



Junior tailback Rodney Stewart meets with reporters after Thursday's scrimmage at Folsom Field.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



08/19/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Buffs On Track, But Need Time To Refine

BOULDER - The Colorado Buffaloes open the 2010 college football season in just over two weeks, and after Thursday's second scrimmage of fall camp CU's coaches said - what did you expect? - the Buffs need every tick of the time remaining.

Thursday's game-condition work at Folsom Field saw the Buffs run 120 of the day's 141 total plays from scrimmage. Closed to the public and media, the scrimmage was designed to be less situational than last week's. No statistical information from Thursday's work was released by CU.

Coach Dan Hawkins said his team "looked OK, but when you're the head guy, the defense does good and you're mad at the offense . . . when the offense does good, you're mad at the defense. So there were a lot of good things to learn from."

Game-planning begins next week for Colorado State, CU's opponent on Sept. 4 at Denver's Invesco Field. Coaches are expected to set their two-deep rosters after completing their evaluation of the

BUFFALO EXTRAS



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second scrimmage. The final preseason scrimmage is set for Saturday, Aug. 28.

In summing up Thursday's offensive highlights, Hawkins mentioned few turnovers and penalties, and productivity in "some clutch situations and on the goal line . . . I don't know what our stats were running the ball, but it looked pretty good."

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FINDING THEIR LEGS? A top camp priority has been improvement in the running game, which averaged just 87.8 yards a game last season.

In Thursday's work, junior tailback Rodney "Speedy" Stewart said, "The holes were crazy . . . even against the first defense, I had a couple of good runs."

Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said even though he "likes the progress (of the ground game), it's still a work in progress. We still have two more weeks. Do I think we're game ready? I don't think 100 percent, no. That's why I like having two more weeks to practice and get after it. I don't feel like we're there yet."

Hawkins noticed "more consistency" than the Buffs demonstrated last season, but noted that game situations usually dictate how balanced an offense can be: "Hopefully we'll have closer games and you can be in a little better control that way."

Freshmen tailbacks Cordary Allen, Trea' Jones and Tony Jones took advantage of fellow freshman Justin Torres' absence Thursday to log more work than in the first scrimmage. Torres was one of four freshmen attending orientation sessions; the others were receiver Paul Richardson, tight end Harold Mobley and defensive tackle Dakota Poole, who would have been sidelined regardless with a broken hand.

Allen, a 6-foot-1, 230-pounder, said position coach Darian Hagan "has been telling me to just relax. I think I did that . . . I've learned my plays and got most of my reads and blocking assignments down. That really helped me out."

Junior quarterback Tyler Hansen's critique of the ground game: "I thought it was real good . . . we did some stuff with two tight ends, and it's nice to see that."

Senior Cody Hawkins, Hansen's competitor for the starting QB job, conceded if the Buffs "need a little more help running the ball (from their position), Tyler definitely has the edge there. If you're mobile and they have to account for you, that definitely opens up things in the run game."

Both QBs mentioned the experience and cohesiveness of the offensive line and an upgrade in speed at wide receiver that defenses won't be able to ignore in 2010.

'TP' SETTLING IN: Transfer Travon Patterson (Southern California) accounts for a big portion of the added speed at receiver. He couldn't participate in full pads for the first camp scrimmage, but was in full gear on Thursday.

"I think I did pretty good; I just played my role," he said. "They've put me in great position to show off my talent, and I'm thankful for that. I feel good about everything."

He said he feels comfortable in most everything he's being asked to do: "It's not really that different to me. Just change the words up - it's the same stuff. I caught on the first week I got out here."

"I've been joking with Travon, calling him Brett Favre," Dan Hawkins said. "He's not a had a whole bunch of pops, but he's doing good."

THE QB QUESTION: After enduring what both described as unspectacular starts, Kiesau said Hansen and Cody Hawkins performed well in Thursday's second half. He also said nothing he saw from either player will complicate the decision on naming a starter.

"Not at all . . . they were both efficient," he said. "The one ball we had tipped up in the air was a pick (a Hansen pass tipped and intercepted by linebacker Michael Sipili). But that's a quarterback trying to find a throwing lane. There were no bad decisions from that standpoint. They were both fine."

Kiesau also said there is "never a right time (to name a starter); it's whenever one guy steps up. We're grading these guys every day in practice, in every drill, every 7-on-7, every team (setting) . . . from meetings to practice, to film. When one guy kind of appears and emerges above the other, we'll name a starter."

Hansen told the *Boulder Daily Camera* earlier this week that he believed he was getting about 80 percent of the work with the first offense. But Kiesau said in the past week, "I've tried . . . to divide it 50-50 and keep them both sharp. We have to keep them both sharp. Whoever the starter is, we're going to need the other guy as well."

"We just can't close the door on the other guy and say, 'You're done, go graduate, see you later.' We've got to keep them both fresh - mentally and physically."

'O' STARTS SLOW: Unlike in scrimmage No. 1, when the Nos. 1 and 2 offenses opened with an 80-yard scoring drive each, Thursday's work began with the 'O' trying to find itself.

Kiesau's explanation: "The reason we started slow was the plays I was calling."

Hansen's explanation: "The first half, we were trying some new things out . . . trying to get some rhythm in things we've had trouble with. We struggled a little, but in the second half, we moved the ball and scored points."

Cody Hawkins' explanation: "The first half we missed on a couple of passes . . . the second half we focused on moving the ball and I thought we were clicking. Both groups moved the ball . . . it really didn't matter (who the QB was), we moved the ball and both wound up going down and scoring in our clutch situations, so that was a really good sign for everybody on the offense."

The lack of first-half rhythm, said Kiesau, stemmed from his wanting to achieve a balance between "a good, hard running game (and) complete balls down the field - just get that balance. It was just something I was trying to do with the offense in the first half. It was better in the second half."

Kiesau called plays from the coaches' booth, while Dan Hawkins made personnel decisions from the field. Said Kiesau: "'Hawk' was saying, 'twos are up, ones are up' . . . we were just kind of rolling like a game. From that standpoint (of running personnel in and out) it was up to him. But we wanted to keep it about a game length."

READING THE 'D': Two of defensive coordinator Ron Collins' camp goals have been limiting big plays and making them - mainly by capitalizing on forced turnovers.

As for limiting big plays - a big problem in 2009 when the Buffs allowed 53 plays of 20-plus yards and 15 of 40-plus yards - Collins said, "We're way beyond where we were last year and as good as at any time last fall. We feel good where we're at."

CU's first scrimmage produced a pair of defensive touchdowns; there were none Thursday. But Collins hinted that had the QBs been "live" in this scrimmage, that might have contributed to his unit coming up with another big play or two.

Collins said Thursday's work should allow a more thorough evaluation of freshmen corners Josh Moten and Jered Bell, who along with freshman safety Terrel Smith have had productive camps. He also said redshirt freshman Paul Vigo "has had an excellent camp" and likely will be the third corner/safety - a role graduated Ben Burney played in 2009.

It apparently will be easier for younger players to emerge in the secondary than up front in Collins' two-deep. "Up front, we've got a pretty good core; it's going to be tough for young guys to break in (there)," he said.

QUOTABLE QBs

"It was just a little hitch route and he stuttered Ray (Polk, safety) . . . his ankles are still out there I think." - Hansen, on a

short pass that receiver Toney Clemons turned into a long TD.

"He rallies every single guy on the team, then he goes out and backs it up with his play." - Cody Hawkins, on Clemons in general.

BUFF BITS: Dan Hawkins said placement contenders Aric Goodman, Marcus Kirkwood and Justin Castor "are in general all kicking pretty good . . . 'Goodie' (Goodman) holds a slight edge there." . . . One stat that was relayed from the SID department was the fact that the first penalty of the scrimmage did not occur until the 77th play; only two were called all afternoon, both false starts, bringing the total to just six penalties (four offense, two defense) in the two full scrum sessions (253 plays). Special teams has had only one flag in 47 plays . . . Former CU placekicker Mason Crosby and his wife Molly, a former Buffs cheerleader, had their first child, a seven-pound, four-ounce son, Nolan James Crosby, last Sunday. Crosby is kicking for the Packers . . . The Buffs have an afternoon practice scheduled Friday, then finish two-a-days on Saturday. Two days off - but meetings on Sunday - follow, with fall classes beginning Monday. On Tuesday, their new morning routine begins (6:30 a.m. meetings, 8-10 a.m. practice).

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SHOW MENU



Bufs QB Hawkins: CU wins 'most important'

Senior says success more important than starting job

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer Cody Hawkins wants to be the starting quarterback at Colorado again this year, but is willing to watch games from the sidelines if it means the Buffs will win more often. Tyler Hansen emerged from the second scrimmage of fall camp Thursday afternoon continuing to feel like he has done enough to hold on to the job he inherited from Hawkins in the middle of last season. He threw two touchdowns and one interception in the 120-play scrimmage.

Posted: 08/19/2010 11:54:47 PM MDT



Cody Hawkins wants to be the starting quarterback at Colorado again this year, but is willing to watch games from the sidelines if it means the Buffs will win more often. Tyler Hansen emerged from the second scrimmage of fall camp Thursday afternoon continuing to feel like he has done enough to hold on to the job he inherited from Hawkins in the middle of last season. He threw two touchdowns and one interception in the 120-play scrimmage.

Whether coaches agree with Hansen remains the great unknown, which appears to be just the way they want it as they prepare to put the wraps on camp with fall classes beginning next week along with the installation of the game plan for the season opener against Colorado State.

"There is never a right time," offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said. "It's just whenever one guy steps up. We've got to go back and watch the film. We're grading these guys every day in practice, every drill, every seven-on-seven, every team. We've even got the NCAA quarterback rating thing going. So they are getting graded every time they're doing it, I mean from meetings to film to practice to drills. So when one guy kind of appears or emerges above the other, we'll name the starter."

Kiesau didn't argue Hansen's assertion earlier this week that he has been getting the majority of the first-team repetitions this year in camp, but he noted Thursday that the numbers have started to even out in the past week since practices have been closed to the public and media.

Kiesau and coach Dan Hawkins said both quarterbacks had their moments in the scrimmage, which was open to invited guests and players' parents but closed to media and the public. Both quarterbacks received nearly equal time with the first- and second-string offenses and both led touchdown drives in the 2-minute offense.

"If it's me on the sideline coaching Tyler up to the best of my ability and getting everybody on the sideline ready to go in and do their job, I'm going to do that," Cody Hawkins said. "But if I'm out on the field, I'm going to be a heck of a field general for the guys and go out there and compete my (butt) off."

"Winning games is definitely the most important thing. Starting would be great, but I'm trying to get to a good bowl game for me and the rest of the guys."

One of the highlights of the scrimmage was Hansen throwing a short hitch route to wide receiver Toney Clemons, who caught the pass and tight-roped the sideline approximately 50 yards for the score. Clemons is the fastest player on the team and demonstrated it on the play.

Fellow wide receiver Travon Patterson also participated after being unavailable a week ago for the first scrimmage. Patterson said he believes he did well.

The defense had the edge early when Kiesau said he was focused on working on the running game, but when he opened more of the playbook, the offense began to move the ball and score points. What that means about the state of the running game, which finished last season ranked 113th in the nation, remains to be seen.

"It's still a work in progress," Kiesau said when asked about the running game. "It really is. We still have two more weeks and we've got to get ready for a game. Do I think we're game ready? I don't think 100 percent, no. That's why, thank goodness, we still have two more weeks to practice at it and get after it."

Fifth-year senior cornerback Jalil Brown said he wasn't tested much in the practice and didn't manage to get his hands on the ball. He said he made several tackles and described the scrimmage this way.

"We came out ready to go. We were fired up, making plays getting quick stops, three-and-out," Brown said. "We were definitely ready to go, but the second half, the offense came out and kind of stepped it up a little bit."

Defensive coordinator Ron Collins is pleased with the progress of his players and said he is ready to set his two-deep depth chart once he reviews film of the second scrimmage. Collins said his defense is "way beyond" where it was at this point last season and is playing as well as it did at any point last fall.

"I think they want to win and they are working hard," Collins said. "Their effort has been tremendous throughout two-a-days. They're playing faster than we've ever had guys play here before. That has been a blessing. It's been a great camp for those guys. You can see the desire in them and that is exciting for us as coaches."

Dan Hawkins said he liked what he saw from the defense early on Thursday. He was happy with the lack of penalties and turnovers and was pleased with the offensive execution in the 2-minute drill and goal-line situations.

"A lot of good things to learn from," Hawkins said about the scrimmage in general.

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Competition heated in CU Buffs secondary

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/19/2010 11:56:07 PM MDT

The numbers aren't adding up in the Colorado secondary.

Could it be defensive coaches plan to play nine or 10 defensive backs on a regular basis, or is it more likely the public praise young players are receiving from coaches is calculated to keep them coming back for more?

The starting four of safeties Anthony Perkins and Ray Polk along with fifth-year senior cornerbacks Jalil Brown and Jimmy Smith is a solid group that ought to be on the field together as often as possible. Redshirt freshman Parker Orms appears to have won the starting nickel back spot.

But coaches have said true freshman Terrel Smith is likely to play this season based on how he has performed in fall camp, and following the second scrimmage Thursday a few more names were added to the list.

"Paul Vigo has had an excellent camp," defensive coordinator Ron Collins said. "We expect him to be our third corner/safety. He's kind of like what Ben Burney was for us last year. He can play either position."

Collins went on to say true freshmen Josh Moten and Jered Bell also are fighting for playing time, which begs the question, what happened to Deji Olatoye, a redshirt freshman who was routinely praised for his performance in practices last season?

Veterans Arthur Jaffee and Jonathan Hawkins have been referred to as in the mix, too. CU coaches tried rotating a lot of defenders early last season and that didn't go over well with the team giving up plenty of points and yards.

The defense began to play much better when the rotation was shortened and the scheme simplified. Only time will tell how many of those names actually see the field on defense with the game on the line this fall.

Goodman in the lead

Coach Dan Hawkins said senior place-kicker Aric Goodman continues to hold a slight lead in a competition with three younger and far less experienced players, Justin Castor, Marcus Kirkwood and Dillan Freiberg.

"As a group they have all been kicking better, and Goody has been kicking really well, too," Hawkins said.

Patterson catching on

Hawkins jokes with wide receiver Travon Patterson by calling him Brett Favre. It's a reference to the 40-year-old Minnesota Vikings quarterback who has made a routine in recent years of missing much of training camp only to report late and take over the starting job.

Patterson, who transferred to CU from USC this summer and is eligible to play this fall because of a waiver from the NCAA, probably hasn't earned a starting job, but he is coming along nicely in learning his new offense.

"They have put me in great positions to really show off my talent. I'm thankful for that and I feel good about everything," Patterson said.

Barring an unforeseen development, Patterson will be the Buffs punt return man. He fielded two punts during Thursday's scrimmage, but would not say how he did with the returns.

Quotable

Dan Hawkins said his team got through the second scrimmage of camp without serious injuries Thursday, but he hedged it

a little bit. "It's always interesting with these guys, particularly the younger. They take a shower and go eat and then they show up tomorrow and go, 'Hey, my gerfuncter is hurting.'"

Notable

Freshman Paul Richardson, Justin Torres and Harold Mobley did not participate in the scrimmage because they had to attend campus orientation. ... Offensive lineman Bryce Givens remained out of action with a sprained ankle. ... Players will help freshmen get moved into dorms and get a feel for campus today as part of the Global Jam event on campus. There is one practice today from 4 to 6:30 p.m. The team wraps up the camp portion of preseason practices Sunday with photo day and the selection of team captains. The first day of fall classes is Monday.

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cu briefs

Bufs expecting ground game to be much improved

Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/20/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — Colorado ranked 11th among Big 12 Conference teams in rushing offense in 2009, but accounts of Thursday's closed scrimmage by coaches and players suggest that a dramatic improvement in the ground game is expected this season.

"The holes I was getting were crazy," starting junior tailback Rodney "Speedy" Stewart said in describing his runs during three hours of work under what coaches called "game-like" conditions. "Even against the No. 1 defense, there were some good holes."

Stewart said his longest run went for about 30 yards. He also caught a touchdown pass from junior quarterback Tyler Hansen.

Statistics were not made available to the media, but Stewart said he drew "a lot of carries" and had good success, especially in the second half of the scrimmage when the offense opened its

playbook.

"I got to see the field a little bit this time," said Stewart, who ran 12 times in last week's scrimmage mostly during short-yardage work. "I think with me coming back as a veteran and knowing more, and the offensive line coming together, we're going to be a lot more effective."

"We actually did some stuff with two tight ends and got after some guys," Hansen said of the power running attack. "It was nice to see."

CU coach Dan Hawkins also praised the ground game. "They did a nice job today, for sure," he said. "They're definitely more consistent than last year."

Play of the day.

The most spectacular play of the scrimmage, according to teammates, was turned in by junior receiver Toney Clemons, the flashy transfer from Michigan.

After catching what appeared to be a simple sideline hitch pass from Hansen, Clemons tiptoed to stay inbounds and then made a fake on sophomore safety Ray Polk to break into the clear for a 49-yard touchdown. Clemons, 6-foot-2, 210 pounds and boasting sprinter speed, was voted last month as Big 12 preseason offensive newcomer of the year.

"Toney made

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(Polk) look silly," senior quarterback Cody Hawkins said. "But he does that to a lot of people."

Colorado Football

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Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau described the play of both quarterbacks as "efficient."

Footnotes.

Following the scrimmage, defensive coordinator Ron Collins cited true freshmen Jered Bell (cornerback), Josh Moten (cornerback) and Terrel Smith (safety) and redshirt freshman Paul Vigo (combo corner-safety) as newcomers who are vying for the two-deep on defense. . . . Dan Hawkins said he was not aware of any significant injuries. . . . A handful of newcomers missed the scrimmage because of university freshman orientation, including tight end Harold Mobley, receiver Paul Richardson and tailback Justin Torres.

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com

Taking the snaps.

Hansen, the expected starting quarterback, estimated that he got most of the reps with the Nos. 1 and 2 offenses by "about 6 0/40" (split) with Cody Hawkins.

"The first half we were trying to get a rhythm with some stuff we've had trouble with," Hansen said. "So the defensive line had the upper hand a little bit. But the second half we moved real smoothly and scored some points."

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

AUGUST 19, 2010, 3:42 PM

CU freshmen making impact in secondary

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Colorado defensive coordinator Ron Collins said the two-deep on defense will be determined after a tape evaluation of Thursday's scrimmage.

Collins cited a quartet of freshmen as being potential contributors this season. That's true freshman cornerbacks Jered Bell (6-foot, 185 pounds) of Ontario Calif., and Josh Moten (6-0, 195) of Carson, Calif.; true freshman safety Terrel Smith (5-8, 180) of Paterson, N.J., and redshirt-freshman Paul Vigo (6-1, 185) of New Brunswick, N.J.

"We're evaluating Bell and Moten as two guys that can contribute for us," Collins said following the scrimmage.

"Vigo can be our third corner-safety," Collins added. "He's kind of like what Ben Burney was for us last year."

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

AUGUST 19, 2010, 2:25 PM

CU running game highlights scrimmage

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER – Statistics were not released following Colorado's closed scrimmage today, but players and coaches agreed afterward that the Buffs running game took center stage.

"It was fun. We had a good scrimmage, I think," junior tailback Rodney "Speedy" Stewart said. "It took us a while to get going. But once we got going, we got some good blocks. We got some good carries.

"The holes were crazy," Stewart added. "Even against the No. 1 defense, there were some good holes."

Stewart said his longest run went for about 30 yards. He also caught a touchdown pass from quarterback Tyler Hansen.

"I got a lot more carries," Stewart said. "I got to see the field a little bit. I think with me coming back as a veteran and knowing more, and the line coming together, we're going to be a lot more effective."

The three-hour scrimmage at Folsom Field was conducted in a game-like format. Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said both quarterbacks, the junior Hansen and senior Cody Hawkins, were "efficient." And, yes, the running game moved the chains, Kiesau said.

"We want that balance," Kiesau said. "We want to run it and throw it. We ran the ball well today. I liked the way the running backs played. The guys on the offensive line have been together for a while. They've spent some summers together. That continuity is good.

"We're still building. We're not there yet. But we're working toward that."

Kiesau said he rotated quarterbacks Hansen and Cody Hawkins between the Nos. 1 and 2 offenses. Hansen said he got more work with the first-team unit.

The most spectacular play of the scrimmage, according to accounts, was turned in by junior receiver Toney Clemons, the transfer from Michigan. After catching what appeared to be a simple sideline pass from Hansen, Clemons tiptoed to stay in-bounds and then made a fake on safety Ray Polk to break into the clear for a 49-yard touchdown.

"Toney made (Polk) look silly," Cody Hawkins said. "But he does that on a lot of people."

As usual after scrimmages, coach Dan Hawkins said there is plenty to clean up before the Sept. 4 season opener against Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High. The coach was pleased that there was only one turnover – an interception of a Hansen pass by inside linebacker Michael Sipili, who tipped the ball to himself.

Dan Hawkins said he was not aware of any significant injuries.

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Longmont, Colorado
Friday, August 20, 2010

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The battle continues

By Brian Howell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Apparently, Tyler Hansen and Cody Hawkins are still battling.

On Thursday, the University of Colorado football team held its second scrimmage of the fall. Because it was closed to fans and media, only the players and coaches really know how it turned out and who did what.

Hansen and Hawkins are competing for the starting quarterback job. The Buffs don't appear to be in any rush to let anyone know who will win it.

"When one guy kind of appears and emerges above the other, we'll name a starter," offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said. "They were both efficient (on Thursday)."

A year ago, CU kept its quarterback choice a secret. The Buffs didn't reveal its starter until Hawkins trotted onto the field with the first-team unit in the season opener against Colorado State.

The decision actually was made a couple of weeks before the CSU game last year, but the Buffs didn't feel it was necessary to make it public.

It's quite possible the Buffs are sticking with that plan again this fall.

Kiesau has publicly stated that Hansen has a slight edge. And Hansen has spent more time working with the No. 1 offense than Hawkins has. Yet everyone involved continues to say that both players are in the mix to start.

As for Thursday's scrimmage, Hansen said he got most of the first-team snaps, but it was "maybe 60-40."

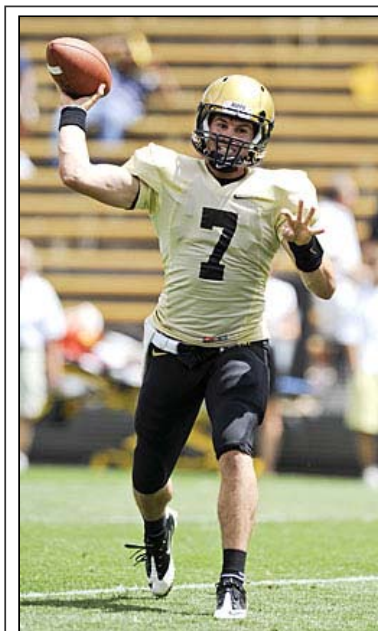
Hansen said he had two touchdown passes — including a 49-yarder to Toney Clemons in which Clemons apparently made a great play — and one interception on a tipped pass. That was the only turnover by the offense, head coach Dan Hawkins said.

Cody Hawkins was pleased with how he and Hansen performed.

"We both moved the ball well, and we both ended up rolling down and scoring touchdowns in our clutch situations, so that's a good sign for everybody on the offense," he said.

Hawkins has opened the season as the starter three years in a row. A year ago, he started the first five games before Hansen was given the job for the final seven games.

Being a senior, Hawkins said "it means a lot" if he could be the starter.



Quarterback Cody Hawkins passes the ball during the University of Colorado scrimmage on Aug. 12 at Folsom Field in Boulder. Hawkins and Tyler Hansen are battling for the starting job. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

“But more than anything, I want to win games,” he said. “I started for three years, and nobody has been where they want to be. As a team, we have to be a little bit more cohesive and get things done. That’s always been the goal.”

Kiesau said the Buffs aren’t concerned with making a decision early.

“There’s never a right time,” he said. “It’s whenever one guys steps up.

“We’re trying to divide (the reps) 50-50 to keep them both sharp. Whoever the starter is, we’re going to need the other guy as well. We have to keep them both fresh, both mentally and physically.”

Whether it’s Hansen or Hawkins who winds up starting, Kiesau said he doesn’t expect spectacular plays at the quarterback position.

“Both of these guys, they don’t have to do anything special,” he said. “They just have to operate and get these guys to be efficient down the field, distribute the ball. They’re never really going to do anything flashy. It’s just a matter of just controlling the game and moving the team down the field.”

Brian Howell can be reached at bhowell@times-call.com. Read his Buffs blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/howell.

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Longmont, Colorado
Friday, August 20, 2010

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Buffs' run game improving

By Brian Howell
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BOULDER — Throughout fall camp, the battle for the starting quarterback position has garnered a lot of attention.

For the Colorado Buffaloes, however, the real key could be how they run the ball.

Last year, Colorado ranked 113th in the country in rushing offense. Just seven teams in the nation were worse.

The Buffs would love to improve in that area and are pleased with their progress.

“We did a nice job today, for sure,” head coach Dan Hawkins said after Thursday’s scrimmage. “Definitely more consistent than they were last year.”

The scrimmage was closed to media, and stats from the afternoon were not made available. But coaches and players all seemed pleased with how the Buffs ran the ball Thursday.

“I was proud of how hard our running backs ran, especially a couple of those young running backs,” offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said.

Starter Rodney Stewart said he had a good day, adding, “I think the running game is going to be more effective (this year).”

There are plenty of reasons to believe it will.

The offensive line brings back a load of experience. Stewart is in his third season.

Whoever wins the quarterback job could be a key, too. Cody Hawkins has more experience starting, but Tyler Hansen is more mobile.

“If we need a little more help running the ball, Tyler definitely has the edge there,” Cody Hawkins said. “If you’re mobile and they have to account for you, that definitely opens things in the run game.”

Cody Hawkins also believes the receivers will help the run game. CU has a deeper pool of talent at receiver than it has had in years.

“With the guys on the edge and the things we’ve been able to do with the receivers, defenses having to spread out and respect those guys, it’ll help our run game a little bit,” he said.

SOLIDIFYING THE DEFENSE: CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins said his unit made some mental errors during the second half of Thursday’s scrimmage. But he is pleased with how the group has played this fall.

“We’re way beyond where we were at this time last year, and I think we’re as good as we were at any time last fall,” Collins said. “We have to eliminate some of the mental errors, which happens at this point in time, but we feel good

with what we've done so far."

He added that the defense is "playing faster than we've ever had guys play here before. That's been a blessing."

Collins said the Buffs also are set to solidify their depth chart on defense.

"Once we evaluate this scrimmage, then our two-deep will be set," he said.

THE GOOD AND THE BAD: Asked to assess Thursday's scrimmage, Dan Hawkins said it was "OK."

"As the head guy, the defense does good and you're mad at the offense; the offense does good and you're mad at the defense," he said. "A lot of good things to learn from. Still just trying to clean some things up."

Offensively, Hawkins was pleased with how the Buffs did in clutch and goal-line situations. He also said the Buffs had fewer penalties than they did a week earlier in their first scrimmage.

HE'S A PLAYER: Freshman receiver Paul Richardson did not participate in the scrimmage because he was going through student orientation.

The Buffs are looking for big things from the true freshman, though.

"He definitely won't redshirt for us," Hansen said. "I can guarantee you that. He's a play-maker. He'll be in the regular rotation."

Running back Justin Torres and tight end Harold Mobley, among others, also missed the scrimmage for orientation.

BATTLE OF THE TRENCHES: While the Buffs were pleased with the run game Thursday, Hansen said he believes the first-team defensive line got the better of the first-team offensive line.

"Today we kind of struggled with protection a little bit at times," said Hansen, who also said the offensive line was banged up. "There was a couple of drives that we got after it a little bit (on offense), but I'd have to say for the most part, the D-line probably won that battle."

THE NEW SLASH: Cody Hawkins said he is calling Matt Bahr "Slash," a nickname once given to versatile former Buff Kordell Stewart, who displayed multiple skills in the NFL.

Cody Hawkins said Bahr — a 6-foot-4, 290-pound junior — lined up at tailback, fullback, right tackle and tight end Thursday.

"Kordell's got company," Hawkins said.

EXTRA POINTS: Linebacker Michael Sipili created the only turnover, intercepting a tipped pass from Hansen. ... Dan Hawkins didn't report any significant injuries. ... The coach said Aric Goodman has a "slight edge" in the place-kicking battle but that Justin Castor and Marcus Kirkwood are close. "They've all been kicking better," Hawkins said.

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