

CU Buffs coach Dan Hawkins: 'Get back on a horse and get riding'

Coach addressed mistakes at Kansas and his future on conference call

By Kyle Ringo, Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Colorado coach Dan Hawkins says he is not haunted by speculation that he will be fired at some point between now and the end of the season. He said his primary focus is the well-being of his players.

Hawkins took questions from reporters this morning on the Big 12 Conference coaches' teleconference. He was asked how concerned he is about his future following his team's fifth consecutive loss on Saturday at Kansas. The Buffs blew a 28-point, fourth-quarter lead to lose their 15th consecutive true road game and 17th consecutive game outside the state of Colorado.

"Life makes no promises. It doesn't. Life's an adventure," Hawkins said. "There is always risks to be taken and that's the nature of this job and that's the nature of this profession. I don't think you walk around with that haunting you. I don't think that's your driving force by any means."

Hawkins said he would make some different decisions if he was given a second chance to coach the fourth quarter at Kansas, but he emphasized that he feels that way after every game once he has reviewed film to see where mistakes were made.

"You could always change a lot of things," Hawkins said. "When we have that many points scored in that amount of time, I think there's always different opportunities in every phase of the game to tweak it."

Hawkins has been criticized for throwing the ball too much in the fourth quarter when CU should have been running the ball against a defense that came into the game ranked 112th nationally against the run. He was asked why the Buffs were still passing as often as they did.

"We didn't want to just totally get into a ground attack," Hawkins said. "We had had success mixing it up. We had had success running it and throwing it. We just didn't want to be one dimensional."

Cody Hawkins, the coach's son, has an opportunity to become the program's all-time leading passer in the final three games. Some have suggested claiming that record might be influencing the play calling.

Dan Hawkins said he and his son are only concerned about winning.

"He's going to be the first guy to tell you, that doesn't mean as much to him, it's about wins," Hawkins said. "Those things are always a bi-product. That's not what you're trying to get. You're trying to win."

Hawkins said he submitted film to the Big 12 office for review of an onside kick and an apparent touchdown catch by freshman Paul Richardson that would have tied the game in the final seconds. Multiple CU players, staffers and KOA radio personnel said CU recovered the onside kick that was awarded to Kansas in the fourth quarter. Richardson claimed he caught a pass from Cody Hawkins that was ruled incomplete.

Asked how he comes back from such a difficult loss, Hawkins chuckled and said, "You've just got to pick yourself up. That's part of sports and that's part of life. You know, it's not fun and it's tough but that's part of the lessons of sport. You've got to get back on a horse and get riding."

In regard to his job security, a reporter asked if Hawkins had adopted a "whatever happens, happens" approach.

"Well, yeah. I mean you have to do what you think is right and do it to the best of your ability and let it go," Hawkins said. "If you win a bunch of games, it doesn't mean your a genius, and, if you don't, it doesn't mean you're awful either. It's always somewhere in the middle."

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Hawkins doesn't regret fourth-quarter play-calling vs. Kansas

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

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It has been two days to absorb the biggest collapse in Colorado football history, but Buffaloes coach Dan Hawkins does not regret the offensive strategy in a fourth quarter in which they blew a 28-point lead.

After Rodney Stewart's third touchdown gave Colorado a 45-17 lead early in the fourth quarter, the Buffs called only four more running plays. Kansas scored 35 unanswered points and won, 52-45.

"We'd thrown it so well," Hawkins said on Monday's Big 12 Conference call. "We didn't want to totally get into a ground attack. We had success mixing it up. We had success running it and throwing it. We just didn't want to be one-dimensional."

True, his son Cody had picked apart a Kansas

secondary that was the worst in

the league. Entering the fourth quarter, Hawkins was 24-of-30 for 263 yards and three touchdowns. Also, with Kansas scoring two touchdowns sandwiched around an on-side kick, Colorado's lead had dropped to 45-31 by the time it got the ball again.

However, 9:20 remained in the game, and the Buffaloes all but abandoned a ground game in which Stewart had 175 yards and three touchdowns. Against what appeared to be a stiff wind, Hawkins hit only 5-of-14 for 59 yards and an interception in the fourth quarter.

Dan Hawkins was asked if the wind was a factor.

"A little bit," Dan said. "We'd thrown it in both quarters going that way. I wouldn't say it was a massive factor by any means, but there was a little bit of a breeze."

Hawkins was vague on many other questions, particularly if he would've changed any strategy offensively or defensively in that final period.

"There's always stuff you'd do differently," he said. "You'd make different calls and use different defenses. You'd always do that. You can always change a lot of things. When you have that many points scored in that amount of time, there's always different opportunities in every phase of the game to tweak it."

The loss, Colorado's fifth

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straight, drops it to 3-6 overall and 0-5 in the Big 12. It must beat Iowa State (5-5, 3-3) Saturday and Kansas State (6-3, 3-3), both at

[All Things Buffs blog](#)



The Denver Post's college football reporters give analysis, notes and minutiae on this blog devoted to CU athletics.

home, then win at ninth-ranked Nebraska (8-1, 4-1) Nov. 26 to qualify for a bowl and avoid a fifth straight losing season.

Athletic director Mike Bohn has refused to comment on his plans for Hawkins but he has not denied reports that he will be fired. Hawkins sounded resigned to his fate when asked about it on the conference call.

"Life makes no promises," he said. "Life's an adventure and there are always risks to be taken and that's the nature of this job and this profession. I don't think you walk around with that haunting you. I don't think that's your driving force by any means."

Bohn is expected to meet with Hawkins sometime this week. Sources say Bohn is

reluctant to fire him before the season ends in order to keep the continuity with Cody, the lone scholarship quarterback available.

Dan Hawkins has given no indication that he'll quit.

"You have to do what you think is right, and you have to do it to the best of your ability and let it go," he said. "You win a bunch of games it doesn't mean you're a genius and if you don't it doesn't mean you're awful, either. It's always somewhere in the middle."

He said he's not concerned about his own feelings as his year winds down with a five-year mark of 19-39.

"I'm mostly concerned about our players and their feelings and their emotions," he said. "That's the thing I'm always most concerned about."

He did say he sent to the league office film of two controversial fourth-quarter calls. Colorado players said walk-on Buff Cameron Ham recovered the onside kick and that Paul Richardson indeed caught that 7-yard TD pass with two seconds left.

Footnote: The Nov. 20 Kansas State at Colorado football game at Folsom Field was not selected for broadcast by the Big 12 TV partners. Kickoff has been set for 12:10 p.m. local time.

John Henderson: 303-954-1299 or jhenderson@denverpost.com

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big 12 football

Iowa State shores up defense to bid for bowl

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

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Iowa State quarterback Austen Arnaud works for yardage Saturday against the Nebraska duo of defensive back DeJon Gomes (7) and defensive end Pierre Allen, a Thomas Jefferson alumnus. (Charlie Neibergall, The Associated Press)

Technically, both Iowa State and Colorado are going after bowl bids. Realistically, Iowa State has the only good chance to celebrate on

Saturday.

The once-moribund Cyclones come to Boulder for an 11:30 a.m. game Saturday against the moribund Buffaloes. The programs are headed in opposite directions. Iowa State (5-5, 3-3 Big 12) is one win away from its second bowl berth under second-year coach Paul Rhoads.

Colorado (3-6, 0-5) must sweep its last three games for a berth and to avoid a fifth consecutive losing season under embattled coach Dan Hawkins. While it's a foregone conclusion that Hawkins, 19-39 in five years, will be fired after the season, if not before, Rhoads could replace new basketball coach Fred Hoiberg as the new Mayor of Ames.

"I don't think anybody outside of our core group of guys would've gone into the season and said, 'Oh, yeah, Iowa State would be headed to a second bowl in a row,'" Rhoads said on Monday's Big 12 Conference call.

Much of the skepticism hung over a painfully inexperienced defense and one of the toughest schedules in the country. The Cyclones have played four teams ranked in the top 10 at the time they met. They were clobbered by Iowa, Utah and Oklahoma but fought Nebraska to the wire Saturday at home, losing 31-30 in overtime.

"We've survived that (schedule) and we've improved and we've put ourselves in position to accomplish that in our second year," Rhoads said. "Now we have to remain focused."

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Iowa State fans certainly like Rhoads' moxie. Instead of going for the tying extra point in overtime, he called for a fake. The play, a pass designed to be thrown to tight end Collin Franklin, was wide open, but the holder for the extra point floated the pass short, and it was intercepted at the goal line.

"It was a call we had ready to go throughout the entire game," Rhoads said. "We studied it during the game to see if the soundness was still there. Indeed it was. We saw an opportunity to end the football game on one play. Unfortunately for us, we did not get the play executed."

The Cyclones were picked last in the North Division because of a defense that lost eight starters. Last month, they were tagged for 68 and 52 points in back-to-back weeks against Utah and Oklahoma, respectively. Even though they've shown marked improvement since, they still rank 93rd nationally in total defense, allowing 420.9 yards per game. The recent improvement has been obvious, however.

The Cyclones won 28-21 at Texas, beat Kansas 28-16 and then held Nebraska to two offensive touchdowns in regulation.

Sophomore linebackers Jake Knott (10.3 per game) and A.J. Klein are second and third, respectively, in the Big 12 in tackles, and Rhoads is rotating eight players on an improved line. End Jacob Lattimer worked his way into a starting spot beginning with the Texas game and has been the Cyclones' best pass rusher.

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Decision on Hawkins future looms

By Brian Howell
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Two days after his team collapsed during a game at Kansas, University of Colorado head football coach Dan Hawkins said he and his team had just one option with three games left.

“You just have to pick yourself up,” he said during his weekly Big 12 teleconference Monday. “That’s part of sports and that’s part of life. It’s not fun and it’s tough, but that’s part of the lessons of sport. You’ve got to get back on the horse and get riding.”

Hawkins’ ride may be over, however. According to several reports, CU is expected to announce today that Hawkins will not be retained as head coach.

If Saturday’s loss to Kansas was indeed Hawkins’ last game at CU, it will end up being a rather fitting end to his tenure.

Hawkins is 19-39 at CU, and his five seasons in Boulder have been marked by several disastrous losses and an inability to win games on the road or in conference play.

Since Hawkins took over, CU is 2-24 when traveling outside of the state, including a current 17-game losing streak. The Buffs are 10-27 in Big 12 play, including a current eight-game skid.

It’s not just the losses that brought heat upon Hawkins. It’s the magnitude and embarrassment of some of those defeats.

In Hawkins’ first game at CU head coach, in 2006, his Buffs were defeated at home by Division I-AA Montana State. There was a triple-overtime home loss against Big 12 doormat Baylor; a 55-10 home loss to Missouri; a 58-0 loss at Missouri that gave CU its first shutout loss in 20 years; and a 54-38 loss at Toledo, of all places, in a game where the Buffs trailed 30-3.

Despite all of that, many within the program felt this year’s team was the most talented team Hawkins has had, and thus hopes were high. The Buffs started 3-1 in non-conference play, but are have lost five straight since getting into Big 12 play.

The losses have included disasters at Cal (52-7) and Oklahoma (43-10) and evaporated second-half leads against Baylor, Texas Tech and Kansas.

Saturday’s loss at Kansas was the final straw. Players, coaches and even athletic director Mike Bohn were visibly upset after CU inexplicably coughed up a 45-17 lead and lost 52-45 against a horrible Kansas team.

Now three days later, Hawkins is likely out of a job. He often talked about his team being resilient and having great ability to get back on the horse, as he said Monday.



Colorado's Travon Patterson is tackled after picking up a couple yards against Hawaii at Folsom Field in Boulder on Sept. 18. CU beat the Warriors 31-13, but the Buffs have won just one game since — a 29-27 victory over Georgia. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

Unfortunately for Hawkins, during his time in Boulder there were way too many times he was knocked off that horse.

AROUND THE BIG 12

There were two questionable calls late in the Kansas game — on an onside kick and on a last-second pass in the end zone. Both calls went against the Buffs and Hawkins said CU submitted the film of both plays to the Big 12 to review.

CU announced Monday that it's Nov. 20 game against Kansas State will kick off at 12:10 p.m. at Folsom Field. The game will not be televised, marking the third time in five games the Buffs won't be on TV.

Seven Big 12 teams are bowl eligible (Baylor, Kansas State, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Texas A&M), while two others (Iowa State and Texas Tech) are just one win away.

Nebraska coach Bo Pelini said he expects quarterback Taylor Martinez to be back on the field this week when the Cornhuskers host Kansas.

"If he's healthy, yeah," Pelini said.

Martinez sprained his ankle against Missouri on Oct. 30. All indications last week were that he would start against Iowa State last Saturday, but he didn't.

Three weeks ago, Texas A&M was 3-3 and going nowhere, despite having Jerrod Johnson — picked as the preseason first-team All-Big 12 quarterback.

Then, coach Mike Sherman made a change at quarterback and the Aggies have been rolling.

Ryan Tannehill replaced Johnson during the second quarter against Kansas on Oct. 23.

In the three games Tannehill has played, the Aggies (6-3) are 3-0 and he has thrown for 829 yards and nine touchdowns.

Sherman said the turnaround is simply because of the change.

"I think overall our team is better at this point," Sherman said.

"I think we're growing up a little bit. The people around our quarterback have made a difference."

Texas played for the national title last year and started 3-0 this year. Since then, the Longhorns (4-5) are 1-5 and in danger of missing out on a bowl game.

"I'm surprised and disappointed," coach Mack Brown said.

Quinn Mecham is the third Kansas quarterback to start this year. Yet even after he completed 23-of-28 passes for 252 yards and led the Jayhawks to their improbable comeback against CU, he's not guaranteed to start at Nebraska.

"At this point in time we're still discussing and evaluating what we need to do with our quarterback situation," KU coach Turner Gill said.

Big 12 players of the week: Offense — Brandon Weeden, Oklahoma State; Defense — Michael Hodges, Texas A&M; Special teams — Coryell Judie, Texas A&M.

Brian Howell can be reached at bhowell@times-call.com. Read his Buffs blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/howell.