
The Denver Post

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

Updated: 09/01/2009 01:08:01 AM MDT



(Denver Post file photo)

A year of heated negotiations ended with the Rocky Mountain Showdown football game returning to Denver for each of the next 10 seasons in an agreement announced Monday. Colorado State agreed to push its 2010 date in Fort Collins back a decade in order to have the 2010-19 games at Invesco Field at Mile High.

"It was a case of playing 2010 at home and not having a series or playing 2010 here (in Denver) and having nine more games," CSU athletic

director Paul Kowalczyk said.

"To me, that's not a difficult decision to make."

Still, there were final details that Kowalczyk, CU counterpart Mike Bohn and the Metro Denver Sports Commission hammered out Sunday night as guests in Broncos owner Pat Bowlen's suite during the

Rocky Mtn. Showdown

[View slide show of historical highlights from the CU vs. CSU football series .](#)

Broncos-Chicago Bears game.

The announcement came during the annual luncheon at Invesco Field. The teams open the season Sunday night in Boulder, the final game at a campus site for at least the next decade.

"It wasn't political pressure, it was political influence," Bohn said of Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper urging the schools to sign the contract. "That's exactly the type of leadership that was instrumental in firing up both institutions to say: 'This is a no-brainer. We really have to do this.' "

One of the hurdles included CU's contractual obligations with sponsors to play at least six home games each season. Bohn fixed that by readjusting a future series with Minnesota.

Advertisement



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

The ticket split will continue 55-45 favoring CU, based on relative stadium capacities.

nmeisler@denverpost.com

CU coach Dan Hawkins said: "It's great for college football. It's great for both institutions. . . Obviously the size of the stadium allows for many more fans."

Invesco Field holds more than 76,000 fans.

CSU coach Steve Fairchild, who has lobbied to return the series to Denver, said, "I don't know the ins and outs of it, but I know the right thing happened."

CSU draws a \$650,000 guarantee (before ticket commitments) at Boulder on Sunday, and CU would have drawn the same amount if the game were played in Fort Collins next year. Even with temporary bleachers pushing capacity just past 35,000 in Fort Collins, Kowalczyk said it wasn't going to net as much as a game in Denver. Bohn estimated CU would make about \$750,000 more a game now, and \$8 million to \$10 million more over the course of a decade playing in Denver instead of on campus. Kowalczyk said CSU's difference would be from \$1 million to \$1.5 million a year.

The series will continue on the opening weekend of the college seasons except for 2011 and 2015, when CU opens at Hawaii.

Staff writer Tom Kensler contributed to this report.

Natalie Meisler: 303-954-1295 or

Advertisement





September 1, 2009

Rams football team starts thinking about Buffs

Camp over, focus shifts to game

BY KELLY LYELL

KellyLyell@coloradoan.com

There was a different feeling Monday, when the CSU football team hit the field at Hughes Stadium for a 2-hour, 10-minute workout.

It's game week, and the Rams got down to business.

"Something about (Monday) was definitely different," senior quarterback Grant Stucker said. "I don't know exactly what it was, but we just came out with a lot of fire, and the whole team came out with it."

With the season-opener coming Sunday in Boulder against the University of Colorado, the Rams no longer spent practice time working against their own offensive and defensive schemes or trying to figure out who will play where this fall, as they had done since practices began Aug. 7. The focus now is on CU, so the Rams' first- and second-string offenses ran plays against a scout-team defense designed to mimic the Buffaloes' 4-3 look, while the top two defensive units and key reserves worked against a scout team running CU's offensive sets and plays.

"It's definitely different going against scout team now," said linebacker Michael Kawulok, a sophomore from Boulder. "Our scout team did a heck of a job (Monday). They came out and hit us pretty well and were moving around pretty fast, which gives us a good look, which is definitely what we need for CU."

...

"Camp's done now. It's game week, and we can start focusing on CU."

Steve Fairchild, CSU's second-year coach, said he was pleased with the workout, which began not long after he returned from appearing with CU coach Dan Hawkins at a luncheon in Denver, where it was announced that the next 10 games in the CSU-CU series will be played at Invesco Field at Mile High.

The Rams got done what needed to be done and did so at a good tempo, with the kind of focus Fairchild said last week that they would need to have throughout this week and the rest of the season to be successful.

"We got better (Monday), and I see it for the rest of this season and for years down the road, if we practice like this we're going to get to where we want to go," Fairchild said.

The Rams will practice four more times and have a walk-through Saturday in preparation for the season-opening game. Players hadn't seen much film on CU prior to Monday's practice but figure they'll see a lot more today and Wednesday. That's also when Fairchild said he'll finish introducing some of the situational parts of the game plan, such as third-down plays and red-zone packages that will be worked into practices later this week.

It's a weekly process the Rams will repeat 11 more times this fall. And one players were more than

ready for after 3½ weeks of grueling practices in the August heat.

"It seemed like everybody came out (Monday) ready to play CU tomorrow," Stucker said. "Everybody can see this is game week, and they're getting fired up for it."

Notes - CU athletic director Mike Bohn said nearly 3,000 tickets remain for Sunday's 5 p.m. game. They're available online at www.cubuffs.com and range in price from \$120 for midfield seats in the lower sections to \$50 for seats in the northwest corner of the stadium and portions of the north end zone. ... CSU guard Shelley Smith, a preseason all-Mountain West Conference selection, was held out of practice with a right ankle injury and is listed as day-to-day, Fairchild said. ... Five true freshmen could see action in the opener for the Rams, Fairchild said. Punter Pete Kontodiakos will handle the punting duties, safety Ezra Thompson is getting work in nickel-defensive packages and defensive end C.J. James could be part of the regular rotation on the defensive line. Fairchild also wants to have running backs Chris Nwoke and Lou Greenwood, listed as co-No. 4s on the game-week depth chart, ready to play, even though one, or both, still might redshirt this season.

Additional Facts

> **Next up:** CSU at CU, 5 p.m. Sunday, Folsom Field, Boulder.

> **TV/radio:** FSN/KLZ (AM 560), KCOL (AM 600), KOA (AM 850).

[Print page](#)[Close window](#)

Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, September 17,
2009

Publish Date: 9/1/2009

Showdown to return to Invesco

CU-CSU series extended for decade

By Patrick Ridgell

© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

DENVER — It'll require some schedule juggling, and there might be some anxiety for fans, but the Colorado athletic department insisted Monday its deal to extend its football series with Colorado State through 2020 bodes well for its long-term health.

The two will play each year through 2020 with all but the the final edition scheduled for Denver's Invesco Field. The 2010 game will be held in Denver, not Fort Collins, as CSU officials had planned last August after CU announced the 2009 game would be in Boulder. The 2020 game is scheduled for Fort Collins.

CU athletic director Mike Bohn continues to say the football program will play six home games every season to satisfy ticket, club and suite holders, plus sponsors. Monday's deal means that from 2010 through 2019, the Buffs plan to play those six plus play one in Denver, giving them seven annual games along the Front Range.

The Buffs' schedule is set through 2011, but their home-and-home plans with Minnesota in 2012 and 2013 are moving to 2020 and 2021, Bohn said.

CU needs a sixth home game in 2012 and 2013. It's now holding talks with programs to fill the void, one being San Diego State.

Washington is scheduled to come to Boulder in 2015. CU is in talks with Oregon for a future series, as well.

CU coach Dan Hawkins said last summer, when asked about the prospect of playing the CU-CSU game in Denver, that he would love to play as many games at home as possible. In the end, Bohn said, this deal wasn't about bowing to political pressure or anything else. It was about a long-term need to build interest and manage money.

"For the University of Colorado alone, it's an \$8-to-\$10 million dollar increase in revenue over what we'd have had if we stayed with the existing models within our own stadiums," Bohn said.

"With our scholarship commitments rising almost \$700,000 per year, obviously it's things like this that are significant in helping us be financially strong — and it helps us be competitive in recruiting as well, playing seven games on the Front Range."

Said Hawkins: "I would always rather be playing a home game, but I think this is a great venue, and I think when you look at the bigger picture, when you look at resources, when you look at fans, when you look at exposure, when you look at college football here, I think it's a great decision."

Bohn said CU expects to earn around \$750,000 more when the game is held in Denver rather than

The New Deal

The Colorado-Colorado State series beyond Sunday's season opener:

Date

SiteHome Team

Sept. 4, 2010

Invesco Field CSU

Sept. 17, 2011

Invesco Field CU

Sept. 1, 2012

Invesco Field CU

Aug. 31, 2013

Invesco Field CSU

Aug. 30, 2014

Invesco Field CU

Sept. 19, 2015

Invesco Field CSU

Sept. 3, 2016

Invesco Field CU

Sept. 2, 2017

Invesco Field CU

Sept. 1, 2018

Invesco Field CSU

Boulder, assuming it sells its full share of tickets. He said it sold them all the past two times the game was held in Denver.

CSU earns an extra \$600,000 to \$800,000 playing in Denver instead of Fort Collins, according to athletic director Paul Kowalczyk.

CU will pay CSU \$650,000 to play at Folsom Field for this year's meeting (Sunday, 5 p.m., FSN).

Bohn said CU budgeted this year for a 10 percent drop in revenue from season ticket sales, an estimate brought on by the struggling economy and CU's decision to increase ticket prices. Bohn said that so far, CU is 4 percent down from last year, and expects that figure to drop to 3 percent or 2 percent.

As has been done with past contracts when the game is in Denver, the contract splits will be similar. CU will get 55 percent of the game tickets; CSU will get 45 percent.

The national standard among teams in Bowl Championship Series conferences is to host seven home games a year. In 2008, 44 of the 66 BCS schools hosted seven. Each Big 12 team plays at least six home games in 2009. Oklahoma State will host eight.

Missouri and Kansas, plus Iowa State and Kansas State, will meet at neutral Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City this year. Bohn said the deal CU gets playing in Denver is better than the deal those four programs get to play in Kansas City because CU and CSU control their ticket distribution.

Bohn said playing seven games along the Front Range instead of six also means savings on travel.

"Every time we get (the team) on an airplane, it's \$130,000 in expenses," Bohn said.

Kowalczyk and Bohn cited the need to build exposure for their programs in Denver. Bohn said CU wants to enhance the profile of its entire athletic department in Denver so that in the future, if it wants to, for example, host a marquee college basketball event, it'll be possible. He lauded Denver mayor John Hickenlooper for being "the leader that pulled this all together."

"We're going to build sponsors and say, 'Hey, for 10 years, we're in this; let's build this. ... into the point where we have good consistent support,'" Bohn said.

Kowalczyk was asked if CSU fans will be angry about giving up the 2010 home date with CU.

"How about this option: If we play in Fort Collins in '10, there's no series," Kowalczyk said. "How do we win? That's not smart. That doesn't help our program.

"There were a lot of things discussed, let me put it that way."

Bohn said he did not tell Kowalczyk that if the 2010 game remained in Fort Collins, the series would stop.

"I do not recall anything that was of that tone," Bohn said. "I really salute the new leadership at CSU ... Their collaborative spirit and their willingness to work together was the best I've seen during my tenure here."

The game will serve as the season opener for both programs all years except 2011 and 2015.

The Buffs open those seasons at Hawaii and will play CSU in week 3. CU scheduled the opening trips to Hawaii those seasons due to travel concerns.

CSU and CU have met every year since 1995, and in Denver nine times since 1998. CU has won five of those nine.

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

Aug. 31, 2019

Invesco Field CU

Sept. 5, 2020

H. Stadium,
Fort Collins CSU

Patrick Ridgell