



Senior corner Jimmy Smith (3) expects big things from himself and the CU defense this season.
Photo Courtesy: Associated Press



08/09/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: No Time (Or Plays) Off For Smith This Season

BOULDER - All-America candidate Jimmy Smith's is approaching his final season of college football with what amounts to a five-word pledge: *All out, all the time.*

"Some stand out more than others, but there's a handful of times (in seasons past) when I took plays off that I should have been more ready," the Colorado cornerback conceded the other day. "I attribute that to (a lack of) focus and intensity . . . I plan on being intense in practice every single play, then doing the same thing in the games."

If he holds fast to his vow, the rangy (6-2, 205) and athletic Smith can be as good a corner as there is on any campus this season. And although it isn't fueling him as much as contributing to a breakthrough season for the Buffs, he can also improve his future earnings potential. Yes, the NFL is watching.

(An aside: Based on the number of agents he says have telephoned him over the past two months - the deluge of calls recently prompted him to change his cell number - Smith's "draftability" already is up there.)

Smith and fellow senior corner Jalil Brown are the headliners in a CU secondary that enters 2010 expecting good, if not great, things of itself and the entire defense. Honed over the past four years by position coach Greg Brown (now at

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Arizona), Smith and Jalil Brown will make the transition from defensive technical intern to assistant coach a bit smoother for Ashley Ambrose.

"You can't take away the ability they have," Ambrose said of the "JJ" duo. "Now, the one thing that I want them both to do is be better technicians, be comfortable with what we're doing and understand what offenses are going to try and do against them."

Smith, of Colton, Calif., once looked at basketball as his first sport. Raised by his mom and stepdad, he moved in with his older brother Ryan (he's 14 years older) before starting the eighth grade and swapped basketball for football. It was a natural move: Ryan still is a football/track coach in Colton.

Smith became very good at his new sport - good enough for scholarship offers to begin streaming in after Scout.com ranked him as the nation's No. 53 high school safety in 2005. But when he arrived at CU, his skill set outweighed his mindset.

"I've grown a lot - and anybody on the team would tell you the same," he said. "When I first got up here I was just basically ignorant to a lot of things. Being here for five years has opened my eyes to a lot of things. I've gotten more mature in learning how to do things right. I'm not saying I'm perfect now, I'm still growing. But I've definitely grown up a lot in being here."

Then there's the leadership role that, willing or not, he finds himself thrust into this season. He's never been a take-charge type, preferring to kick back, follow at times and let his natural abilities kick in when he's on the field.

Now, though, the maturity and growth he talks about have kicked in, making him realize what's expected of an older player.

"Yeah, I have no choice really (in being a team leader)," he said. "I'm a fifth-year senior. I'm not a leader by choice, but you kind of have to be in your fifth year."

Asked why that role never has come easy for him, he responded, "I've never been a leader before . . . I just always followed, did my part. This year, more eyes are on me; it's a little more difficult but I'm willing to step up and take that challenge. It hasn't been that difficult . . . it's just something I'm not used to."

A couple of years ago in August, Smith outlined among his personal goals the desire to become an all-conference corner. He recently was selected to the Thorpe Award preseason watch list, but when media covering the Big 12 Conference selected their preseason all-league defense Smith was not included.

He didn't perceive it as a slight, merely "the preseason thoughts of some guys sitting in the booth . . . it doesn't mean anything. It's what happens at the end of the season that really matters. I give no thought at all to that."

But, yeah, he has given some thought to what happens to him next season - and not because of those relentless calls from agents.

"I have to think about (the NFL) at this point," he said. "I mean it definitely alters the way I do things; I have to stay on the straight and narrow path. The more I think about it, I think the more I grow up here at school. I know they're not taking any crap up there (NFL) and I have to make sure I'm good down here before they even take me. Besides the football, that's all a part of making it in the NFL."

Ambrose, a second-round draft pick who played 13 seasons in the NFL, believes Smith and Brown can earn a living there, too.

"They already have the ability," he said. "I see some of the guys who were drafted this year (in the secondary). I show (Smith and Brown) what those guys ran, how big they are, what they lifted - Jimmy and Jalil have that already. They have all that stuff. The thing I want them to do is become mentally and physically focused, get them tougher. That's what it's all about."

But Ambrose is pushing his entire secondary to accomplish those things this season.

"I want our guys to come through training camp with the knowledge that they know what they're doing," he said. "They'll get plenty of 'reps' so they should be comfortable with it - and knowing the defense in and out.

"I'll be happy if I can see improvement in causing turnovers and finding ways to get our offense back on the field. I also want us to be better tacklers."

Had Greg Brown not left last winter, Ambrose was ticketed to coach the receivers this season. Obviously, with his defensive background, he's on the side of the ball he prefers.

"I'm really comfortable . . . I probably would have been a little more nervous being on the receivers side because the guys would have looked at me a little different," he said. "The older guys were saying I could have helped them a lot with coverages, techniques and different things, but the younger ones would have been saying, 'this guy never coached receivers . . . what does he know?'"

"But it's good for me. I learned a lot from coach Hawk and from coach (Eric) Kiesau - just being on that side of the ball. I'm glad I had the opportunity to do that."

Ambrose's probable starting safeties are Anthony Perkins and Ray Polk, with Parker Orms in the No. 1 nickel back role. Ambrose calls his depth "decent . . . I mean it would be hard to replace guys like Jimmy and Jalil; I think they could be the best tandem in the Big 12.

"It's hard to say our backups could be that good. We have guys who have the ability, but they're young. And at safety it's the same way with (Perkins) and (Polk). Behind them, there's nobody who's really played at the position - they may have played on special teams.

"But when we go through this camp, all those backups are going to get a lot of 'reps.' They're going to know what we're doing. All it takes is one play for any of those guys to go down, anyone of them."

Orms was particularly impressive last spring, leading the secondary in almost every defensive statistic. Ambrose compared the redshirt freshman to graduated Cha'pelle Brown, CU's 2009 defensive MVP.

"Parker has that same ability and he's only a freshman," Ambrose said. "Throughout the spring he made plays and reminded you of Cha'pelle. It's hard to find a guy who'll come in and do the things he did - he led the team in interceptions, forced fumbles, everything. I think when the lights are on, he's going to show up."

But Orms is about to begin his first college season. For Smith, Brown & Co., it's the beginning of the end. As do his fellow seniors, Smith sees great possibilities in their final year.

"I mean, if there's any time it's going to be this time," he said. "We have all the pieces in place. We have better leadership than we've had in the previous years . . . more offensive weapons and defensively we look solid, I think.

"We have leadership in the places where it's needed. Special teams will be key for us, but I think with the leadership we have it'll be good this year."

THE INSIDE LOOK AT . . .

Defensive backs

Coach: Ashley Ambrose, first year as position coach, third year on staff.

Returning starters: CB Jalil Brown, Sr.; CB Jimmy Smith, Sr.; S Anthony Perkins, Sr.; S Ray Polk, Soph.

Returnees: S Arthur Jaffe, Jr.; S Cameron Ham, Sr.; S Vince Ewing, Soph.; S Travis Sandersfeld, Jr.; CB Jonathan Hawkins, Jr.; CB Matt Meyer, Jr.

Newcomers: CB Deji Olatoye, Fr.-RS; CB Josh Moten, Fr.; CB Paul Vigo, Fr.-RS; S Parker Orms, Fr.-RS.; S Terdema Ussery, Fr.-RS.

Key losses: CB/Nickel Cha'pelle Brown, S Ben Burney.

Stat line: The Buffs have intercepted nine passes in each of the past two seasons. In 2009, that put them 10th in the Big 12 Conference, with only Missouri (eight) and Kansas (seven) making fewer interceptions.

Bottom line: In Smith and Brown, CU has one of the best corner tandems in the nation. With two years of significant playing time under his belt, Perkins is experienced, while experience is all that Polk lacks. Orms had a dynamic spring as a nickel back and entered fall camp holding that spot with the No. 1 unit. On the depth front in the secondary, there's plenty of talent but it's mostly untested.

Next: Defensive line

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Jimmy Smith, Jalil Brown could help Buffs turn corner

CU covered at cornerback with dynamic duo

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/08/2010 11:07:29 PM MDT

When asked during Saturday's media day press conference about the luxury of having a "shutdown" cornerback on the defense, an otherwise somber Dan Hawkins smiled and pointed out that Colorado has a pair of all-conference starters at the position.

The coaching staff has enough confidence in Jimmy Smith and Jalil Brown to leave each starting cornerback alone in man to man coverage.

That means the defensive line, linebackers and safeties can focus on stopping the run, pressuring the quarterback, and defending short and intermediate route runners.

"It's going to relieve a lot of stress for us up front because of their skill and talent. They're going to lock down guys, and for us as a D-line and 'backers, we're going to get a lot more sacks because of them," starting outside linebacker B.J. Beatty said. "If the quarterbacks get the ball off, I'm going to look at Jalil and Jimmy and say, 'Do what you have to do.'"

Smith and Brown, who are both seniors, finished with two interceptions each in 2009. Despite CU's struggles on the scoreboard, Smith earned second-team All-Big 12 honors and Brown was honorable mention all-conference.

There were no Buffs taken in April's NFL draft, but that almost certainly would not have been the case had Smith -- a 6-2, 210-pound senior who might be the fastest player on the CU roster -- left school a year early.

"The special thing about Jimmy, for me, has been his maturation over the years; both as a player and as a person," Hawkins said. "He probably could have gone out early after last year, and he probably would have made somebody's club because he's that gifted athletically. But I think he also knew that there were elements of the total package that he wanted to pull together."

That isn't just coach speak. Smith agrees that there is important work to finish in the classroom, the weight room and on the field at CU before leaving Boulder and starting a career in the NFL.

"Coming back was the right choice," said Smith, a preseason candidate for the Thorpe Award, an honor given to the nation's top defensive back in college football. "I had to graduate and I wasn't fully mature enough to make that jump yet, even though the money was there. I felt like it was the right decision to come back. And also I wanted to leave on a winning note."

Smith started all 12 games for the Buffs last season, finishing with 10 pass break-ups, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery. Opposing quarterbacks were obviously made aware of his athletic and play-making abilities in the scouting report considering cornerback Champelle Brown led the team with 96 tackles and Jalil Brown had a team-high 15 pass break-ups.

"It's great playing with Jalil because you know that the quarterback has to go either way now. They can't pick on one corner, they have to go both ways, and we're both capable of making big-time plays," said Smith, who estimated that he was only thrown at four or five times a game last season. "It just makes me excited to know they have to come my way and they have to go his way. The number of times I'm thrown at will definitely go up because Jalil proved himself last year."

Jalil Brown, who is listed at 6-1, 205 pounds, started the final 10 games of the 2009 season and finished the campaign with eight stops on third down, two quarterback pressures and two fumble recoveries. And teammates say he had one of the more impressive offseasons of anyone on the roster.

"It's always easier having a good corner on the opposite side of you," Brown said. "The quarterback on the opposing team can't decide where he's going to go with the ball based on which cornerback is no good. He's going to have to pick and

choose his plays wisely. ...

"Sometimes you have to send a safety out there to help out the corners. With our team we can guard man on man with Jimmy and myself. The safeties can come up and help with the runs, go with the tight ends, and help the linebackers in man coverage versus helping the cornerbacks. That will help our defense a lot. We will be able to run our plays and have a lot more freedom on defense."

With Anthony Perkins, Ray Polk, Arthur Jaffee and Parker Orms competing at the safety positions, the secondary might be the strength of the entire team. Scotty McKnight, who seems to get open against just about everyone, said his Big 12 peers are going to have to play at a high level against CU's defense this season.

"Those guys are unbelievable. I mean, it's a struggle going against them every day," McKnight said of Smith and Brown. "I'm happy that I'm going in the slot now because I can sneak away from them every now and then. ... Going against those two guys in comparison to other guys in the Big 12, not to take anything away from them because if you're in this conference you're a good player, but Jalil and Jimmy are the best two cornerbacks I go against. As big and strong and fast as they are, you don't see that a lot."

So how does a No. 1 or No. 2 wide receiver go about beating CU's starting cornerbacks?

"You stay in your own game and hope one of those guys makes a mistake or gets lazy," McKnight said. "But if they're both on their game it's tough to get open. They're going to have to game plan against us big time."

Colorado State head coach Steve Fairchild, a former NFL offensive coordinator, certainly had his team ready for CU in the 2009 opener. This summer the Buffs' cornerbacks are already salivating over the prospects of facing a freshman or redshirt freshman Rams quarterback on Sept. 4 at Invesco Field.

"It's tough to play as a freshman. It's kind of hard to count on them to play because the transition from high school to college is hard," Brown said. "You're playing against more speed, more size, and you're more stressed out. You're coming into a new environment, and the combination of those three things is tough. Playing a freshman is always going to be to the advantage of another team."

Having two shutdown senior cornerbacks should be one notable advantage CU has this season as the program looks to finally turn the corner in Hawkins' make-or-break fifth year on the job.

"Leadership-wise we've gotten to the point where on the defense we don't have to wonder, 'Is he doing his job, or is that guy doing his job?'" Beatty said. "That's something with those two out there on the corners we never have to worry about."

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Intensity rises ahead of first day in pads for CU Buffs

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 08/08/2010 11:02:29 PM MDT



Defensive linemen are already tired of and angry with offensive linemen. Same story with the defensive backs and wide receivers.

And Michael Sipili let Brian Lockridge know how the linebackers are feeling about the running backs on Sunday night during a violent collision near the sideline in the middle of Colorado's crisp practice No. 4.

"Practice is getting more intense," junior running back Rodney Stewart noted. "We have a lot more competition and players that want to play. They have to do what they have to do in practice. ... We want to go to a big bowl game this year. Anything that messes that up is not (tolerated)."

The Buffs' 2010 camp should ramp up another notch this morning when the players go in full pads for the first time. The practice begins at 8:30 a.m. on the CU practice fields. Sessions are open to the public through Thursday's scrimmage at Folsom Field before Dan Hawkins pulls the curtain.

"There's a lot of great seven-on-seven players in America and a lot of great intramural guys," Hawkins said. "When you put on the pads, that's a little different. So I'm looking forward to that."

One of CU's most physical players, senior linebacker B.J. Beatty, did not participate in the action on Sunday due to an undisclosed injury.

"It's just football. Just got a little banged up and have to rest for now," Beatty said. "I love to hit. That's just kind of my way. I like to get in there and bang and get roughed up a little bit. We'll find out (today) if I can get back out there."

After the offense got the better of the defense on Saturday night, Sipili and Co. returned the favor on Sunday. A smothering effort by the defense was highlighted by a Jalil Brown interception of a Cody Hawkins pass, which the senior cornerback returned for a touchdown.

"Our offense came out and had a great practice and we came out and kind of answered back," Beatty said. "That's what we need. Hopefully the offense comes back again and we have to elevate ourselves. That's what it's going to take to make the team better, having both sides of the ball competing. We have that this year and it's exciting to watch."

Dove Valley woes

Dan Hawkins knows all about the injury bug that has invaded Dove Valley, where the Denver Broncos saw their top two running backs go down on the first day of training camp and have lost reigning NFL sack leader Elvis Dumervil for the season with a torn pectoral muscle.

So far the Buffs have held up well physically. Beatty's injury does not appear to be serious; offensive lineman Maxwell Tuoti-Mariner and defensive end Forrest West were the only other players rehabbing injuries on Sunday during practice.

"It's just amazing. I was talking to one of the Broncos scouts the other day here and it's weird," Hawkins said. "A couple of years ago we had all those ACLs and they were non-contact. It's just strange to me how sometimes you have them and sometimes you don't. I think there's a fine line between getting ready and being smart."

Un-Bear-able attire

Hawkins couldn't help but yell out: "Who let the Cal shirt in?"

The players immediately turned their attention to the fan watching practice with bright yellow Cal gear on. CU plays the Bears on Sept. 11 and will be joining the Pac-12 in either 2011 or 2012.

The man wearing the Cal shirt, Patrick Grychtol, is actually a visiting scientist from Germany who knows very little about American football. He purchased the shirt during a recent trip to the Golden State and had no idea sporting it on the CU practice field would cause a commotion.

Notable

USC transfer Travon Patterson was still unable to practice while the receiver waits for all of the paperwork to be finished. ... The field goal kickers are aiming at goalposts that are six feet narrower than regulation goalposts. Hawkins said he want them to get used to kicking the ball right down the middle.

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THE DENVER POST

colorado football

Buffaloes buzzing about linebacker Evan Harrington, a juco alum

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/09/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — First impressions often make the strongest impression, and Colorado senior linebacker B.J. Beatty hasn't forgotten the first time he saw Evan Harrington.

A transfer from a California junior college, Harrington arrived in Boulder in midsummer as a 6-foot, 225-pound linebacker. He turned heads.

"The kid came in here, and the first day of lifting he started throwing around weights," Beatty recalled. "I looked at him and was, like, wow. He packs the power. He's strong and he can move. He impressed me. He's definitely one to watch."

Most junior college transfers have only two years of eligibility remaining and thus are recruited to make an immediate impact. Harrington is counting on it. Apart from Beatty, senior Michael

Sipili and junior reserve Tyler Ahles, there isn't much experience at linebacker. Harrington no doubt will get an opportunity.

Once he settles down, that is.

"I had a little case of the jitters the first practice," Harrington said. "Some guys were telling me to slow down, that I am thinking too much. I thought I'd picked up the defense pretty fast, but it's different when you're out there with your teammates and the coaches. The intensity level is pretty high."

A native of Bowie, Md., Harrington is quiet and polite off the field and rather disruptive on it. Last fall, as a sophomore at College of the Canyons, he recorded a team-high 85 tackles, including 11 1/2 tackles for losses, seven sacks, 10 quarterback hurries, three forced fumbles and an interception.

That playmaking ability earned Harrington a spot on the all-conference team in what is regarded as one of the top areas in the nation for junior college football. As a high school senior in suburban Washington, Harrington had been named to The Washington Post's all-metro team after making 112 tackles for Bowie High.

Harrington headed west to junior college when his College Board scores fell shy of the minimum requirement

for initial eligibility with a major college.

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Colorado Football

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In retrospect, Harrington said playing two years of junior college football was beneficial.

"The coaches there get you ready for the next level," said Harrington, who benches 370 pounds. "Now I just have to learn the plays. My quickness is my biggest asset, but you can't use your quickness if you hesitate because you're not sure where to go."

Harrington is doing just fine, Beatty said. "Evan has asked some questions," Beatty said. "But what might take a freshman two hours to learn, he has it down in 15 minutes."

Pads to start popping.

Full pads begin with today's 8:30-10:30 a.m. practice, the only workout of the day. The coaching staff will learn a lot more about the team then, coach Dan Hawkins said Sunday.

"There's a lot of great 7-on-7 guys in America, a lot of intra-mural guys," Hawkins said. "But when

you put on the pads, that's a little different."

As for the risk of players getting banged up during the early days of full-pads work, Hawkins said he "always" worries about injuries.

"There's a fine line between getting them ready and being smart," he said. "When we hit, we want to hit and hit hard. But these guys can't slam every single day or there will be nothing left."

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

AUGUST 8, 2010, 3:33 PM

New CU linebacker hopes to play next year vs. Pac-10

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

Colorado was a solid member of the [Big 12](#)^[1] Conference when junior-college linebacker [Evan Harrington](#)^[2] signed with the Buffs last winter. By the time Harrington arrived on campus CU was a future member of the [Pac-10](#)^[3].

A junior, Harrington has fingers crossed that Colorado will begin competing in the [Pac-10](#)^[3] in 2011, when he will be a senior. Harrington grew up in suburban Washington, D.C., but played two years of junior-college ball in Southern California.

“I’m looking forward to being in the [Pac-10](#)^[3] because all my friends back there were telling me how the [Pac-10](#)^[3] is better than the [Big 12](#)^[1],” Harrington said with a grin. “It will be exciting to play against some of them.”

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THE DENVER POST

terry frei

Frei: Miller still a building block for Buffaloes

By Terry Frei
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/09/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — Ryan Miller is on track to get his degree in anthropology from the University of Colorado next May. Yet the Buffaloes guard then still will have a season of football eligibility remaining, thanks to a medical hardship year he was granted because he suffered a broken fibula in the fourth game of his true sophomore season, against Florida State in 2008.

It's seems safe to assume he will stick around to play the 2011 season while taking courses toward a second undergraduate degree or in graduate school. Ask Miller about that, though, and he smiles wryly.

"I haven't a clue," the Columbine High graduate said Saturday. "We have a meeting tonight. It really is day to day. It's wherever God takes me."

That "cluelessness" seems uncharacteristic. The 6-foot-8, 310-pound lineman, one of the first high-profile recruits of the Dan Hawkins era at

CU, has his life well-ordered . . . and has had for a long time.

"He really represents what a student-athlete should be," Columbine principal Frank DeAngelis said last week. "He was a role model, and he led by example. His physical presence was daunting. He had every reason to be arrogant and self-centered, but he was the furthest from that. He was just a well-rounded kid who helped others."

Said Miller: "As you grow in the program, you learn time management and especially now, being a junior in football — wow, that's gone by quick! — you learn what you can sacrifice and you can't sacrifice."

At CU, Miller played as a true freshman and then suffered the broken leg the next season. He moved to guard for 2009 but ended up going back and forth between guard and tackle, primarily because of injuries.

A plate was placed in his forearm in the offseason, but the plate broke on the first day of spring practice.

"I'm finally back to the point where I can confidently say I'm fully healthy," he said. "I'm definitely excited. I've gone through

about everything anyone and your brother could go through up here. But that which does not kill you makes you stronger."

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THE DENVER POST

[Blog: Terry Frei](#)



The Post's Terry Frei posts analysis, notes and minutiae on this blog devoted to the sports landscape.

CU's line seemingly underachieved as a unit last season. But it returns intact, and Miller — settled in at guard — plus senior tackle Nate Solder were named preseason all-Big 12 choices.

"Our offensive line can be phenomenal and fantastic," Miller said. "It's up to us, though. It's what has to happen for the good of the program. For the good of the team, the offensive line has to play as a unit, with cohesion and with some attitude."

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AUGUST 8, 2010, 11:54 PM

More from CU's Ryan Miller: Positional shuffle and Columbine loyalty

By **TERRY FREI** |  Comments Disabled

My page 2 piece on Colorado Buffaloes' guard Ryan Miller is in Monday's paper.

Additionally, we talked about his shuffle between guard and tackle. He was switched inside to guard last season, mainly because it seemed the best way to get the Buffs' best offensive linemen on the field, but had to play some tackle, also, because of tackle Bryce Givens' unavailability for two stretches during the season.

Now Miller is back at right guard, and it's still tempting to wonder how he and left tackle Nate Solder would look as season-long bookend tackles — Solder as a fifth-year senior (he already has a degree) and Miller as a fourth-year junior.

"You feel comfortable where you practice at," Miller said. "I think that's true of any position, be it quarterback, running back, safety, regardless. You get a sense of stability by staying at one position. But I feel much more comfortable at guard by now than I probably would feel at tackle because I played mostly guard last year and I've been playing guard throughout the spring. It doesn't mean you can't bump out and play a different position, but you feel more comfortable at the position you practice at."

Miller smiled and said playing guard requires more of "a mean streak."

"You have to be more powerful inside," he said. "You look at defensive ends now (working against tackles), they're not as big and brute as they used to be. They're taller, faster guys with long arms and you need a little more athletic guys — guys like Nate and Bryce and (backup David) Bakhtiari who can get out on the edge and do a quick kick-slide and give the pocket good depth. The front three, the two guards and the center, really have to protect the front of the pocket and you have to have more brute strength and vigor."

Columbine principal Frank DeAngelis, quoted in the story, also told me that Miller often goes back to his high school alma mater.

I asked Miller why he does that.

"They treated me phenomenally, fantastic," he said. "I love Columbine. Andy Lowry I consider to be one of the most incredible people in my life." He listed several other Columbine staff members, too. "I could go on and on, all those guys," he said. "In my faith, as a man, as a football player, all walks of life. That's a great staff down there. They care about you as a person and a human being. . . The bond formed between players and the coaches at that school is incredible. I would hope that everyone can experience that kind of bond somewhere."

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[Terry Frei's Web Site](#) ^[1]

All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

AUGUST 9, 2010, 7:01 AM

CU preview: As usual, starting QB not yet decided

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

CU QUARTERBACKS

Newcomers: Nick Hirschman, a 6-foot-3, 230-pound true freshman from Los Gatos, Calif., also was courted by Pac-10 schools and was considered one of the plums of CU's 2010 recruiting class. Justin Gorman (6-0, 200) is a walk-on from Manhelm, Pa.

Biggest losses: Seth Lobato of Eaton showed some athleticism and potential last year as a recruited freshman working with the scout team. But he transferred to Northern Colorado.

Strengths: With senior Cody Hawkins and junior Tyler Hansen, Colorado may have as much experience at this position as any team in the Big 12 Conference. Hawkins, the fulltime starter in 2007 as a redshirt freshman, ranks first in CU history in TD passes (46) and is third in career passing yards (5,862), behind Kordell Stewart and Joel Klatt. Hansen took the job away from Hawkins during each of the past two seasons.

Weaknesses: Hansen started the last seven games of 2009 but hasn't yet been named this year's starter, although most observers expect that to happen a week or so before the Sept. 4 season opener against CSU. The Buffs roster lists only three scholarship quarterbacks, a small number for a major-college program.

What to look for: It will be a surprise if Hansen, who is more athletic and has a stronger arm, does not open the season as a starter. It also will be a surprise if Cody Hawkins, who literally grew up with the system, doesn't get some snaps.

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Brown, Smith among the best

By Brian Howell
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BOULDER — In the pass-happy Big 12 conference, University of Colorado cornerbacks Jimmy Smith and Jalil Brown could get picked on a lot.

Bring it on, they say.

“Me and Jimmy are definitely going to get our fair share of balls thrown our way, and we’re going to get a lot of opportunities to make plays — and I think we both will,” said Brown, a senior.



University of Colorado cornerback Jalil Brown, left, keeps pace with receiver Jason Espinoza during practice in Boulder on Thursday.
Joshua Buck/Times-Call

Texas and Nebraska may boast the top two cornerback tandems in the league this season. But CU’s duo isn’t far behind.

Smith was a second-team All-Big 12 selection a year ago, while Brown earned honorable mention.

“It’s good to have somebody on the other side like that,” Smith said of Brown. “Now quarterbacks can’t just pick on one person.”

Colorado had numerous problems a year ago, when it went 3-9. But its pass defense, which ranked 34th nationally and fourth in the Big 12, was a strength. With Brown and Smith leading the way, it figures to be again.

“They’re very talented,” CU head coach Dan Hawkins said. “Obviously, they’ve had a ton of snaps — and they’re both very smart, savvy guys.”

Together, Smith and Brown had four interceptions and broke up 25 passes.

The 6-foot-2, 205-pound Smith came back for his senior year rather than opting for the NFL — which was a realistic option for him.

“He probably could have went out early last year and probably made somebody’s club (in the NFL) because he’s that gifted athletically,” Hawkins said. “But I think he also knew that there were still elements of the total package that he wanted to pull together.”

Smith said he realized he wasn’t mature enough to leave after last season. He said he also wanted to work on his leadership, graduate from school (he’s one class away) and have a winning season.

Smith teaming with Brown in the secondary will give the Buffs a better shot at winning, because they’ll be able to make the whole defense better.

“No doubt,” Hawkins said. “You can do a lot more things (defensively). It’s much easier to bring other people (to rush the quarterback) when those guys can lock people up. That’s a huge advantage.”

Of course, Brown and Smith help the Buffaloes on offense, too. They work every day in practice against the receivers.

“They’re everything to us as a receiver corps,” junior receiver Toney Clemons said. “They’re the best in the business.”

The receivers are returning the favor. This year’s group of receivers is as good as any in recent memory in Boulder. That will help Smith and Brown get better prepared for the season.

“This is the first time I’ve been here that our depth at receiver (is such that) all of them can play,” Smith said.

BACKING UP: The talent at cornerback doesn’t stop with Brown and Smith.

The two vets both mentioned Deji Olatoye, a redshirt-freshman, as a player to watch this season.

Redshirt freshman Paul Vigo and freshmen Josh Moten and Jared Bell are talented, as well.

“We have a lot of good players,” Smith said.

GETTING CHIPPY: Sunday was the fourth day of practice, and the intensity is picking up.

There were several altercations between players during Sunday’s practice. During one drill between offensive lineman and defensive lineman, junior tackle Matthew Bahr got into a scuffle with true freshman defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe.

“It’s good,” Hawkins said of the minor altercations. “I like the energy. Stuff like that is going to happen. It has to if you’re competitive.”

ADDING PADDING: The Buffs will practice from 8:30-10:30 a.m. today. It will be their first practice in full pads.

“There’s a lot of great seven-on-seven players in America and a lot of great intramural guys,” Hawkins said. “When you put on the pads, that’s a little different. I’m looking forward to that.”

Today’s practice is open to the public.

EXTRA POINTS: Starting outside linebacker B.J. Beatty sat out Sunday’s practice with a hamstring injury. He was hurt on Saturday. ... Guard Maxwell Tuioti-Mariner (knee) and defensive end Forrest West (knee) also sat out. ... On Saturday, the Buffs’ offense was the better unit in practice. On Sunday, it was the defense. ... Brown picked off a Cody Hawkins pass and ran it back for a score during team drills. ... Senior receiver Travon Patterson has still not been cleared to play after transferring from Southern Cal.

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Football

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2010

Gauging the Big 12 QB battles

By Eric Sorrentino



With just under four weeks remaining until the start of the 2010 college football season, five Big 12 Conference teams are seeking an answer to the starting quarterback spot.

With just under four weeks remaining until the start of the 2010 college football season, five Big 12 Conference teams are seeking an answer to the same question: Who will be the starting quarterback?

Kansas, Kansas State, Nebraska, Colorado and Texas Tech are locked in quarterback battles that have carried over from spring ball into preseason camps.

A long-awaited final answer on a starter could come at any time leading up to Sept. 4, when most conference teams kick off the season.

Here are capsules breaking down each situation.

Let the competition begin:

Kansas

Challengers: Sophomore Kale Pick, red-shirt freshman Jordan Webb.

The situation: Pick spelled Todd Reesing last season in mop-up duty, mostly seeking yardage on the run. The Dodge City native rushed 14 times for 167 yards, an impressive 11.9 average. But can he make the throws? Pick only attempted five passes last year.

Webb is known to have the better arm, and Gill praised the play of the Union, Mo., native in spring ball.

Quotable: “The quarterback spot is definitely wide-open at this point in time for us,” Gill said at Big 12 media days in Irving, Texas. “We’ll see how that all shakes out.”

Advantage: Pick. Barely. In the most competitive situation for the two quarterbacks so far — the spring game — Pick outplayed Webb. Pick completed 14 of 22 passes for 214 yards and two scores, while Webb was 8-for-13 for 46 yards and a touchdown.

Pick’s a year older and should fit in nicely with the Jayhawks’ new offensive system, which will focus more on running the ball. If he also displays an ability to make quality throws, that may earn him the job.

Kansas State

Challengers: Senior Carson Coffman, sophomore Collin Klein, junior Sammuel Lamur.

The situation: Coffman opened last season as the starter, before struggling and giving way to Grant Gregory. Coffman completed 60.4 percent of his passes for 860 yards, two touchdowns and four interceptions last year.

Klein played wide receiver and caught six passes for 38 yards and a touchdown last season. He has good size for a quarterback at 6-foot-5 and 233 pounds. Lamur red-shirted last season after transferring from Joliet (Ill.) Junior College.

Quotable: “We just do not have a clear-cut No. 1 right now,” K-State coach Bill Snyder said at media days. “The first snap that the quarterback will take with our No. 1’s will be Carson Coffman. He came out of spring not necessarily as the No. 1, but that individual will take the first rep, and then Collin Klein and Sammuel Lamur. All three of them, I think, will compete diligently.”

Advantage: Coffman, based on experience. Snyder may not have officially named a starter, but it seems it’s Coffman’s job to lose.

Nebraska

Challengers: Senior Zac Lee, sophomore Cody Green, red-shirt freshman Taylor Martinez.

The situation: Lee started 12 games last season, but was hurt and ineffective for the majority of the year. In Big 12 play, Lee threw only six touchdowns versus seven interceptions. He had surgery on the flexor tendon in his throwing arm in the offseason. As a result, he missed spring practices.

Green saw limited action as a freshman — he started two games — and threw for 317 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions. Green is more of a threat to run (158 yards, two TDs) than Lee. Martinez took a red shirt last season.

Quotable: “We need the quarterback position to step up,” Nebraska coach Bo Pelini said. “Let’s face it. He’s at the center point. He’s the trigger guy.”

Advantage: Lee. He ended the year on a good note against Arizona, when he combined for 238 total yards and two scores in the Holiday Bowl. If he's healthy, it could be his job to lose.

Colorado

Challengers: Junior Tyler Hansen, senior Cody Hawkins.

The situation: The two quarterbacks had similar stats last year and split the playing time almost down the middle. Hansen finished the year 129-for-231 (55.8 completion percentage) for 1,440 yards, eight touchdowns and seven interceptions. Hawkins' line: 121-for-239 (50.6 percent), 1,277 yards, 10 TDs, 11 INTs.

In games where Hawkins started, CU was 1-4; the Buffaloes were 2-5 in Hansen's starts.

Quotable: "Really, on any given day, you could probably split them with a razor hair," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "We'll see how that goes. I think Tyler probably had a little bit of an edge coming out of spring ball."

Advantage: Hansen. The coach seemed to say so himself.

Texas Tech

Challengers: Senior Taylor Potts, senior Steven Sheffield.

The situation: Both battled injuries this spring, but are healthy in time for the preseason. Potts took most of the snaps last year, starting 10 games (Tech went 5-5 in that time). A concussion prohibited Potts from playing toward the middle of the season, and Sheffield played well in his absence, starting two games and winning both of them.

Quotable: "It's going to be tough to make a decision, but one will stand out," first-year Tech coach Tommy Tuberville said. "We look at everything, from how they handle pregame all the way to how they handle the meeting at the end of the scrimmage ... we will not have rotating quarterbacks. I don't believe in having one guy go out one series and one the next."

Advantage: Potts. He has the game experience and had a productive last month, winning the "Air It Out" challenge against other major-college quarterbacks at the Manning Passing Academy on July 10 in Thibodaux, La.