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colorado football

CU tight end Thornton in TD column

By **Tom Kensler**
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — While walking across campus recently, Colorado tight end DaVaughn Thornton was stopped by a coach who wanted to see how the redshirt freshman was doing. That ordinarily would not be unusual, except in this instance the coach was from a different sport.

Tad Boyle, CU's first-year men's basketball coach, and Thornton, you see, go back a ways.

"Coach Boyle recruited me at Northern Colorado before he came here," said Thornton, a two-sport standout at Denver East. "If I hadn't decided to play football for CU, I probably would have gone to UNC for basketball."

Until last weekend, the 6-foot-4, 225-pound Thornton might have still been known more for his basketball background. But against Kansas, Thornton

recorded his first college reception. And it was

an eye-opener — a 12-yard touchdown from Cody Hawkins that gave Colorado a seemingly comfortable 35-10 lead with just three seconds remaining in the second quarter.

"I finally got the burden off my back," Thornton said of his first catch.

Playing time has been scarce for Thornton, who remains stuck on the depth chart behind junior starter Ryan Deehan and senior Luke Walters. But judging by that catch in Lawrence, Thornton could be getting more opportunities, beginning today against Iowa State at Folsom Field.

Thornton's touchdown last week was anything but a routine play. Crossing from right to left, he slanted toward the back of the end zone, nabbing the pass in full stride and in traffic, just inside the back line.

Thornton said he was the primary receiver on the play.

"I had to make sure I had my route right and had to make sure I got the ball," he recalled. "If all that happened, it was going to be a touchdown."

Thornton had been a star of the spring game and during August scrimmages, and some fans must have wondered if something had happened to him. But, as with most freshmen, he is still learning the offense and is at a disadvantage when competing for reps with two veteran tight ends.

"DaVaughn is a great athlete, and we'd love to

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use him more," offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said this week. "But it's a matter of him learning the assignments. He has to know exactly what he's doing in order for him to execute it.

"We do have some specific plays for him. But you have to be smart with that. You can't have it where every time he trots out on the field, (the defense) knows the play call because that's the play DaVaughn knows. We have to camouflage it."

Include Thornton in the list of young CU players with great potential but awaiting their turn. Thornton's athleticism and bloodlines suggest a bright future. His father, David, played football at Oklahoma State, and oldest brother Dazzmond played basketball under Bob Knight for one season at Texas Tech before completing his college hoops career at James Madison.

DaVaughn said he is patient and understands there is a lot to learn. He certainly has that team-first attitude every coach wants to hear.

Asked how many passes he would like to catch in the next three games, Thornton said it didn't matter.

"I just want to win," he said.

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Remembering Iowa State

Nov. 19, 1994: CU 41, ISU 20

It's the only time in history a tailback topped 2,000 yards, nailed down the Heisman Trophy and was relegated to the back pages the next day.

Yes, it happened at Folsom Field 16 years ago. Rashaan Salaam entered the Iowa State game, the last game of the regular season, needing 204 yards to become only the fourth player to top 2,000 rushing yards in a season.

Colorado was 9-1, appeared headed to the Fiesta Bowl and playing a winless Iowa State team mercifully ending its 0-10-1 season.

There was no real suspense. Many players could get 200 yards on Iowa State, but the way Salaam did it made it a Hollywood ending.

He took a handoff around the right side, found an opening along the sideline and dashed 67 yards for a touchdown to top the 2,000-yard mark.

"I'm out of breath," Salaam said afterward. "My cousin's down there telling me, 'Strike the pose. Strike the pose.' And I'm just like, 'Hey, that's not my style. I'm not that kind of person.' "

He joined the 2,000-yard club of Barry Sanders, Marcus Allen and Mike Rozier, all of whom won the Heisman.

Not many fans were talking about the Heisman much afterward, though. Coach Bill McCartney, Colorado's all-time win leader who led the Buffaloes to the 1990 national title, made the

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shocking announcement of his retirement.

"There are no negatives here," a red-eyed McCartney said at a packed news conference with his wife, Lyndi, at his side. "There is no reason except it was the best time for us to do this as a family."

He denied he would work full time for his new Christian-based men's organization, Promise Keepers, and that he clashed with president Judith Albino's administration.

McCartney finished with a school-best 93-55-5 record.

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Overall: CU leads 48-15-1. In Boulder: CU leads 24-6-1. In Ames: CU leads 24-9.

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Woelk: KU embarrassment should be motivation enough for Buffs

By Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/13/2010 12:26:08 AM MST

Lost amidst the brouhaha over the Dan Hawkins dismissal has been the fact that the Colorado Buffaloes actually have a game to play today.

Much to the dismay of many, the 2011 season isn't here yet.

But Iowa State is, and it's a pretty salty Cyclones team to boot that will hit the turf today at Folsom Field.

Colorado fans may be happy there's a new sheriff in town, even if he is wearing a temporary star. But Colorado's players should have other things on their mind, starting with bouncing back from their epic meltdown one week ago against Kansas.

The collapse would be hard to forget. The Buffs held a 45-17 lead in the fourth quarter and appeared well on their way to their fourth win of the season before giving up 35 points in the final period to absorb a humiliating 52-45 defeat.

The loss didn't cement Hawkins' future -- but it did hasten his departure.

Had the Buffs beaten Kansas, Hawkins almost certainly would have been on the Folsom sidelines today, still hoping for a miracle finish to the season.

But now, it will be interim head coach Brian Cabral calling the shots as the Buffs attempt to put last week's embarrassment behind them.

There should be no lack of motivation on their part. While Hawkins ultimately took the blame for last week's debacle -- and rightfully so -- it wasn't the head coach last week who was missing tackles, throwing interceptions and fumbling in the disastrous fourth quarter.

Those were players in CU uniforms committing those miscues, and if there's any sense of pride in this bunch, they'll stand up and play well today.

I wouldn't expect any less. Nobody expects the Buffs to win one for their former coach today. That would be a misguided form of motivation.

Neither should the Buffs feel it necessary to win one for their interim coach.

Rather, this team should feel motivated to erase the embarrassment of the Kansas calamity and inspired to play well for themselves.

In short, they must bounce back and prove that they have not quit.

For too many years now, "resilient" has been a term used to describe CU's football teams. Gary Barnett talked about his last couple of teams in Boulder being "resilient." Hawkins' teams were forced to be "resilient" for much of his stay here.

Now, these Buffs must be resilient as they head down the final stretch of what has been the latest of a long string of disappointing seasons at CU.

But resilient indicates a team that must be able to bounce back from adversity or rebound from a poor performance (or two or three).

Someday, Colorado's football program needs to get past resilient. It would be nice to see the Buffs in position to play for something other than pride down the stretch; enjoyable to see the program play games in November that we'd like to remember.

But today, while bowl eligibility is still technically within reach, it's not worth the time to discuss the possibilities.

Instead, the Buffs need to be resilient -- and give fans something to remember rather than something they wish they could forget.

Sept. 4 -- CU 24, Colorado St. 3

Sept. 11 -- California 52, CU 7

Sept. 18 -- CU 31, Hawaii 13

Oct. 2 -- CU 29, Georgia 27

Oct. 9 -- Missouri 26, CU 0

Oct. 16 -- Baylor 31, CU 25

Oct. 23 -- Texas Tech 27, CU 24

Oct. 30 -- Oklahoma 43, CU 10

Nov. 6 -- Kansas 52, CU 45

Nov. 13 -- IOWA STATE, 11:30 a.m., FCS

Nov. 20 -- KANSAS STATE, 12:10 p.m.

Nov. 26 -- at Nebraska, 1:30 p.m., ABC

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Cabral, Buffs set for Cyclones

Interim coach ready to lead Colorado in final 3 games

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 11/13/2010 12:25:09 AM MST

Interim Colorado football coach Brian Cabral says he doesn't view the final three games of the 2010 regular season as his audition to earn the job on a permanent basis.

The reality is, just about everybody else does -- fair or unfair as that might be.

Cabral this week said he wants to be considered for the job. After spending the past 21 1/2 seasons coaching in the program under four other men, he finally has an opportunity to take what he has learned from each of them and combine it with his own instincts and preparation on game days to prove he can handle the position.

The 54-year-old Hawaiian native showed just how much he cares about the program he has given much of his adult life to when he became emotional this week talking about the task he faces over these final weeks. He spoke of having a black and gold heart, a characteristic some believe is a prerequisite for the job.

"We'll see what I bring," Cabral said on Tuesday. "But I am confident that I can find the competitors in these guys."

He and the Buffs have a tough assignment in the first game of the post-Dan Hawkins era today at Folsom Field (11:40 a.m., Fox College Sports). A gritty group from Iowa State arrives looking for a sixth victory and bowl eligibility.

The Buffs also bring some baggage into the game they must overcome. Their complete collapse in the fourth quarter at Kansas last week was the final failure of the Hawkins era. CU allowed 35 points to be scored against it in slightly more than 11 minutes in one of the worst crashes in NCAA history.

The 2010 Buffs will always have that on their resume, but they can redeem themselves with solid performances down the stretch, starting today.

"I believe these guys will rebound," Cabral said.

The Buffs will modify their pregame routine today, in part because of the early start time. They won't make the usual walk across campus and enter the stadium on the south end passing the bronze buffalo statue in the process. Instead, buses from the team hotel will drop them at the north end so they can go directly into their locker room and focus on the game. Officials said the change was requested by the seniors.

Colorado officials also are challenging former players who live in the area to support the current team by spending time with the Buffs in the locker room before the game. They were hoping enough players would come to form a tunnel of former players from the locker room door to the field before the game.

Regardless of whether that happens, it figures to be an emotional game for everyone associated with the program.

The Buffs are hosting a Cyclones team that has been tested. Today's game features a pair of teams who have played two of the toughest schedules in the country, according to the Sagarin Ratings. Iowa State has faced the sixth-toughest schedule in the nation to this point and boasts its first road win over a ranked team (Texas) since 1990.

The Cyclones are also coming off a heartbreaking loss to Nebraska in which coach Paul Rhoads boldly chose to attempt a 2-point conversion that he didn't have to in overtime to win. The Buffs have played the nation's eighth-toughest schedule and haven't fared well against it.

The Buffs (3-6, 0-5) are one of only nine schools remaining in the nation without a win in conference play in 2010. CU must win each of its final three games to have any chance of playing in the postseason.

Colorado must meet two goals to give itself the best opportunity to win today. Take care of the football and stop ISU tailback Alexander Robinson.

The Cyclones have been among the most opportunistic teams in the nation since Rhoads took over prior to last season. They have forced 54 turnovers in the past 22 games.

Robinson will be going for his fourth consecutive 100-yard rushing day today. He already is the Cyclones fourth leading rusher in school history, with 13 100-yard games to his credit. Three of those games have come against the Buffs.

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