



Dakota Poole (97) has a notable rugby background could be beneficial to him -- sometimes.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



08/07/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Poole Working His Way Into A Different Scrum

BOULDER - As a football player, Dakota Poole is as raw as a February night in his homeland. But if you're gathering guys for a scrum, or perhaps a more loosely organized brawl, you'd probably want to consider him as a teammate.

Poole is a former Canadian rugby player of note who has designs on playing defensive tackle in American college football. Right now, he's a project - although one that Colorado D-line coach Romeo Bandison believes has a sizeable upside.

"I look forward to watching him progress; in time, I think he'll be fine," Bandison said Saturday. "I don't know how it works in rugby, but I'd imagine if you're on the national junior team you've got to have some athletic ability."

Indeed, Poole has plenty of that, as well as size to match. He's just a click under 6-foot-5 and a shade

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over 250 pounds. He's at least two years older (20) than most of his incoming freshman classmates and he's in mint rugby condition - mentally and physically.

After we found a shady spot Saturday morning following the Buffs' early practice, I asked him the obvious - how rugby lends itself to playing college football.

"Definitely the aggression," he answered immediately. "Just being able to turn that on . . . the tackling helps as well, but there's a little different technique. In rugby you keep your head on the inside, push them out of bounds and get possession. In football it's the opposite - head across and on the outside."

Old habits die hard . . . and Poole has played a *lot* of rugby. A native of Kelowna, a mid-sized metropolis on Okanagan Lake in British Columbia's southern interior, he played football as a kid and loved it.

"But one day, our coach says, 'I'm sure everyone here wants to go pro,'" Poole recalled. "We're in *bantam* league. I'm saying, 'I don't want to go pro; I'm just here to have fun, you know what I mean?' Then I started playing and I said, 'Hell yes, I want to go pro; I like this.'"

Problem was, he liked rugby just as much after a friend convinced him to pick it up as a method of cross-training for football.

"I went out (for rugby), did pretty well and ended up making the regional team, then I the skipped up to the senior team in junior rugby, captained that team, went from there to regionals . . . then made the provincial team, then the national squad," he said of his ascent in the Canadian junior circle.

"To a high school kid - and my mom wanted the best for me as well - I was like, 'Do I play for the high school football team in Kelowna, which isn't even on the map for football, or do I play for my country in rugby? What am I going to do? So I went and played national rugby at the age of 16 for the under-17 team and then worked my way up from under-17 to under-20."

But after playing rugby for four years without a break, Poole returned to football, playing the 2008-09 season for the Okanagan Sun in the Canadian Junior League. He did well enough as a defensive tackle that his coach advised him to contact an American college acquaintance - CU coach Dan Hawkins.

Poole sent Hawkins a Facebook message and got a reply the following day asking if he had a highlight video on line.

"I didn't have any from (the Sun) and none from high school," Poole said. "But I rounded up some film and had a buddy who worked for a TV station in Kelowna. He edited it, put an arrow in the tape (on Poole). My buddy put it on YouTube for me and we went from there."

(FYI: The Dakota Poole highlight clip is still up - arrow and all.)

Poole visited CU in June and already had purchased an airline ticket to visit Arizona State afterwards. But he was sold on Boulder and canceled the trip to Tempe. CU now; later ASU.

He believes he's a "natural" at defensive tackle, but admits "it's such a leap" coming to this level with his lack of experience. He played some offensive tackle in high school and would move there if CU coaches insisted, but there would be some reluctance.

Poole, who also is into extreme sports, basically "anything that involves a board," believes he could add weight necessary for the D-line but would have trouble adding enough to be an O-lineman. On the other hand, "If I could have the body mass like (Nate) Solder, then sure, you know what I mean?" he said.

"But I don't want to turn into a 300- or 350-pounder, get out of university and my body's wrecked. But I'll do whatever I've got to do for the team, bottom line."

Solder, CU's senior left tackle, is 6-9, weighs about 310 and has a body fat percentage in single digits. Although about five inches shorter, Poole doesn't carry much extra poundage either. He's used to rugby's constant running, calling it "a really fit sport," but he's also excited to return to a sport that will allow him to focus on getting stronger.

"It's a chance for me to put on weight because I've been running my ass off for I don't know how long," he said. "I can switch from the endurance factor to the power and strength. You can only get so big and strong and still be able to move around the field for 80 minutes straight (in rugby)."

His age and maturity - he turned 20 in February - might provide an advantage in some instances, but not in others. He's attuned to what could be plusses and minuses.

"I've been through camps like this with Rugby Canada and it doesn't bother me too much," he said. "I'm sure guys are getting hit with a lot this week and they're not getting any sleep. I'm used to that . . ."

"But a (minus) is that a lot of these younger guys have a lot more experience than me in the sport. I've got a deficit there; that's no secret. I've just got to fight to make that up."

He's trying to break into a CU D-line that returns almost every player, so spending a redshirt season might be of benefit. Again, he sees the pros and cons there: "A lot of the better players on this team have done it (redshirted) and I don't think that's a coincidence.

"But I'm also 20; I'd like to get playing. Obviously, every guy's dream is to make some kind of a draft. If I do well in Division I football, the CFL is going to look at me somewhere. You get to 24-25 in the CFL and that's almost too old for the draft . . . It could go either way."

For now, he's simply trying to absorb what Bandison is heaping on him, and the teacher says the pupil has promise. He's inquisitive, competitive and willing to learn.

"When he plays you can see he's aware but not very instinctive yet," Bandison said. "Everything's new to him. A lot of things he does would be great in rugby, but not so much in football. Our keys in football are different; we look where we're going, he's looking for the next possible guy to get the ball. He's always looking around or looking back. But again, he's a smart guy and willing to learn."

Those are two factors in Poole's favor, and there a lot more.

SAME SIDELINE, DIFFERENT ROLE: **Victor Rogers**, who lettered four years at offensive tackle and was a senior on CU's 2001 Big 12 Conference championship team, is joining the Colorado Football Network team as its new sideline reporter. Rogers will be able to work eight games in the first season, mainly due to the late notice of the switch. He replaces **Charles S. Johnson** (CU's assistant AD) and joins **Mark Johnson** and **Larry Zimmer** on the broadcasts.

SIX (OR LESS) DEGREES OF BUFFS: How small of a world is it? Senior SN **Joe Silipo's** father, Joe Sr., was the center on the San Antonio Gunslingers of the USFL during the 1984 and '85 seasons. His quarterback was former CU head coach Rick Neuheisel.

WHAT I DID THIS SUMMER: Poole wins the award so far for the most interesting summer job ... although he is a pilot and has flown previous summers, he lists one of his previous summer jobs as an "apple picker."

GENERATION BUFF: Invited walk-on DB **Jordan Marquez's** father, Mike, lettered three years at halfback at CU from 1985-87 and was a key player in the switch to the wishbone that turned around the program's fortunes. He rushed for 463 yards and four touchdowns in his career and led the Buffs in the '85 Freedom Bowl with 10 carries for 80 yards against Washington.

MEDIA GUIDES EXCLUSIVELY ONLINE: If you're expecting to receive or purchase a copy of CU's football media guide, it's not going to happen. CU is the latest school to throw in the towel when it comes to printing guides. After a barrage of new NCAA legislation, we are shifting the budget to enhance areas of CUBuffs.com. There will still be a PDF version of the media guide, expected to be completed by about August 15. Other sports will follow suit with the same plan, as well.

BUFF BITS: Hawkins told Saturday's media day audience that even after only three days of camp, the 2010 Buffs were playing faster and with more confidence. "We've had more guys go through this," he said The obligatory quarterback question was asked and Hawkins offered the standard answer: Naming a starter will come later. Tyler Hansen continues to do much of the work with the No. 1 offense, with Cody Hawkins rotating in. Dan Hawkins said it would be difficult for freshman Nick Hirschman to work his way into the starting role, but added, "You never say never." CU finally is able to work with four full offensive lines, a welcome departure from having to scrape enough O-linemen to go two deep. The depth and experience should pay off Receiver Travon Patterson, a transfer from Southern California, did not practice Saturday. He's still waiting for administrative clearance Hawkins said freshman receiver Paul Richardson, who began practicing Friday, "is very talented and has good hands." He also said senior Scotty McKnight has been mentoring redshirt freshman Jarrod Darden, and it's paying off. "Darden is coming on," Hawkins said If senior Aric Goodman emerges from camp as the No. 1 placekicker, he won't enter the season on a "short leash." Said Hawkins: "That wouldn't be fair to him." Redshirt freshman Zach Grossnickle is focusing exclusively on punting and doing well, Hawkins noted.

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SHOW MENU

Bufs' Bonsu ready to bounce back

By **Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/08/2010 12:06:41 AM MDT

Defensive lineman Nate Bonsu was one of the most impressive freshman on the Colorado football team last season, but he wasn't able to build on that success in the spring because of a knee injury suffered in winter conditioning.

Bonsu underwent surgery to have a torn meniscus repaired and bone chips removed and he spent a month of spring practices riding a stationary bike on the sidelines. The 290-pound defensive tackle was fully recovered by mid-June and is on the field once again with the start of fall camp.

"Everybody knows how we ended the year," Bonsu said. "Everybody out here is just ready to prove we're actually a really, really great team, and we just want to win for us and the fans."

Bonsu played in all 12 games as a true freshman from Allen, Texas. He recorded 15 tackles and recovered one fumble in 184 plays from scrimmage. He hopes to build on those totals as a sophomore, but he will have to steal playing time away from older teammates such as Curtis Cunningham, Eugene Goree, Will Pericak and Conrad Obi.

"It's good to be out here finally again," he said.

Short leash?

Coach Dan Hawkins said he believes the Buffs have a good competition going on this month at place-kicker with five kickers on the roster and a sixth to be added as a post-camp walk-on. He said if senior Aric Goodman, the team's regular kicker the past two seasons, wins the job once again, he won't be quick to take him out of games if he misses kicks.

"I don't think you ever want to do that to a guy," Hawkins said. "If he's the guy, he's the guy, and I think you kind of have to roll with him."

Goodman underwent hip surgery in the spring but is participating fully in practices. He is hoping to improve his accuracy in his senior season after making just 10 of 18 field goal attempts last season.

Two QBs or not two QBs?

Hawkins and his assistants must choose a starting quarterback some time in the next two weeks. Hawkins said he is in no hurry to do so.

"We'll see when it emerges, no big rush right now," Hawkins said.

Senior Cody Hawkins, the coach's son, and junior Tyler Hansen are competing for the job. Dan Hawkins was asked about the possibility of rotating them in games.

"We might. We'll see how it goes," he said.

Hawkins said it is unlikely freshman Nick Hirschman could win the job because the veterans have too much experience under their belts.

Notable

The offense dominated the late practice Saturday featuring most of the veteran players. The offensive line led the way to several long runs for tailbacks Rodney Stewart and Brian Lockridge. ... The Buffs have one full-squad practice today at 5:15 p.m., and will be in full pads for the first time on Monday morning.

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Woelk: Confidence not lacking in Buffaloes

Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/08/2010 12:01:05 AM MDT

To a man, the Colorado Buffaloes say they're tired of losing.

No surprise there. There's not a player on the roster who has finished a season in Boulder with more victories than losses. Live through that kind of stretch, and any competitive athlete worth his salt is bound to be just a little fed up with the whole thing.

But it's one thing to say you're tired of losing and something totally different to actually do something about it.

You'd better have the players to back it up and the mentality to match. It may sound counter-intuitive, but if you want to cure a long stretch of losing, you need a little swagger to your step to go with that chip on your shoulder.

The players on Dan Hawkins' fifth CU team believe they have that combination.

"We're tired of losing -- sick and tired of losing," said Buff cornerback Jimmy Smith at Saturday morning's CU media day. "All the work we've put in, everything we've done -- we've done too much to go through the same thing again. It's going to pay off."

Again, easy to say. You wouldn't expect Smith to say anything else. But the look in Smith's eye suggests there's something different with this year's team. The young man who is quick to flash a smile shows no sign of even the slightest grin when discussing what's ahead for the Buffs.

Smith -- one of the best players on CU's team and one of the best players in the Big 12 -- is very, very serious about his fifth and final season in Boulder.

He's done his best to make sure his teammates view it the same way.

"This is the first time since I've been here that there's a little swagger," Smith said. "We have some confidence. You can look around and know that we have good players everywhere."

"Last year people said we were supposed to be improved and we maybe just thought it would happen. This year ... this year we're working to make sure it happens. Anyone who saw our 7-on-7s this summer, anyone who saw us out there competing knows we have the players."

Already, Hawkins has noticed the difference in this year's team. It's nothing he can quantify, but what Hawkins calls "a little extra juice" is no doubt present.

"It's a good thing," Hawkins said. "You look at the older guys we've got out there and they've gone through a lot, personally and as a team. Injuries, close losses -- all those things."

"To accomplish anything great, I think there has to be a little extra juice, that motivation that drives you. I do think our team is there. I think everything these guys have been through has provided a little bit of that chip on their shoulders."

Certainly last season's 3-9 record provided plenty of ammunition in that department. From the opening loss to Colorado State to the season-ending defeat to Nebraska -- both at Folsom Field -- 2009 proved to be a long, long season for the Buffs.

"This team definitely has that chip on our shoulders," said quarterback Tyler Hansen. "You know that thing that Hawk keeps saying about being 'this close?'"

"People don't realize how true it is. We've sat and looked at film, looked at the things that cost us games. Little things

here, little things there. Dumb mistakes. It's so frustrating.

"Now we're fed up with losing. Sick of it. And this year, we've got players everywhere to make a difference. We've got the guys to do something special."

The Buffs do indeed have the players to make a difference. As the Buffs gathered for lunch on Saturday, one CU football staffer looked around the room and noted that "there are more NFL-caliber guys in here than we've had in a long time."

But translating talent into wins won't come easily. At CU, nothing ever comes easily.

Back to Smith. Asked why this year will be different than any of the other past four, the Buff cornerback leaned in and said with conviction:

"Because it's going to be. You can just feel it. We have the players, guys believe and guys are willing to work. It's not going to be the same."

Honestly? I've heard it before. From lots of players on lots of teams over the last 30-plus years.

But there's something about the way Smith and his teammates are saying it that makes it seem just a little different.

Different enough, anyway, to think that the swagger in their step and the chip on their shoulders might actually lead to something good for the 2010 Buffs.

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Hawkins' assurances low-key at CU media day

Expectations high, but Buffs football coach not issuing 10-win challenge

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/07/2010 07:40:29 PM MDT

Dan Hawkins has taken a more subtle approach to the offseason this year after challenging his Colorado football team to win 10 games on multiple occasions leading up to the 2009 campaign.

But that doesn't mean Hawkins doesn't have big expectations once again. He said Saturday he always sets a high standard. After watching 2 1/2 practices of fall camp, he was able to offer this much to fans of his program during his Saturday media day press conference on campus.

"I think we're playing faster and playing more confident," Hawkins said. "I think we have many more guys who have been here and gone through it. That's obviously a huge benefit."

All the customary goals are in place for this year's team -- Hawkins' fifth in Boulder -- as they are for just about any program around the country. Win the division, win the conference, play in a bowl game, hopefully a Bowl Championship Series game.

But there are no 10 wins to live up to or be distracted by as there were at media day a year ago.

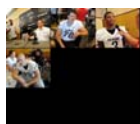
The Buffs believe they can surprise their peers around the country, especially those on their schedule, with more wins than losses for the first time since 2005. The average fan and reporter might think a lot would have to change for a 3-9 team that finished 113th in the nation in rushing, 92nd in scoring, 104th in total offense, 80th in rushing defense and 88th in scoring defense to achieve that goal.

Hawkins doesn't buy that.

He has spent the offseason telling supporters, his players and assistants the Buffs were just a few plays away from winning in most of their losses last season, even though five of those setbacks were by double-digit margins.

When challenged about that assessment with his team's statistical record last fall, by a reporter who said the numbers don't jump out as being those belonging to a team that was a few plays away, Hawkins said everyone is welcome to their opinion.

Hawkins will turn 50 years old in November and began fall camp needing his best season in Boulder to keep his job. He has been low-key about expectations for his team while athletic director Mike Bohn has said on multiple occasions, "It's a big year for Dan."



Hawkins said if the Buffs reach their potential this season and he is able to conduct a postseason press conference in December to discuss a trip to a bowl game, it won't be because a seismic shift has occurred in his program with the addition of new talent or changes in philosophy.

"I've told you guys before, just the line between getting it done and not getting it is very small," he said. "I've said that before many times in the past. You will go, 'What was the big thing?' And it won't be a big thing. It will be a bunch of little things.

"There is a bunch of those. There is a long list of those. There really are. Injuries. There is all those little, little infinite things. It won't be one big thing. It will be a whole lot of those things. Part of it is turnovers, being a little more consistent, making a couple kicks here or there, a penalty less or two. It comes down to two or three plays a game. You've got to get those and then you get a little momentum going. Like I said, the line between 10-2 and 2-10 is ..."

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CU FOOTBALL

Four frosh in rush to boost Buffs

By John Henderson

The Denver Post

The Denver Post

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

BOULDER — They come from all corners of the prep football world. They could only be more far apart if they belonged to the United Nations.

Southern California. New Jersey. North Carolina. Alabama. That's how far Colorado went for a freshman running back quartet that must add some bash to its dash.

CU got it from Cordary Allen, a 6-foot-1, 230-pounder from Central High School in Phenix City, Ala., and 6-0, 215-pound Justin Torres from La Mirada (Calif.) High. They join Trea' Jones (5-10, 190), from Rolesville High in Wake Forest, N.C. But the most highly touted is the smallest of all. Tony Jones (5-7, 180) was the New Jersey player of the year at powerful Don Bosco Prep in Paterson.

"Those guys have the ability to be dynamic," CU running backs coach Darian Hagan said Saturday.

So how did he lure players who had never left their region, let alone visit the Mountain time zone, to Boulder?

"It's not hard," Hagan said. "It's an opportunity, I always tell them, to be in warm weather."

Huh?

"They think it's cold everywhere," he said. "The main thing about the three guys from the East Coast is they ask, 'Is it cold?' You get that question a lot. 'Does it snow every day?' "

Other than clearing up the meteorology, it's not nearly as hard to recruit cross country as years ago. Think about it. How often have you IM'd or Skyped a close friend another world away?

Sitting in a dorm room for the first time away from home really doesn't feel too far from home.

"The whole world is smaller," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "Just whether it's travel or Internet or text messaging or e-mailing or Skype, whatever it is, it's a much more accessible world out there.

"You just have to find kids who are open to that."

These are. Allen said he has Skyped his mother every day since coming to Boulder in early summer.

"Skype does help," Torres said. "Internet does help. Facebook, Twitter. It does help honestly, talking to your parents and friends back home."

Of course, connections help more. Kent Riddle, the Buffs' tight ends and special-teams coach, coached at Army from 1995-98 and maintains strong ties to New Jersey prep coaches. That led CU to Tony Jones. Mike Moschetti, a former CU quarterback, coached Torres at La Mirada and highly recommended Boulder.

Trea' Jones' prep running backs coach, Josh Gallagher, worked CU's summer camp last year and submitted a film. Hagan received a link of Allen's highlights from Street Light Productions, a recruiting service.

One word of caution: None caused recruiting wars in their areas. Rutgers wanted someone bigger than Tony Jones, who chose CU over Michigan and Boston College. North Carolina State offered a scholarship to Trea' Jones. Allen chose CU over Tulsa and Alabama-Birmingham. The Buffs beat UCLA for Torres.

It may be a red flag for some, but not to Hagan.

"You make your evaluation on what you see on film or what you see in person," Hagan said. "You check backgrounds and all that. But you don't make your opinion or evaluations off other people."

Backs in business

A look at CU's quartet of freshman running backs:

Cordary Allen of Phenix City, Ala.: "You watch him run and his vision, he gets up on those O-linemen real quick," says CU running backs coach Darian Hagan.

Tony Jones of Paterson, N.J.: Don Bosco Prep won the mythical national title last year with a big boost from Jones' 1,387 yards and 34 touchdowns. In his four years as a starter, Bosco went 47-1. "He gets up to top speed right now," Hagan says. "He's a little jitterbug out there."

Trea' Jones of Wake Forest, N.C.: Rushed for 1,572 yards and 17 touchdowns last year. "Trea's real light on his feet, and he makes cuts on a dime," Hagan says.

Justin Torres of La Mirada, Calif.: Added 20 pounds of muscle before his senior year, and La Mirada went from 4-7 to 13-1 as he rushed for 900 yards and 15 touchdowns.

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cu football

Patterson in waiting game

By Shemar Woods
The Denver Post

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

BOULDER — Senior wide receiver Travon Patterson, who was released from his scholarship at Southern California after the NCAA penalized the Pac-10 power for rules violations involving 2005 Heisman Trophy winner Reggie Bush, is waiting for his paperwork to get cleared before he can practice with Colorado.

CU coach Dan Hawkins downplayed any suggestion that USC coach Lane Kiffin is purposely delaying the process.

Freshman wide receiver Paul Richardson was released from his scholarship at UCLA and already is practicing with the Buffaloes.

"We anticipate (Patterson to practice) here shortly," Hawkins said. "We don't know when. Obviously what Paul has done here, he can run and he's talented and he's got some hands. He's got to learn the system. Travon, we haven't seen at all."

QB competition.

Who will be the starting quarterback?

Coming off a 3-9 season, that's one of the biggest questions the Buffs need to answer before their Sept. 4 opener against Colorado State at Invesco Field.

Junior Tyler Hansen and senior Cody Hawkins are battling for the job. Hansen started CU's last seven games in 2009, completing 129-of-231 passes (.558) for 1,440 yards, eight touchdowns and seven interceptions in eight games overall.

Hawkins is CU's career leader in touchdown passes with 46, breaking Joel Klatt's record (44, from 2002-05).

Hawkins made five starts in 2009 and played in eight games overall. He passed for 1,277 yards and 10 touchdowns and threw 11 interceptions.

"We'll just see it when it emerges," Dan Hawkins said. "There's no big rush right now (to declare the starter). . . . We might (rotate QBs). We'll see how it goes."

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Question marks and tension for CU Buffs football

Shemar Woods
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — The University of Colorado football team faces some new challenges and old questions.

Players and coaches gathered in the Dal Ward Athletic Center at Folsom Field this afternoon to talk to the media after the third day of practice. Throughout a 30-minute Q&A session with head coach Dan Hawkins, the importance of the 2009 season was expressed through his monotone answers and tense facial expression.

"Our tempo has been good," Hawkins said. "You're always trying to clean a few things up and we've certainly got a long way to go, but I like our guys right now."

The Buffs have yet to wear pads during practice, but once the team suits up, the plan is to focus on establishing the run on offense while stopping the run on defense.

Last year, the Buffs defense allowed 161.1 rushing yards per game, while gaining 87.9 rushing yards on offense.

"Those are always two things that I think are critical," said Hawkins, who noted that he has four different rotations on the offensive line. "That obviously starts up front and you have to have some shoulder pads on to get some things done there."

Fifth-year wide receiver Travon Patterson, who was released from his scholarship at USC after the NCAA penalized the school, is waiting for his paperwork to get cleared before he can practice. Hawkins discounted any belief that USC head coach Lane Kiffin is purposely delaying the process. Hawkins said that the paperwork could be cleared by this evening and as late as next week. Freshmen wide receiver Paul Richardson was also released from his scholarship at UCLA and began practicing with the team yesterday.

"We anticipate (Travon will practice) here shortly," Hawkins said. "We don't know when. Obviously what Paul has done here, he can run and he's talented and he's got some hands. He's got to learn the system. Travon we haven't seen at all."

One of the intriguing questions entering the season is who will start at quarterback for the Buffs. The leading candidates for the position are junior Tyler Hansen and senior Cody Hawkins. Hansen started the last seven games of 2009, completing 129 of 231 passes for 1,440

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yards. Hawkins, who ranks first in CU history in touchdowns with 46, started in five games and played in eight. Hawkins doesn't have a timetable for when a final decision will be made while leaving the option open to rotate the two during the season.

"We'll see," Hawkins said. "We'll just see it when it emerges. There's no big rush right now . . . We might (rotate)," Hawkins said. "We'll see how it goes."

Key injuries include offensive guard Maxwell Tuioti-Mariner, who tweaked his knee Thursday during practice, and defensive end Forrest West.

After finishing the season 10 for 18 on field goals last season, Aric Goodman likely will get the nod at place kicker, though he has competition behind him. Similar to the quarterback position, Hawkins said that he is going to wait before making a final decision.

"They've all done a nice job," Hawkins said. "I think again, you have to see over time how that shapes up and how that emerges."

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Despite rough past, Hawkins is optimistic for 2010

By Brian Howell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Four years into his tenure, Dan Hawkins has not had the results he has wanted.

The University of Colorado football team is just 16-33 since Hawkins became the head coach in 2006.

This is a new year, however, and on Saturday as the Buffs held their annual media day, the coach was brimming with optimism.

“They are certainly in very good shape and their leadership has been good and their attitude is good, and I think our tempo has been good, as well,” said Hawkins, whose team began fall camp on Thursday. “We’ve certainly got a long way to go, but I like our guys right now.”

A year ago, the Buffaloes were 3-9. They ranked at the bottom of the Big 12 in total offense and 10th in scoring offense. They were 11th in scoring defense.

Yet, with the 2010 season less than a month away — the Buffs open against Colorado State on Sept. 4 in Denver — Hawkins believes in his team’s ability to produce a winning season.

“My expectations are always high — extremely high,” Hawkins said. “That’s why even in practice I think I’m always complimentary, but again, you’re always searching for that realm of excellence, that realm of perfection.”

The Buffs certainly haven’t been perfect in practices at this point, but they have been effective.

“I think we’re playing faster and we’re playing more confident,” Hawkins said.

What is there to like about a team coming off a 3-9 season? Hawkins offered plenty:

The offensive line is experienced and deep. The Buffs have been able to run four full lines. In the recent past, they had trouble fielding a solid second unit. “We’ve got some good talent in there and we’ve got some good competition,” Hawkins said. “Still trying to sort a few things out, but certainly there are several guys in there that can play.”

The Buffs are deeper and more talented than ever at receiver. In addition to senior Scotty McKnight returning, they add Toney Clemons (transfer from Michigan), Travon Patterson (transfer from Southern Cal) and Paul Richardson (former UCLA recruit).

Although undecided on who will start at quarterback, the Buffs have two experienced options in Cody Hawkins and Tyler Hansen. Dan Hawkins said he is in no rush to name a starter. “We’ll see when it emerges,” he said.

Rodney Stewart returns after leading the Buffs in rushing the past two seasons. He had 804 yards a year ago.



CU head football coach Dan Hawkins listens to a reporter’s question during CU’s media day at the Dal Ward Center at Folsom Field on Saturday. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

The defensive line has already shown improvement, coach Hawkins said. "Clearly they're much bigger, stronger faster," he said.

Jalil Brown and Jimmy Smith are two of the better cornerbacks in the Big 12.

Whether or not all that translates into a winning season remains to be seen. But at least on Saturday, Hawkins was optimistic.

In order to be successful, however, Hawkins knows the Buffaloes need to do a lot of the little things they haven't done in past seasons.

"The line between getting it done and not is very small," he said. "It comes down to two or three plays a game."

It would also help if the Buffs avoid the key injuries that hampered them in the past. And a strong start to the season would be nice.

"Hopefully we can stay healthy and we can garner a little bit of momentum," Hawkins said.

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CU true freshman walk-on Justin Gorman making the switch back to quarterback

By Brian Howell
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BOULDER — On Friday, University of Colorado offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said that true freshman walk-on Justin Gorman would play a lot of different positions for Buffaloes' football team.

Less than 15 hours later, that plan seemed to change. Following Saturday morning's practice, Kiesau and CU head coach Dan Hawkins told Gorman that they would be moving him back to his natural position at quarterback.

A quarterback in high school, Gorman had been playing receiver in the first few days of camp.

"When I came in, I was kind of recruited as an athlete," said Gorman, who starred at Manheim (Pa.) Central High School last season. "They kind of told me to look at receiver first, maybe some wildcat quarterback, kick return and stuff like that. I guess now we're going to try to settle into the quarterback spot and see how that goes.

"(Saturday) was my last day at receiver, so as of (today), I'll be a quarterback."

Gorman wasn't highly recruited out of high school. According to rivals.com, he was a two-star recruit. Gorman said he received scholarship offers from Division I-AA schools, and was given an opportunity to be a preferred walk-on at Penn State or Pittsburgh. But Colorado seemed right to him.

"It's where I felt I fit in the best," he said.

The 6-foot, 200-pounder quarterbacked his team to a 15-1 season and a trip to the AAA state championship game in 2009. According to Gorman, he became the sixth player in Pennsylvania history to throw for at least 2,000 yards and rush for at least 1,000 yards in the same season.

Gorman has been in Boulder all summer and he's already drawn the attention of the coaching staff.

"I just love his competitive spirit and his heart," Hawkins said. "He kind of reminds me of (senior receiver) Scotty McKnight in terms of that kind of thing. You just see how much football means to him.

"We're fired up he's here. He's a great kid, he's a winner, he's a good player. We just have to keep working to find his niche."

As of Saturday, Gorman became the fourth quarterback on the roster — behind junior Tyler Hansen, senior Cody Hawkins and fellow true freshman Nick Hirschman.

Gorman is excited about the position change.

"Receiver, I could do it, but everything was new," said Gorman, who did spend part of Saturday morning's practice at quarterback. "To come in here, everyone here can play, so just trying to learn it and coming in and competing with these guys is kind of tough. At quarterback, I'm natural and I can compete at that position the best, I think."

Gorman may not be done moving around, however.

"I told him I think he's going to be something and I said I don't know what that something is," coach Hawkins said. "I said, 'Maybe you're going to be Jim Jensen.'"

Jensen had a 12-year NFL career with the Miami Dolphins. He started as a quarterback, but also played receiver, running back and tight end and was a special teams star.

"He's just such a great kid and he's a baller," Hawkins said of Gorman. "I think somewhere he's going to show up."

Ironically, Gorman's hometown of Manheim, Pa., is just 83 miles from Jensen's hometown of Abington, Pa.

EXTRA POINTS: Senior receiver Travon Patterson, a transfer from Southern California, is still waiting for the transfer process to be completed so he can get on the field. Dan Hawkins said, "We don't anticipate any problems. But you've still got to go through the hoops." ... Freshman tight end Clark Evans is still not practicing because of academic issues. ... Hawkins said he's been pleased with how the kickers have done so far. ... Guard Max Tuioti-Mariner left Friday's practice with an apparent knee injury. He has had three torn ACLs. Hawkins said Saturday that the knee "swelled up on him."

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