

'1961 CU Buffs forever a family

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

They don't party like it's 1961 anymore.

But those who played on that legendary Colorado football team -- which stood up to rugged competition in the Big Eight and racial segregation in the South -- still celebrate together 50 years later.

"We used to meet up at The Sink. I worked there, a bunch of guys on the team did," said Jerry Hillebrand, a first-team All-American end for the Buffaloes. "We'd be sloshing our beer ... we had a pretty good time in college. We still meet there, but now, now we're sloshing water and orange juice."

The seniors on the roster, led by captains Joe Romig and Charlie McBride, were all recruited by Dal Ward. The well-respected head coach was fired after 11 seasons, despite compiling a 63-41-6 record and leading the program to a victory over Clemson in the Orange Bowl five years earlier.

Many of the underclassmen who were recruited by the brash new head coach, 32-year-old Sonny Grandelius, and emerging as future stars, were embraced by the Class of '61.

That combination of experience, talent and team unity made the Buffs a force to be reckoned with that fall a half-century ago.

"I think what happened was in the middle of the Dal Ward firing when we were sophomores, everyone was pretty upset," McBride said. "There was a lot of talk about, 'Let's go transfer,' as there usually is during a coaching change. ...

"Going through that episode made us closer. A lot of the guys who played the most for Sonny were recruited by Dal. We just had fun together and it was a great group."

After surviving spring football practices, the Buffs had a feeling over the summer that the 1961 season would be special.

"Somehow that senior group reached out and touched everybody. We're about as tight a group as there is," said John Meadows, who was a sophomore end. "Back in those days, spring ball was 20 days of pure torture. I mean it was all pads, hitting ... I think we all thought that we might have a good team after that. I was just hoping to make the travel squad and just contribute. Those guys were so great to me. I felt like I was a part of something."

Cloudy with a

chance of Oranges

On Sept. 30, 1961, the Buffs opened the season with a 24-0 romp over Oklahoma State in front of 40,000 witnesses at Folsom Field.

"I didn't think 1960 was a good year," Gale Weidner, the quarterback, said of CU's 6-4 finish to a campaign that had started so promisingly at 5-1, including back-to-back home wins over Nebraska and Oklahoma. "So the opener was a game we were happy to win. I felt comfortable that our defense would be good and we shut them out, 24-0."

Weidner is one of the few Buffs who can recall the most intimate details -- what routes his targets were running on specific plays in specific games, what the field conditions each Saturday were like, what was said in the huddle -- all these decades later.

Everyone remembers the finish to the Kansas game on Oct. 7.

CU found itself trailing the Jayhawks -- who were led by first-team All-American quarterback John Hadl and three-time All-

Big Eight running back Curtis McClinton -- 19-0 in the fourth quarter. The Buffs rallied with three unanswered touchdowns to pull off a dramatic, season-changing 20-19 victory over KU.

Weidner threw three touchdowns, two long strikes to Ken Blair (57 and 47 yards) and the 17-yard game-winner to Hillebrand, which capped a 63-yard drive in the final minutes to send the home crowd of 42,700 into a frenzy.

"If we would have lost, it would have been an average season," Weidner said. "The last one to Hillebrand, the guy from KU was playing inside him, so he was pretty much alone."

Hillebrand had been poked in the eye on the previous drive, and Grandelius sent a wide-eyed Meadows into the game with championship dreams hanging in the balance.

"I go in there and in the huddle they start screaming and crying at me, 'Meadows, you better do something,' " Meadows said. "We went down the field from our own 25 or 30, and Weidner called an out play to my end. He was going to throw that (touchdown) pass to me. And Hillebrand comes running in and says, 'Meadows, out!' I was that close."

Weidner and Hillebrand naturally made the headlines, but defense would win the conference championship. Lost in the comeback story against KU was linebacker Walt Klinker's third-down tackle of Hadl to force a punt.

On Oct. 14, the suddenly nationally-ranked Buffs (No. 15) traveled all the way to Miami and escaped with a 9-7 victory over the Hurricanes, another opponent with an All-American quarterback (George Mira) under center.

"I had received an award when I was a junior during a basketball game. That night I predicted we'd win all our games my senior year," said Romig, an All-American guard. "I had a sense we had a pretty good team and there wasn't anyone on our schedule we couldn't beat. By the same token, everyone could beat us."

CU cracked the top 10 in the polls and beat Kansas State 13-0 in Manhattan on Oct. 21. The Buffs probably should have been even more dominant, but there were bigger fish to fry the following Saturday in Norman, Okla.

Perhaps one of the reasons why many fans had demanded that Ward be removed was CU's 0-8-1 record against Oklahoma on his watch. A 7-0 victory over the Sooners, the Buffs' first win in the series since 1912, highlighted Grandelius' second season in 1960.

This time, on Oct. 28, the Buffs beat OU on the road, 22-14, to put themselves in position for the Big Eight crown.

"I was overwhelmed being in that stadium," said Bill Harris, a sophomore halfback who would break into the spotlight in 1961. "As a kid, you see and read so much about Oklahoma. I remember I ran a kickoff return back 52 yards, then we went in to score to win that ball game."

The victory gave CU a 5-0 record, a No. 8 ranking, and a chance to all but clinch the conference title in a showdown with No. 10 Missouri on Nov. 4 at Folsom Field.

Dan Devine's Tigers had shared the Big Eight title with KU in 1960 (they were retroactively awarded the outright title when it was learned that the rival Jayhawks had used an ineligible player in winning the Border War that year) and beat Navy in the Orange Bowl.

Missouri, ranked No. 1 at the time, beat CU 16-6 in Columbia en route to a 10-1 finish.

The determined Buffs gutted out a 7-6 victory over the Tigers in the rematch. Weidner hit Harris on a 21-yard touchdown pass, and CU thwarted a 2-point conversion try by Missouri, which also missed a field goal, in the fourth quarter.

"That was a classic," Harris said. "It was a tight ball game, the stadium was filled, and we knew if we won we would win the title."

Oranges rained down from the bleachers at Folsom Field as the Buffs trotted off the field.

Circled in red once again

Some of the greatest moments from the early days of CU football came against Utah. From 1910-47, the Buffs and Utes

were rivals, first in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference and then the Mountain States Athletic Conference.

On Nov. 7, 1936, Byron "Whizzer" White ran for a touchdown, threw a touchdown, returned a kickoff for a touchdown, and returned two punts for touchdowns to lead CU to a 31-7 upset of the Utes.

On Nov. 6, 1937, the future U.S. Supreme Court Justice made a field goal, scored on an 85-yard punt return, scored on a 57-yard touchdown run, and converted both extra points to lead the Buffs to a 17-7 win in Salt Lake City. White was the runner-up in the Heisman Trophy balloting that season after leading CU to an 8-1 record and its first postseason game (a 28-14 loss to Rice in the Cotton Bowl on Jan. 1, 1938).

But in 1948, CU left Utah behind for a new challenge in the Big Seven.

Then the Utes stunned their old foes with a 21-12 victory over the No. 8 Buffs on Nov. 11, 1961, at Folsom Field.

The perfect season was spoiled.

"I felt we were the better team, but we couldn't do anything right," McBride said. "It was a mess."

Grandelius, who died in 2008, may have taken a win over Utah for granted. After CU marched down the field and scored to take a 7-0 lead, the young head coach platooned in his reserves. The Utes rattled off the game's next 21 points to seize control.

"By the time we got our stuff together, we were down big and fighting like hell to get back into the game," Hillebrand said. "We took them too lightly."

Utah's Gary Hertzfeldt, one of the more unheralded quarterbacks CU faced that season, controlled the game with his passing. It was easily the highlight of the campaign for the Utes, who finished 6-4.

"The Utah game was like, 'What happened?' " Meadows said. "It's even hard to believe today."

In 1962, after Grandelius had been fired for committing NCAA violations, CU lost 37-21 in the opener at Utah to set the tone for a 2-8 season and some dark days for the Buffs. The programs haven't played since, but will renew the rivalry in 2011 as new members of the Pac-12 Conference.

"Colorado has fallen off the past few years, but I'm sure they'll get it back because they have great tradition," said former Utah halfback Bud Scalley, who scored the last points in the series. "I'm sure it won't take long to get a good rivalry going there."

Current CU head coach Jon Embree and contemporary Buffs fans want to let rivalries develop over time in the Pac-12, but members of the '61 team have the Nov. 25 game in Salt Lake City circled in red.

"That's the first thing I thought of, our loss to those guys," McBride, who went on to become Tom Osborne's longtime defensive coordinator at Nebraska, said of CU leaving the Big 12 for the Pac-12. "I think personally, CU should have been playing Utah, Wyoming, Colorado State, and all those regional teams. It seems natural. But conferences change, and you can't do anything about it. I think this move is great."

Buffs bonded for life

CU was able to bounce back on Nov. 18 with a 7-0 victory over Nebraska in Lincoln. The Buffs held the Cornhuskers without a first down, to 0-for-12 passing, and 31 yards of total offense. The field conditions were perfect for a pig sty, but not a well-played game of pigskin.

"We fumbled three times inside their 10. The mud was over our shoes," Weidner said. "Finally, we were at the 1, and Grandelius called a QB sneak. I don't know if I got in or not. I think I did. I just plopped down in the mud, they called it a touchdown, and dang it if we didn't kick the extra point, too. ...

"I don't know what I had for breakfast some days," Weidner says with a laugh. "But I can remember the Nebraska game."

During Meadows' career as the director of community relations at Coors, he remembers speaking to the Nebraska

Cattleman's Association one night in Omaha and introducing himself as a member of the '61 CU team that humbled the Huskers in their own stadium.

"Not a word, not an acknowledgement, not a recognition," Meadows said of the response.

Just crickets.

After the historic win over Nebraska, CU closed out the regular season with convincing victories over Iowa State (34-0) and Air Force (29-12) to become the program's first nine-win team.

An invitation to the Orange Bowl was accepted by CU officials, and turned down in the locker room.

Romig and McBride announced that the Buffs would only play powerhouse LSU in the Orange Bowl if the entire team -- white and black players -- could stay at the same hotel.

During the trip to Miami earlier in the season, the five black players -- Harris, running back Teddy Woods, wide receiver Ed Coleman, running back Noble Milton, and tackle Al Hollingsworth -- were segregated from the rest of the Buffs.

"We were sort of nervous, but also proud and happy with what our teammates stood up for," Harris said. "I think a lot of that stuff we went through that year made us a really close-knit family. The racial stuff in the South, it's something we were aware of. But our teammates kept us pretty secure, and we just stayed together as a team and a group.

"When you're with your teammates, you forget a lot of that stuff."

LSU dominated the Orange Bowl on Jan. 1, 1962, with a 25-7 victory over CU in front of a crowd of 62,391. The Buffs still walked off the field with their heads held high.

Years later, Romig's wife Barbara ran into an old sports writer in New York who asked her if she was related to the College Hall of Fame player from Colorado. He remembered vividly the stance the losing team in the Orange Bowl had taken against the old South.

"He said, 'They stood together as a team with no color lines. They stood for what was right,' " Barbara said.

Joe Romig became a Rhodes Scholar, earned a PhD in Astrophysics at CU, and is still working as a certified fire investigator. After retiring from Coors following a 34-year career, Meadows served CU as an assistant athletic director and is now a top agent for women's college basketball coaches around the country. Harris was a highly successful health care executive and served as the C-Club director at his alma mater before retiring two years ago.

A total of seven players from the 1961 team played in the NFL. The group also produced 15 successful businessmen, 11 educators, three attorneys, three college coaches, three physicians (including a brain surgeon), a judge, and an FBI agent.

Eight members of this football fraternity have passed away, but many of them keep in touch regularly on the phone or over dinner, and most of them return to Boulder for a reunion at least once a year.

Harris is hoping to get all of the living members back at Folsom Field for the Washington State game on Oct. 1 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of that Orange Bowl run.

"I think maybe why we won was because we were so close," Hillebrand said. "You have all these different personalities and we just all got along. There wasn't any problems, and I think that carried over into our games. ...

"Some of the guys that I played against in the pros were from Nebraska and Oklahoma and Missouri. They used to tell me, 'Those Buffaloes were tougher than hell.' "

They still are. Just not as rowdy when reminiscing back on The Hill in Boulder 50 years later.

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Former CU Buff Billy Nelson wins U.S. steeplechase

Jenny Simpson second, earns Team USA spot

Camera staff report
Boulder Daily Camera

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EUGENE, Ore. -- Two former University of Colorado athletes took to the track at Hayward Field on Saturday with hopes of making it to South Korea.

Mission accomplished for Billy Nelson and Jenny (Barringer) Simpson at the USATF Outdoor Championships on the University of Oregon campus.

Nelson won the men's 3,000-meter steeplechase in a time of 8 minutes, 28.46 seconds to earn a spot on the U.S. national team that will compete in Daegu, South Korea, later this summer. Daniel Huling was second in 8:29.27 and Kyle Alcorn was third in 8:29.44.

"This is just the next step," Nelson said of earning the victory. "Over there the bar is raised. It's a more physical race. Here I'm comfortable running in a pack because we're all friends and know each other. Over there it is more aggressive."

Simpson, meanwhile, finished second in the 1,500 to earn her spot on Team USA. Morgan Uceny won the race in 4:03.91. Simpson crossed the line in 4:05.66. Shannon Rowbury was third in 4:06.20.

CU volunteer assistant coach and former Buff Jeremy Dodson advanced to the semifinals of the 200-meter dash after taking second in the fourth heat. Dodson finished in 20.34 behind Shawn Crawford (20.24), who had the fastest time of the day. The semifinals and finals are today.

Two current CU athletes will also compete in the women's steeplechase final today. Emma Coburn and Shalaya Kipp will battle the country's best for a trip to Worlds. Coburn finished fourth in her qualifying heat, while Kipp was the 13th of 14 qualifiers.

U.S. Championships

At Hayward Field

Eugene, Ore.

All race distances in meters

Finals only

MEN

400 -- 1, Tony McQuay, Florida, 44.68. 2, Jeremy Wariner, adidas, 44.98. 3, Greg Nixon, Asics, 44.98. 4, Jamaal Torrence, Nike, 45.11. 5, Michael Berry, Oregon, 45.22. 6, Miles Smith, unattached, 45.34. 7, Calvin Smith, adidas, 45.39. Kerron Clement, Nike, DNS.

1,500 -- 1, Matthew Centrowitz, Oregon, 3:47.63. 2, Bernard Lagat, Nike, 3:47.96. 3, Leonel Manzano, Nike, 3:48.16. 4, Andrew Wheating, Oregon TC Elite, 3:48.19. 5, William Leer, 3:48.20. 6, David Torrence, Nike, 3:48.31. 7, Lopez Lomong, Nike, 3:48.54. 8, Dorian Ulrey, Arkansas, 3:49.02. 9, Kyle Miller, Nike, 3:49.38. 10, Jordan McNamara, Oregon TC Elite, 3:49.61. 11, AJ Acosta, Oregon, 3:50.02. 12, Evan Jager, Oregon TC Elite, 3:50.11. 13, Michael Hammond, Virginia Tech, 3:55.69.

3,000 steeplechase -- 1, William Nelson, New Balance, 8:28.46. 2, Daniel Huling, Reebok, 8:29.27. 3, Kyle Alcorn, 8:29.44. 4, Joshua McAdams, New Balance, 8:30.78. 5, Benjamin Bruce, Oregon TC Elite, 8:37.22. 6, Donald Cowart,

Ragged Mountain Racing, 8:39.13. 7, Andrew Poore, Indiana, 8:43.95. 8, John Sullivan, Stanford, 8:44.81. 9, Derek Scott, unattached, 8:45.41. 10, De'Sean Turner, Indiana, 8:46.46. 11, Jordan Fife, Brooks, 8:48.41. 12, Cory Leslie, Ohio State, 8:48.70. 13, Stephen Finley, Oregon, 8:54.12. 14, Justin Tyner, unattached, 8:57.94.

110 hurdles -- 1, David Oliver, 13.04. 2, Merritt, 13.12. 3, Richardson, 13.15. 4, Trammell, 13.16. 5, Porter, 13.26. 6, Ash, 13.27. 7, Berger, 13.34. 8, Akins, 13.48.

Pole vault -- 1, Derek Miles, Nike, 18 feet, 6 3/4 inches. 2, Jeremy Scott, Nike, 18-4 1/2. 3, Nick Mossberg, unattached, 18-2. 4, Mark Hollis, Nike, 18-2. 5, Jordan Scott, Kansas, 17-10 1/2. 6, Jack Whitt, Oral Roberts, 17-10 1/2. 7 (tie), Darren Niedermeyer, Jump High Athletic Club; Scott Roth, Washington; and Victor Weirich, Brigham Young, 17-6 1/2. Tyler Wallace, Long Beach State, NH. Jacob Pauli, unattached, NH. Paul Litchfield, Fuzion Athletics, NH. Jason Colwick, unattached, NH. Brad Walker, Nike, NH. Chris Little, Brigham Young, NH. Rory Quiller, unattached, DNS.

Long jump -- 1, Marquise Goodwin, Texas, 27 feet, 4 inches. 2, William Claye, Florida, 26-10 1/2. 3, Jeremy Hicks, unattached, 26-7. 4, Christian Taylor, Florida, 26-5 3/4. 5, Randall Flimmons, unattached, 26-3 3/4. 6, Collister Fahie, Akron, 26-3 3/4. 7, Trevell Quinley, unattached, 26- 3 1/2. 8, Zedric Thomas, LSU, 26-1/2. 9, Bryce Lamb, Texas Tech, 25-11. 10, Dwight Phillips, Nike, 25-10 3/4. 11, David Registe, Alaska, 25-5 1/2. 12, JaRod Tobler, unattached, 25-4 1/2. 13, Melvin Echard, Texas A&M, 25-2 3/4. 14, Michael Hartfield, Ohio State, 24-9 3/4. 15, J Trey Hardee, Nike, 19-6 3/4. Ryan Grinnell, unattached, pass. Giorgio Bryant, Cal State LA, foul.

WOMEN

400 -- 1, Allyson Felix, Nike, 50.40. 2, Francena McCorory, adidas, 50.49. 3, Debbie Dunn, Nike, 50.70. 4, Jessica Beard, adidas, 51.06. 5, Natasha Hastings, unattached, 51.15. 6, DeeDee Trotter, Saucony, 51.17. 7, Keshia Baker, Saucony, 52.21. 8, Mary Wineberg, New York Athletic Club, 52.26.

1,500 -- 1, Morgan Uceny, adidas, 4:03.91. 2, Jennifer Simpson, New Balance, 4:05.66. 3, Shannon Rowbury, Nike, 4:06.20. 4, Christin Wurth, Nike, 4:06.21. 5, Emily Infeld, Georgetown, 4:08.96. 6, Treniere Moser, Nike, 4:09.72. 7, Brie Felnagle, adidas, 4:10.33. 8, Katherine Follett, Brooks, 4:11.92. 9, Jordan Hasay, Oregon, 4:12.66. 10, Anna Pierce, Nike, 4:12.84. 11, Gabriele Anderson, Brooks, 4:17.17. 12, Jackie Areson, unattached, 4:25.04.

400 hurdles -- 1, Lashinda Demus, Nike, 54.21. 2, Queen Harrison, Saucony, 54.78. 3, Jasmine Chaney, Arizona State, 55.22. 4, Turquoise Thompson, UCLA, 55.53. 5, Tierra Brown, adidas, 55.93. 6, Christine Spence, unattached 55.99. 7, Latoya James, North Carolina, 57.07. 8, Takecia Jameson, Miami, 58.75.

Javelin -- 1, Kara Patterson, Asics, 194-8. 2, Rachel Yurkovich, Nike, 180-2. 3, Alicia DeShasier, unattached, 177-2. 4, Avione Allgood, Vegas Valley Track Club, 176-8. 5, Kimberley Hamilton, unattached, 175-9. 6, Dana Pounds-Lyons, US Air Force/Nike, 171-10. 7, Brittany Borman, Oklahoma, 170-7. 8, Karlee McQuillen, Penn State, 170-1. 9, Hannah Carson, Arizona Cheetahs Track Club, 165-5. 10, Amanda Peterson, unattached, 159-8. 11, Jennifer Austin, Shore Athletic Club, 158-0. 12, Katie Coronado, unattached, 152-7. 13, Grace Zollman, Central Park Track Club, 150-6. 14, Kim Kreiner, Nike, 148-8. 15, Emalie Humphreys, Texas A&M, 141-8.

Hammer -- 1, Jessica Cosby, Nike, 234-0. 2, Amber Campbell, Mjolnir Throwers Club/Nike, 229-10. 3, Keelin Godsey, unattached, 226-0. 4, Jeneva McCall, Southern Illinois, 221-4. 5, Amy Haapanen, unattached, 220-4. 6, Gwendolyn Berry, New York Athletic Club, 218-7. 7, Aubrey Baxter, Team Nebraska Brooks, 213-1. 8, Kristin Smith, Throw1deep Club, 212-2. 9, Chelsea Cassulo, UNLV, 210-10. 10, Brittany Hinchcliffe, unattached, 210-5. 11, Britney Henry, adidas, 205-9. 12, Marissa Minderler, USC, 204-2. 13, Loree Smith, New York Athletic Club, 203-6. 14, Amanda Bingson, UNLV, 203-5. 15, Caressa Sims, unattached. 193-7. 16, Ashley Harbin, ConnQuest, 192-8. 17, Chandra Andrews, unattached, 192-6.

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Former Buff Hawkins leading Stockholm team in many ways

By Brian Howell Longmont Times-Call
Longmont Times-Call

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The list of young football players who dream of playing in the National Football League is long.

The list of those who actually end up in the NFL is short.

For many, college football is the end of the line.

Cody Hawkins won't be suiting up in the NFL any time soon, but he's also not quite done playing. The former University of Colorado quarterback, who finished his college career in November, has spent this spring and summer as the starting quarterback for the Stockholm Mean Machines in Sweden.

"I knew I wanted to play for a little while longer after college," he said through an e-mail interview from Sweden. "I wasn't sure where or how -- I just wanted to play. To me, Europe offered a great experience. Not only would I be able to travel the world, but I would be able to finish out my playing career, get my feet wet in the coaching realm and live in an entirely new culture."

Playing in Sweden has presented Hawkins with a set of challenges few players deal with. He has been learning the Swedish language, although he said there is a good deal of English spoken where he lives. The time change -- Stockholm is eight hours ahead of Colorado -- and high prices for pretty much everything have been an adjustment, too. Yet, those seem to be easy transitions.

"Finding cheddar cheese, though, now THAT is impossible," he said.

On the field, Hawkins has enjoyed success. He is the starting quarterback for the Mean Machines and in his first game he threw for 369 yards and five touchdowns -- both Swedish records for one game. He threw 15 touchdown passes in his first five games and led the country in passing. In one game, he tossed a game-winning 35-yard touchdown pass with 10 seconds left, while his parents watched from the stands.

"I have been playing pretty well, but we will see how our team develops through the season," he said.

That is, in large part, up to him. Hawkins, who has always wanted to get into coaching, teaches football concepts to his teammates, helping them to learn a little more about the game each day.

"You have some great athletes out here, you really do, but the knowledge of the game is where you see the separations," said Hawkins, who compared the level of play to really good high school or Division III college football. "Here, you rarely get game film of the opponent, so sometimes you really have to coach on the fly. I do my best, but I am sure sometimes it seems like I am speaking in tongues.

"I help out at the U-17, U-19 and women's practices during the week, as well."

It has been a challenge, for sure, but a rewarding one.

"What the Swedes lack in knowledge, they easily make up for in enthusiasm," he said.

Hawkins is the only player on the Mean Machines under contract. He's not making Peyton Manning-type of money -- or even Brady Quinn-type money for that matter -- but Hawkins does "make a good living," he said.

And, while his teammates -- many of whom have families and other jobs -- may not have Big 12, or even high school varsity talent, Hawkins heaps praise upon them.

"We don't have a lot of depth," Hawkins said, "but the guys who show up give it everything they have."

The experience has given Hawkins a new perspective on the game. For years, he could concentrate on playing, and trying to win. Now, he's not only coaching, but acting as his own trainer and equipment manager. And winning? Well, that's not the highest priority.

"European football is much more about using football as a medium to explore culture than it is to compete at the highest level," he said. "There are days when I wish it would be a bigger deal, when I wish we could have meetings every day and game plan 'til our eyes burned, but you also enjoy the smiles on everyone's faces before practice. Everyone plays because they love the game and have a blast with it."

That, ultimately, is what led Hawkins to Stockholm, a place he had never been before arriving to play for the Mean Machines. He took a big chance to travel so far from home to play his favorite game.

"Dropping my three bags in an empty apartment 5,000 miles from home, all by myself, was a pretty big moment I will remember," he said.

While this move was rooted in football, it has become much more than that.

"It is the friendships and memories that make the experience so great," said Hawkins, who will take a break from the Mean Machines next month to play quarterback for the United States at the IFAF World Cup in Austria.

Hawkins said he has gained a greater appreciation for family, and has learned that the world has a universal language that makes life enjoyable.

"I live in an apartment complex with people from Iraq, El Salvador, Finland, Iceland, Italy, France, along with many Swedes," he said. "Though you cannot communicate fully with all of them, a smile and a kind gesture goes a long way.

"My horizons have opened up, and I am looking forward to living the rest of my life with a much more enlightened perspective about the world we live in."

It is a world that, for Hawkins, may be expanding again soon. His contract with the Mean Machines ends on Sept. 30. From there, he is considering a move to Amsterdam, where he would pursue a master's degree in international sports management and continue playing football.

No matter where Hawkins lands next, however, his post-CU journey is off to a great start.

"So far it has been an awesome ride!" he said.

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