



No matter the outfit, Brian Cabral has been a picture of leadership and experience on the CU sidelines.  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



08/23/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Brooks: LB Numbers, Competition Excite Cabral

**BOULDER** - In forging a radiant reputation as Colorado's linebackers coach, Brian Cabral in most years has had quantity to accompany the quality he annually cultivates at his position.

Recently, though, his number of crunchers dwindled, forcing him to ask players such as 2009 tri-captain Jeff Smart to learn all positions and be ready for plugging in as needed.

But 2010 finds Cabral counting his blessings - and bodies. The head count at his position is way, way up. And through fall camp, quality of play has run stride-for-stride with quantity. Cabral finally is in a good place and knows it.

"My two deep - I can play any of them with first group, and that's where I want to get to," he said. "I want to play anybody I need when I want them. I feel like I've got enough experience and depth to

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do that. I'm not so hung up on who's starting and who's second team as I am this: just give me four guys I can play a game with.

"It's been a long time since I've been able to do or say that. But I'm feeling very confident I'll be able to do that. I have a three-deep and my goal is to bring them along, get them all involved. You're always going to need everybody before the season's over."

Cabral's current corps is a diverse assemblage of personalities, size and talent. Senior leadership is flowing from a source (Michael Sipili) that several years ago might have been considered unlikely. A converted safety (Patrick Mahnke) has found lining up nearer the line of scrimmage to his liking, as well as Cabral's. If you're not familiar with the name Tyler Ahles (pronounced "Allis"), you will be; he's a heavy hitter. Ditto for swift redshirt freshman Derrick Webb, who says his forte is bringing "violence" to his position. A native Hawaiian (B.J. Beatty) with flowing auburn hair lives on the edge, which also happens to be where he usually lines up. A former local high-profile recruit (Jon Major) is ready for an even higher profile season.

Those six players, joined by athletic Doug Rippy and junior college transfer Evan Harrington, most likely will form Cabral's top eight players. The pre-opener depth chart offered a couple of mild surprises - Ahles ahead of Beatty at the Sam (outside) position, Rippy and Webb in a dead heat behind Sipili at the Mike (middle) spot. A leg injury slowed Beatty early in camp.

Cabral is an upbeat guy, but this season's fierce positional dueling takes that up a notch. Opening-game depth, he said, is "still sorting itself out . . . I've got a lot of competition going on. I would suspect that the first eight can change, but that's the flexibility I have."

Major, of Ponderosa High School, said the work ethic across the board at linebacker is impossible not to notice: "All these guys want to work hard, want to be good. That's the most important thing. Then it's pretty much in coach's hands from there, and we all know he's very successful at that."

The increased numbers and intense competition leaves little or no room for subpar practices.

"Everybody's seeing it . . . you always feel that pressure, which is good," Major continued. "It makes everyone better. The guys low on the depth chart always want to climb, the guys at the top are always looking right back behind them. Somebody's always gaining. It brings out the best in you - it's got to."

Major, who played in six games last season as a redshirt freshman (he suffered a knee injury in his first year), entered camp wanting to gain more experience and smooth out his game.

"I want to stop being robotic . . . it's OK to be fluid out there instead of 'this gap - be there,'" he said. "I want to find the flow, be a little more fluid and make plays. It's all about the ball."

Is he getting there?

"Definitely . . . it's just experience," he said. "I've always been the type of guy who wants to perfect it and go from there."

After showing up well in summer 7-on-7 work, Harrington usually practices at Major's Will (inside) position but has found the acclimation process taking longer than expected.

"Things are going good, but there's still a lot to learn," he said. "It's taking a while."

Still, while Cabral wouldn't describe Harrington as being "overwhelmed," he didn't hesitate in applying that description to his incoming freshmen - Lowell Williams and Gage Greer. Redshirt freshman Liloa Nobriga is more advanced, but also still is learning. The depth chart lists him as sharing the third spot behind Ahles and Beatty with junior David Goldberg.

Harrington, said Cabral, "is just starting to sort it all out. It's a lot for him, but he's doing it. The only thing I can hope for is that he improves and gets better each day and week - and we build on it. It's very hard, but I do like his progress. He's not overwhelmed. Now my freshmen, they're overwhelmed."

But if they stay diligent and mimic Webb's first year on campus, good things await. A rare Tennessean on the CU roster, Webb admits that his head was swimming upon his arrival in Boulder in 2009.

"Yeah, I was lost . . . I'm not going to lie," he said. "The redshirt was probably the best thing that could happen to me. Taking the year to sit back and watch, pay attention . . . now it's my time and I feel like I'm ready to go."

In truth, he might be a couple of steps on the far side of ready.

"I'm bringing violence to the position," he said. "I want to inflict pain on somebody on every play. I'm going to go hard, 100 percent at the blocks, at the ball, wherever. And I'm going to try and hit you hard."

Off-season and summer conditioning left him fit and fast.

"I feel like I can run full speed on every down, go my hardest and still don't feel winded. I got in the best shape I could," 'D-Webb' said.

"Coach Cabral always said he knew I'd be 100 miles an hour, but I needed to learn where I was going with it. When I started learning the defense more, all the stuff just started coming together."

Webb's attitude and swagger always might have been there, but the knowledge of what to do and where to go was nurtured in summer sessions with Sipili, the fifth-year senior whose name arises in any conversation about leadership at the position or on the defense.

Said Webb, who mostly plays the Mike position (Sipili's) but has seen time at Will: "I learned as much as I could (last fall), then refreshed what I learned in the spring. By the time fall camp hit, I was pretty familiar with our base defense and just went from there. But I worked with (Sipili) a lot and watched lot of film over the summer. We learned it fast."

Major, Harrington and Webb all point to Sipili as a guiding force. If the LBs want to be like Mike, there's a reason.

"He's a leader to all the 'backers - a fifth-year guy. He's been here the longest," Webb said. "You can watch Mike and learn a lot, plus he's probably one of our hardest working linebackers. That's what I built my hard work on in the summer . . . he's inspired me to work harder."

Added Major: "He's not just (a leader) in our group, but on the whole team. He's done a very good job in the off-season . . . been where he's supposed to be, done what he's supposed to do. He's been very motivating in workouts and practices and coaching up guys.

"It's a little bit of a change for him, but I think he's embraced that responsibility. It's always been the other guys, but I think now he's stepping into it."

Cabral agreed: "He's fitting into everything you expect from a senior - the leadership, understanding the defense. He's been good, can't ask for anything more from Mike right now. He's been a little nicked up at times, but I like his leadership in our group and on the defense. He's confident and ready to have a great year."

So are the guys he's lining up alongside.

## **THE INSIDE LOOK AT . . .**

### **Linebackers**

**Coach:** Brian Cabral, 22nd season.

**Returning starters:** SLB B.J. Beatty, Sr.

**Returnees:** MLB Michael Sipili, Sr.; WLB Jon Major; SLB Tyler Ahles, Jr.; MLB Doug Rippy, Soph.; WLB Patrick Mahnke, Jr.; SLB David Goldberg, Jr.

**Newcomers:** MLB Derrick Webb, Fr-RS; SLB Liloa Nobriga, Fr-RS; WLB Evan Harrington, Jr.; MLB Gage Greer, Fr.; WLB Lowell Williams, Fr.

**Key losses:** MLB Marcus Burton, WLB Jeff Smart, MLB Bryan Stengel, WLB Shaun Mohler, WLB Brandon Gouin.

**Stat line:** In Smart, the Buffs lost their second-leading tackler (93 total, 65 unassisted), so someone must step up to fill that void. Burton recorded 66 tackles (40 solo) and Mohler 42 (24). Here's an oddity: The linebacking corps didn't provide an interception in 2009, but Burton was tied for No. 2 in quarterback sacks (four).

**Bottom line:** With four key contributors - including two starters and the group's leader (Smart) over the past two seasons - graduated, this position will have a decidedly new look in 2010. But from all indications, Sipili has stepped into a leadership role and is talented enough to be a top tackler. Also, Cabral is reveling in his depth - something that's been absent for a while at this position.

*Next: Running backs*

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## Cody Hawkins among four CU Buffs captains

**Brown, McKnight, Solder also selected by teammates**

Camera staff report  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/22/2010 05:48:24 PM MDT

Cody Hawkins is still a leader on the CU football team even though he's not the Buffs' starting quarterback.

Hawkins was among four seniors named team captains on Sunday after a vote by the Buffs. Cornerback Jalil Brown, wide receiver Scotty McKnight and offensive tackle Nate Solder were also selected captains.

All four players are fifth-year seniors and three-year lettermen. Brown, McKnight and Solder top the depth chart at their respective positions and Hawkins was named the backup to Tyler Hansen on Saturday.

The four captains have played in 144 games, with 97 starts among them.

"Scotty, Cody, Jalil and Nate clearly stuck out in the majority of our team's minds as people they respected as players, students and people," CU head coach Dan Hawkins said, noting that all players and not just seniors were eligible to be selected. "These captains have the ability to both reach out and build up others and carry a firm stance when needed. They are a fine example of our program's foundation of 'Excellence with Class.'"

The Buffs officially wrapped up camp on Saturday and will be off today as classes for the fall semester begin. They will resume practice Tuesday ahead of the season opener Sept. 4 against Colorado State. The Rocky Mountain Showdown kicks off at noon at Invesco Field in Denver.

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colorado football

## CU's Polk adds depth to secondary

By John Henderson  
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/23/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — The apprenticeship of sophomore Ray Polk is over.

Donald Trump would keep him. Colorado certainly will. In a secondary featuring two NFL prospects at cornerback, Polk has made the transition from a 4.4 tailback buried on the depth chart to a fire-breathing, raw meat-eating, bone-crunching free safety.

The secondary is Colorado's strength thanks to senior cornerbacks Jalil Brown and Jimmy Smith and strong safety Anthony Perkins, who was third on the team with 78 tackles last season. Now add another sub-4.5 defensive back who has finally learned the position, and you have the best secondary Colorado has had in years.

In only his second year at the position, Polk is no longer dazed and confused.

"I'm really getting comfortable in that spot," Polk said. "It's all about experience. It's been an expedient growth."

The transition isn't easy. He's going from running forward to running backward. Yet think of the run support the defense gets from a safety who runs a 4.4.

In his apprenticeship year in 2009, Polk played well enough off the bench to earn the starting job by Game 7 at Kansas State. He has been entrenched ever since.

"It's kind of similar to tailback, honestly, in the run fits," Polk said. "You come up and you fill a hole. You get to read it from farther back. I never thought I'd enjoy that, but I never thought of it from a defensive perspective."

With Smith, Brown and Perkins returning, Polk's maturation into the new position was the secondary's lone question mark. As far as new secondary coach Ashley Ambrose is concerned, the question has been answered.

"He's doing good," said Ambrose, an all-pro cornerback with the Bengals in 1996. "He's made tremendous strides from last year. I've seen some good things from him, and he just has to keep working."

Polk's dad, Raymond, was a cornerback at Oklahoma State, but Ray's move to defensive back wasn't as obvious as it

seemed. At Brophy Prep in Scottsdale, Ariz., he was a SuperPrep All-American and ranked as the No. 11 tailback in the country by [Rivals.com](http://Rivals.com).

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## Colorado Football

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He came to Colorado, shunning programs that suggested a switch to defense. Then he saw the depth chart at tailback. Above him in his own class were the highest-recruited tailback in the country, Darrell Scott, and Rodney Stewart, so good out of Westerville, Ohio, that he could beat out Scott, which he did.

After redshirting in 2008, Polk went to then-secondary coach Greg Brown on signing day with an idea. Move him to safety.

"I said I think this would be the best idea for me and the team," Polk said. "We've got a lot of running backs as it is. Obviously, now it's a little different."

Yes, Scott never played to his press clippings and transferred to South Florida, and at least two true freshman tailbacks will get playing time behind Stewart and junior Brian Lockridge this season.

How much this secondary can dominate may be revealed Sept. 4 when Colorado opens against Colorado State and a true freshman quarterback, Pete Thomas.


"We've got a great secondary, honestly," Polk said. "It's pretty exciting. I think we're really stepping up. The great thing about it is not only is our secondary really good but our receivers actually are pushing us. We have receivers to get better off of, and it's all building on itself."

## Buff's select captains.

Quarterback Cody Hawkins, wide receiver Scotty McKnight, offensive tackle Nate Solder and cornerback Brown were selected captains by their teammates Sunday.

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AUGUST 23, 2010, 7:01 AM

## CU preview: Linebackers coach likes his depth

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

[1]

[Michael Sipili](#)<sup>[2]</sup> will anchor the inside for the Buffs linebacker corps this season. Karl Gehring/The Denver Post

*In the seventh part of a series of look-aheads at Colorado's 2010 season, broken down by units, we look at the Buffs' linebacking corps...*

### CU LINEBACKERS

**Newcomers:** Redshirt freshman Derrick Webb (6-0, 220) ranks among the most punishing hitters on the team and looks to be a capable backup to senior [Michael Sipili](#)<sup>[2]</sup> at the Mike (inside) linebacker spot. There won't be much dropoff when Sipili needs a breather. Junior-college transfer [Evan Harrington](#)<sup>[3]</sup> is still trying to get comfortable with the defense but is one of the strongest and quickest players on this unit. Redshirt-freshman outside linebacker [Liloe Nobriga](#)<sup>[4]</sup> (6-2, 215) recorded a quarterback sack in the first scrimmage and may get some opportunities. He looks active. New at least to the linebackers, is junior [Patrick Mahnke](#)<sup>[5]</sup>, a former safety who switched positions in the spring. A strong tackler, he will help. As Mahnke has said, "I'm maybe slow for a safety but fast for a linebacker."

**Biggest losses:** CU linebackers coach [Brian Cabral](#)<sup>[6]</sup> had to replace two senior starters, Marcus Burton and [Jeff Smart](#)<sup>[7]</sup>, plus two top senior reserves: occasional starter, [Shaun Mohler](#)<sup>[8]</sup>, and reserve Bryan Stengel.

**Strengths:** Despite losing four seniors, Cabral said he hasn't had this much depth at all three linebacker positions in four or five years. New starters Sipili and sophomore Jon Major have seen game action. Major (6-1, 220) can really run and was a national top-150 prospect at [Ponderosa High](#)<sup>[9]</sup> in Parker in 2007.



**Weaknesses:** Experience might matter as much at linebacker as any position on the team except quarterback. The lone returning starter, senior [B.J. Beatty](#)<sup>[10]</sup>, must be a leader.

**What to look for:** This could be a more athletic group than last year's unit. Major, a third-year sophomore who missed his first year with an ACL knee injury, could be the key. It's time for the former Parade All-American to play to his potential. He can run. In any case, having enough quality players for at least a two-deep rotation at all three spots should enable Cabral to keep everybody fresh. At times last year, CU's defense appeared to wear down in the second half against quality opponents.

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- \*\* **WRs:** [Newcomers add explosiveness to offense](#)<sup>[14]</sup>
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Longmont, Colorado  
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## Quite a catch

By Brian Howell  
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Nearly five years after completing his spectacular high school football career, Travon Patterson is still looking to be an impact player in college.

“Yeah, I have (been waiting),” he said. “Patience is a virtue. Hopefully this is the year.”

Patterson is in his first season with the University of Colorado Buffaloes, and it appears he has a chance to make an immediate impact.

The 5-foot-9, 175-pounder from Long Beach, Calif., is heading into the season as CU’s top punt returner. He’s also among the talented group of receivers that hopes to make CU’s passing game a serious threat.

At Long Beach Poly High School, he was a PrepStar All-American. As a senior in 2005, 15 of his 25 receptions went for touchdowns, and he averaged 28 yards for every catch. He also averaged 38 yards on kick returns and 27 on punt returns.

Naturally, he figured he’d duplicate that success in college. He signed with Southern California and spent the past four years with the Trojans.

Patterson never shined at USC, however. He caught just 10 career passes there and never got a chance to return kicks.

He’ll get an opportunity at CU.

“He’s very good,” special teams coach Kent Riddle said.

Patterson can’t wait to prove that.

“I’m very excited,” he said. “Coach Riddle believes in me and put his trust in me, and the team put their trust in me. I’m doing it for the team, just to help us.”

Patterson would love to catch a lot of passes this season, but he’s also eager to prove himself as a punt returner.

“It is fun, really,” he said. “Once you make that first guy miss, you can score and make a big play and help the team out. It’s a lot of fun doing punt returns.

“I’m very excited to finally get the opportunity to really go out there and return one live in a game. It is a privilege, and I’m honored for it.”

There was a time this summer when Patterson wondered if he’d get this chance. After USC was hit with NCAA sanctions, he and other upperclassmen were allowed to transfer. Patterson chose to come to CU, but because CU has



Receiver Travon Patterson fields a punt during the University of Colorado scrimmage on Aug. 12 at Folsom Field in Boulder. Patterson is in his first year with the Buffs after transferring from Southern California. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

joined USC in the Pac-10, he needed approval from all the other Pac-10 schools. One by one, he got that approval.

“It was a lot of frustration going through that time,” he said. “As I continued to get votes, it was easier and easier. When I finally got that last vote, it was a big relief for me.”

Now he’s a Buffalo, which he admits is a bit weird after wearing Trojans colors for four years. But, he’s happy and ready to finally make a name for himself.

“Everything works out for a reason,” he said. “I’m here for a reason.”

Brian Howell can be reached at [bhowell@times-call.com](mailto:bhowell@times-call.com). Read his Buffs blog at [www.timescall.com/blogs/howell](http://www.timescall.com/blogs/howell).

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## Bufs shift gears for 2010

Football season preview

*By Michael Krumholz on August 23, 2010*

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Last November, the Colorado football team walked off their own field defeated by the rivals in red. The third straight loss gave end to a long despondent season, which defined itself with midseason transfers, a quarterback switch and an unpredictable

In September the great cycle of college football will repeat.

The out-of-conference schedule features SEC powerhouse Georgia, future Pac-10 foe California and pass-happy Hawaii in their first three games after the annual civil war game with CSU.

Starting quarterback Tyler Hansen looks at the tough competition with delight.

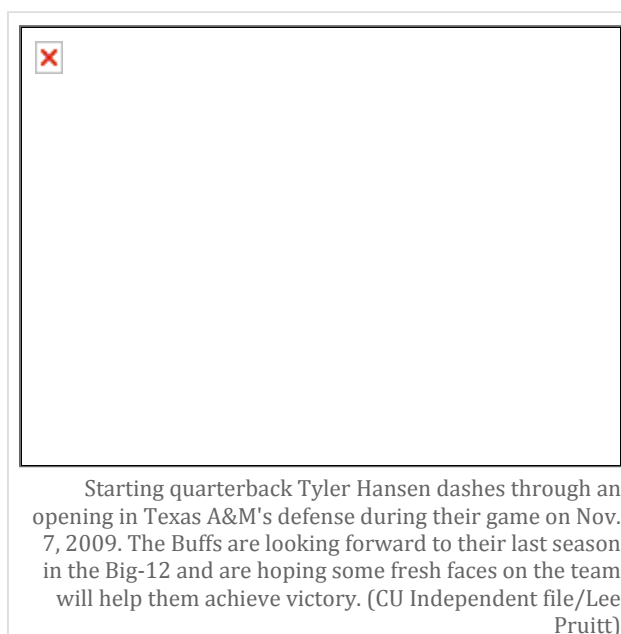
“If we can beat some of the top teams in the nation it will burst us onto the national stage,” said the junior from Murrieta, Calif. “I think whenever you can beat the teams like Georgia or California, it gives you a little more confidence.”

Here are four reasons the Bufs can contend for the Big 12 North:

1. The offensive line returns all five starters. The same offensive line that allowed only one sack to Nebraska (and that was awarded for intentional grounding). Nebraska finished second in the FBS in sacks last season with 44 and the second overall NFL draft pick Ndamukong Suh had 12 of those himself.

Now that Colorado brings back one of the deepest offensive lines in the country, Coach Dan Hawkins said he feels a little more relaxed in practice.

“We’ve been running with about four full offensive lines, which is nice,” Hawkins said. “There’s a ton of guys who have played and know the system. It’s nice when they can play center and guard, or guard and tackle.”



Not only did the O-line, which averages a height of nearly 6-foot-6, allow Hansen to throw for 269 yards and three touchdowns, but it gave Rodney Stewart enough room to run for over 100 yards against the Huskers. The Buffs, in coach Hawkins' view, will need to run the ball consistently in the Big 12 conference.

"Those are always two things that I think are critical in football: Being able to run it and being able to stop it," Hawkins said. "That obviously starts up front."

2. Defensive Coordinator Ron Collins returns seven starters to his side of the ball and 20 defenders who had significant playing time last season.

The secondary brings back three starters: Jimmy Smith, Jalil Brown and Anthony Perkins and could be the strength of the defense.

At the end of the 2009 season, CU defense's results were more bad than good.

"We look at it that everyone is pushing us aside, that we are going to shock the world," B.J. Beatty said. "We have a lot of guys, a lot of depth so if somebody goes down, another guy can come right in and do the exact same job."

The defense will be battle-tested by the time it reaches conference play in October. Players like California's Shane Vereen, Georgia's A.J. Green and Hawaii's Greg Salas are some of the best offensive weapons in the nation.

3. Coaches named quarterback Hansen as the starting guy two weeks before opening kickoff.

"Tyler gives us a little more of an edge when it comes to the things we can do on offense and being a little more creative," said Offensive Coordinator Eric Kiesau after announcing Hansen as the starter. "His athleticism [helps], whether it's dropping back to pass or making something happen on his feet."

4. This team is filled with talent in all the right gaps offensively. Since the 2009 season kicked off at Folsom, the Buffs have lost a number of important playmakers. Hawkins' big time recruit Darrell Scott is long gone, running back Demetrius Sumler went out to California with him, and troubled receiver Markques Simas finally got the boot.

Before his departure, Simas was Hansen's favorite deep target, and had 106 yards against Nebraska's secondary. This offseason, three receivers have arrived in hopes of picking up where Simas left off, after being released from their respective scholarships.

Preseason Big 12 Newcomer of the Year Toney Clemons was with the team during spring practices and has locked up a starting spot at X receiver. With a 6-foot-2 frame and a 4.4. in the 40 to match, he'll be Hansen's best threat for big yardage.

The late arrivals of ultra-quick USC transfer Travon Patterson and UCLA recruit Paul Richardson give the Buffs much needed open field speed. Scotty McKnight, who is two catches from being the school leader in receptions, looks forward to being surrounded by the talent.

"We thought it was going to hurt to lose Markques, at it turned out that we've added so many people we can look past that," McKnight said.

When the grudge match against CSU kicks off in Denver, the Buffs will have a clean 0-0 slate to work with. Alongside their fans, critics and coaches, CU's starting quarterback said he wants to see what the 2010 season brings for the boys in Boulder.



“The last few years have been disappointments to us,” Hansen said. “We have to go out there and prove to people who we are; we are a strong team.”

Four seniors were chosen as captains for the football team on Sunday, all seniors: cornerback Jalil Brown, quarterback Cody Hawkins, wide receiver Scotty McKnight and offensive tackle Nate Solder.

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