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CU's Kirkwood to get shot at kicking

By Brian Howell
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BOULDER — The University of Colorado football team will have a new kicker, a new strong safety and a new backup running back this week when Baylor comes to town.

On Tuesday, CU head coach Dan Hawkins announced that Marcus Kirkwood will get the first crack at kicking field goals this week.

Hawkins also announced that starting strong safety Anthony Perkins (knee) and backup running back Brian Lockridge (ankle) will miss the rest of the season with injuries, and he closed the door on true freshman Justin Torres returning to the team.

Kirkwood, a junior from Faith Christian High School in Arvada, will replace struggling senior Aric Goodman. In a 26-0 loss to Missouri on Saturday, Goodman missed a 40-yard field goal — his seventh miss in eight tries dating back to last season. Goodman is 16-for-36 during his career on field-goal attempts.

“Right now, Marcus Kirkwood is in the front of the line,” Hawkins said. “Those guys have competed all fall. It was very close between him and (freshman) Justin (Castor), so we’re just going to roll him in there and see how he does.”

Goodman was benched during the Missouri game, as Castor got a chance at CU’s second field-goal attempt. Castor’s kick was blocked after he didn’t elevate it enough to get it over the line.

Hawkins said Goodman — who still will handle kickoffs — and Castor still could get opportunities.

“It’s kind of kicker by committee right now,” he said.

If Castor doesn’t kick again this year, he’ll lose his redshirt year after playing just one play.

Perkins tore his ACL against Missouri but did play the second half injured. He leads the team with 38 tackles.

“We’ll miss him back there physically and emotionally,” Hawkins said.

Redshirt freshman Deji Olatoye and true freshmen Jered Bell and Terrel Smith will vie for the starting job at strong safety.

Lockridge injured his ankle against Georgia on Oct. 2. Last week, he tried to play through it, but Hawkins said, “It’s bothering him too much.”

Lockridge was second on the team with 146 rushing yards. His injury comes on the heels of the Buffs losing Torres, who surprisingly left the team last week.

Torres made a big impression on Hawkins and running backs coach Darian Hagan with his ability to pick up the game in the classroom and then translate that to the field. One of the few true freshmen to play this year, Torres had 58 yards

on 14 carries.

Former CU quarterback Mike Moschetti, who was Torres' coach at La Mirada (Calif.) High School, didn't hide his disappointment over Torres' decision.

Moschetti told the Times-Call that Torres "couldn't handle it; he couldn't handle being away from home."

"I called (Torres') dad, and his dad said he's not coming back (to CU)."

Moschetti relayed that message to Hawkins and Hagan. Moschetti said Torres never talked to Hagan or Hawkins before leaving and hasn't contacted them since. Moschetti said Torres won't return his calls, either.

"What he did to coach Hawkins and Hagan and the rest of the football team in general is inexcusable," Moschetti said. "Colorado is better off without him. You can't count on someone like that."

Moschetti said he has heard that Torres would like to play football at a junior college near his hometown.

Without Lockridge and Torres for the rest of the season, the Buffs are seeking depth behind starter Rodney Stewart.

That depth may come from Will Jefferson. The receiver has been moved to running back — a position he played in high school.

"Will's a good player," Hawkins said. "He was great about (changing positions)."

The move could help Jefferson get more involved with the offense. He has just six catches for 74 yards this season.

"I don't dislike it," he said. "I like being on the field. I'm more comfortable at running back. It's going back to what's more natural for me."

Hawkins said Jefferson could see time at running back against Baylor. Jefferson said his running style is to get upfield as quickly as possible — which is similar to how Lockridge runs.

"With me, I like contact, so I'm not going to avoid too many people," the 5-foot-11, 190-pound sophomore said. "I'm not going to do a lot of side-to-side movement at all."

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cu football

Injuries hitting Buffs hard

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Not that it was cause for confetti or anything, but Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins told reporters Tuesday he had at least one piece of good news: Starting safety Anthony Perkins showed remarkable toughness by unknowingly playing most of the second half of Saturday's 26-0 loss at Missouri with a knee injury later diagnosed as a torn ACL.

"That shows something about his character," Hawkins said of Perkins continuing to play after the first-half injury. "He's a warrior. He's a great kid."

However, the injury also means Perkins, a junior from Northglenn, will undergo season-ending surgery. The likely candidates to replace him are freshmen.

In addition, Hawkins announced during his weekly media luncheon:

- Also finished for 2010 is junior tailback Brian Lockridge, who is CU's second-leading rusher

(146 yards) as Rodney Stewart's top backup. Lockridge will need season-ending ankle surgery. He will be replaced by sophomore wide receiver Will Jefferson, who was switched this week to running back.

- Senior place-kicker Aric Goodman, a three-year starter, is being replaced for extra points and field goals by junior Marcus Kirkwood, who has yet to kick in a game for the Buffaloes.

All this means Colorado (3-2, 0-1 Big 12) will go into an important conference battle against Baylor (4-2, 1-1) on Saturday at Folsom Field with untested players at starting strong safety, starting place-kicker and backup tailback.

"The next game is a 'must win' — not just for our conference record but for the team to get confidence," CU junior defensive end Josh Hartigan said Tuesday.

Lockridge was coming off a career game with 109 yards rushing against Hawaii when he injured the ankle the following week against Georgia. He did not carry the ball against Missouri.

"Brian was trying to get through it," Hawkins said of the injury. "But it is bothering him too much."

At strong safety, Perkins' replacement may not be determined until after this week's practices, secondary coach Ashley Ambrose said. Ambrose will be evaluating newbies: redshirt freshman Deji Olatoye, who was listed No. 2 on the depth chart behind Perkins, and a pair of true

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freshmen, Terrel Smith and Jered Bell.

Perkins became the fifth CU defensive back to suffer a significant injury.

"The first thing I thought about was, 'Why did it have to happen to this group?' " said Ambrose, who had a long and distinguished NFL career. "But things happen for a reason. I started wondering, 'Is it me? Is it something I'm doing?'"

"But that's just the nature of this game. Unfortunately, this year it's been DBs. To lose five, though, is really unheard of."

Towering for a kicker at 6-feet-6, Kirkwood played soccer at Faith Christian High School in Arvada and at the small-college level at Concordia (Calif.).

Still the one.

Hawkins reiterated Tuesday that junior Tyler Hansen is still CU's starting quarterback and that Hansen's confidence remains good, even though he was replaced late in the third quarter by Cody Hawkins at Missouri.

Said Hansen of retaining his starting job: "I have to perform, though. It's natural to be frustrated and worry about whether you're going to get pulled after you've been pulled. You have to be confident."

Footnotes.

True freshman kicker Justin Castor, a former

Arvada West athlete, may get further opportunities, Dan Hawkins said. Discarding his redshirt, Castor had a 40-yarder blocked against Missouri when his kick failed to get enough lift. . . . Freshman tailback Justin Torres will not return to the team, Hawkins said. Torres had been the third-string tailback until quitting last week to return to his California home for what Hawkins called "personal reasons."

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college football

CU's Perkins, Lockridge injured f or the season; Buffs change kickers

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post
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Updated: 10/12/2010 07:07:10 PM MDT

BOULDER — The Denver Broncos aren't the only area football team besieged by injuries.

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins announced Tuesday during his weekly media luncheon that junior tailback Brian Lockridge and junior safety Anthony Perkins are done for the season.

Lockridge will undergo ankle surgery. The top backup to starter Rodney Stewart was injured in the Oct. 2 victory over Georgia and did not carry the ball Saturday night in the 26-0 loss at Missouri.

Replacing Lockridge on the tailback depth chart will be sophomore Will Jefferson, who was moved

this week from wide receiver.

"It's natural to me; I played tailback in high school," Jefferson said Tuesday.

Perkins suffered a knee injury against

Missouri and will undergo surgery to repair an ACL tear.

Apparently, Perkins tore the ACL during the first half of the game in Columbia, Mo., and played almost an entire half of football with the injury.

"He's a warrior," Hawkins said of Perkins.

In another Tuesday announcement, Hawkins said during his weekly media luncheon that the team will trot out a new place-kicker for Saturday's home game against Baylor. Marcus Kirkwood, a 6-foot-6 junior who played soccer at Faith Christian and also at a small college in California, will get the first placement against the Bears, Kirkwood replaces senior Aric Goodman, who has made just one of his four field-goal tries this season.

Hawkins also said that freshman tailback Justin Torres, who left the team last week to attend to personal reasons, will not be returning.

Perkins became the fifth CU defensive back to go down with a significant injury. He followed sophomore safety Vince Ewing (season-ending ACL tear during August camp), redshirt-freshman safety Parker Orms (season-ending ACL tear), safety Travis Sandersfeld (fibula

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fracture) and redshirt-freshman cornerback Paul Vigo (fibula fracture).

Candidates to replace Perkins, defensive secondary coach Ashley Ambrose said, include true freshmen Jered Bell and Terrel Smith, redshirt freshman Deji Olatoye and junior Arthur Jaffee. Bell and Olatoye could get the first looks because Smith has not yet burned his redshirt.

Bell, who had played on special teams, drew his first defensive snap on Saturday night in Columbia, Mo., as a replacement for Perkins.


At least, Sanderfeld and Vigo could return in "a couple of weeks," Ambrose said.

"The first thing I thought about was, 'Why did it have to happen to this group?' " said Ambrose, who had a long NFL career. "But things happen for a reason. I started wondering, 'Is it me? Is it something I'm doing?'"

"But that's just the nature of this game. Unfortunately this year, it's been DBs. The good thing is, we've got guys that know what they're doing," Ambrose said. "The thing about it is, (a lack of) playing experience.

"I've been telling guys, 'It's just one play (and you'll be next to go in).'" They've been stepping up and are doing a good job for us. To lose five, though, is really unheard of."

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Hansen frustrated by move in Missouri

After being benched, Buffs' starting QB says he has chip on his shoulder

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

Posted: 10/12/2010 11:54:34 PM MDT



Colorado quarterback Tyler Hansen was visibly upset when he was taken out of the game in the third quarter of a loss last week at Missouri and replaced with Cody Hawkins.

Coach Dan Hawkins explained his decision to pull Hansen and insert Cody Hawkins as an attempt to find a spark for an offense that failed to find the end zone through much of the first three quarters.

The Buffs got back to work on the practice fields Tuesday and Hansen made it clear in a huddle with reporters afterward that he feels he has something to prove this week when Baylor visits Folsom Field for the team's third consecutive night game (5:10 p.m., Fox College Sports).

"Well, naturally it's going to strike your confidence a little bit and you're going to be frustrated a little bit," Hansen said when asked how being replaced affected him. "So I just have to go out there and perform and kind of get a little mad and play with a little chip on your shoulder. Today, I think I had a little chip on my shoulder and people knew that. I feel like on Saturday I'm going to go out there with a chip on my shoulder."

Hansen wasn't playing particularly poorly against the Tigers. He completed 15 of 21 passes for 117 yards. He was called for intentional grounding in the middle of the first quarter and that resulted in a safety. Hansen explained he was trying to throw to an area where a receiver should have been, but he thought the play call was a poor choice in the situation because it gave him only two options.

Hansen also had led the Buffs to a pair of come-from-behind victories after trailing by 10 points in the second half of the Georgia and Hawaii games and wanted the chance to make it happen a third time. Georgia coach Mark Richt had singled Hansen out just a week earlier as being a key element in the Buffs' victory.

Coach Dan Hawkins reiterated Monday during his weekly teleconference that Hansen remains the starter. Hawkins was asked twice during his meeting with the media on Tuesday whether he was concerned that he had created any doubt in Hansen's mind. Hawkins answered the question the same both times.

"No, he's good. He's good," Hawkins said.

Hansen said he hopes to prove that coaches are making the right decision by sticking with him.

"It feels good, it doesn't feel good to be told, you'd like to think that you're the spark that needs to be out there," he said. "That wasn't the case. I gotta go out there into this Saturday and earn my spot back, I guess. I'll be playing for myself and my team and my teammates. I just have to go out there and perform."

Wide receiver Scotty McKnight, a team captain, also indicated he believes coaches are making the correct decision by staying with Hansen.

"I talked to Tyler about it just to kind of see how he is doing," McKnight said. "He seems OK. This is Tyler's team and he's the leader. This is his offense and I talked to him about that and that's got to be him."

Hansen is completing 65 percent of his passes through the first five games this season, a big step forward from a 54-percent completion rate last year. He is also playing behind an offensive line that continues to struggle in pass protection, which has been one the Buffs' biggest problems.

Hansen said he has a good relationship with offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau and said Kiesau listens to his opinions and preferences during preparation for games each week. This week Hansen is hoping coaches will keep Baylor guessing a little more.

"I think we're just so focused on the running game and establishing the running game and controlling the clock that we haven't really taken much shots," he said. "I think we need to change up our tendencies a little bit because defenses are starting to -- Missouri at least -- are starting to figure us out a little bit. We run the ball first and second down and on third down, it's third-and-8 and we're throwing the ball.

"That's kind of predictable and we've gotten into that a little bit. We need to change up our tendencies a little bit to perform."

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Bufs' Jefferson returning to running and other CU notes

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

Posted: 10/12/2010 11:39:07 PM MDT



a day filled with news around the Colorado football program, perhaps the most surprising development was the coaching decision to move wide receiver Will Jefferson to running back.

Coach Dan Hawkins announced junior Brian Lockridge's season was cut short by an ankle injury suffered against Georgia that will require surgery. There are six other running backs on the roster, including three true freshmen, but Hawkins said coaches opted to give Jefferson a shot to return the position he played most in high school.

"He is so darn explosive," Hawkins said. "We like to try and give him the ball anyway and we're trying to find ways to get him the ball. He played in high school and he is a very smart guy."

Jefferson came to Colorado late last summer as very late addition to the 2009 recruiting class and earned playing time at receiver as a true freshman. He has had more competition for playing time at receiver this fall. Hawkins said Jefferson could see playing time at running back as early as this week's game against Baylor.

Jefferson's experience at receiver should allow coaches to use him in a lot of ways as long as he is able to pick up the plays and his assignments quickly. Jefferson says that won't be a problem. He prides himself on pursuing perfection.

"I like being on the field and I am more comfortable at running back," he said. "Receiver was something I learned. Running back is something I've always done. So it's actually going back to what's more natural for me. I just like playing football. So if it's how I can play and how we can have a good chance of winning, it's what I'll do."

Jefferson was a multi-threat player during his high school career when he played running back, wide receiver, quarterback, middle linebacker, safety and even kicked a field goal.

He rushed for 116 times for 755 yards and caught 83 passes for 11,46 yards and 12 touchdowns as a senior in high

school.

New kicker gets a chance

Colorado special teams coach Kent Riddle once again took responsibility for the team's struggles in the kicking game after Tuesday's practice. The Buffs had a poor day on special teams last week at Missouri.

Riddle said place-kickers Aric Goodman, Justin Castor and Marcus Kirkwood would compete this week in practice for the starting job. Goodman missed another kick against the Tigers causing coaches to pull the redshirt off of Castor, who then had his first career attempt blocked.

"Well, I feel everything can be fixed," Riddle said. "Obviously the field goal deal has been something that has hurt us for awhile. We've got to straighten that out. We tried another guy in there. I think a true freshman went in there and got a first taste of reality and kind of let his technique get away from him just cause he got caught up in the moment. So we continue to work with that.

"We're going to open it up and see who does the best this week and be out there Saturday."

About 90 minutes later, Hawkins told reporters during his weekly press conference that Kirkwood would get the first opportunity to kick in this week's game and that Goodman would continue to kickoff.

The inability of place-kickers to make kicks and help the team score points is bothering teammates.

"They need to definitely pick up their game a little bit," quarterback Tyler Hansen said.

Wide receiver Scotty McKnight said more emphasis on special teams was already noticeable in Tuesday's practice.

"You know we realize it's a problem and it's losing football games for us," McKnight said. "So special teams in a lot of cultures and a lot of teams is where you will maybe get backups in, but all the starters, all the older guys, we want to push that to where we have the best guys on the field because that has really hurt us."

Perkins' season over

Safety Anthony Perkins is out for the season after suffering a torn anterior cruciate ligament during last week's loss at Missouri. Perkins played the entire second half with the injury.

"He's a warrior," Hawkins said. "We'll miss him physically and emotionally."

First-year secondary coach Ashley Ambrose is getting an education in managing his corps of players and navigating through injuries. Perkins is the fifth member of the secondary to suffer a serious injury this fall.

Vince Ewing and Parker Orms are out for the season with torn anterior cruciate ligaments and Travis Sandersfeld and Paul Vigo have missed significant time with lower leg fractures. Both are expected to return in the coming weeks.

Ambrose said redshirt freshman Deji Olatoye and true freshmen Terrel Smith and Jered Bell are competing for Perkins' starting job this week in practice. Ambrose said coaches would choose one of the players later in the week. Ambrose said it's possible Arthur Jaffee could compete for the position as well.

Gold rush game

Colorado students have dubbed this week's game a "gold rush" game and are asking fans to wear gold to Folsom Field on Saturday. The football program and students successfully organized a black out for the Georgia game two weeks ago.

Notable

CU officials said about 9,000 tickets remained for Saturday's game as of Tuesday morning. ... It's Living Legends Weekend. Colorado will honor alumni who earned their first varsity letter 50 or more years ago.

Woelk: Next two are 'musts' for Buffaloes

By Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/12/2010 08:31:03 PM MDT

Two weeks, two games -- and the clock is ticking.

If Dan Hawkins is going to reverse his fortunes at Colorado, it would appear that it's now-or-never time.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the upcoming games against Baylor and Texas Tech are perhaps the most important two-week stretch in Hawkins' tenure in Boulder.

Win the next two, and the Buffs would have a 5-2 record overall, a 2-1 mark in the Big 12 and a legitimate shot at a bowl berth.

Lose one or both, and it's hard to imagine a realistic scenario under which Hawkins carves out a successful season and another year on CU's sidelines.

Hawkins won't be drawn into any such speculation. For Hawkins, the next game is always the most important one on the schedule. Every game is a must-win situation.

"We kind of look at every game like that, whether it's the start of a season or on the road, or whatever it is," Hawkins said Tuesday. "We try to scratch and claw every week to get one more point than the other team."

But Hawkins' players know that the next two weeks are very, very important if they plan on playing past November.

"This definitely is a must-win," defensive end Josh Hartigan said. "Not only for conference play, but to get our confidence back and to get to where we want to be."

It's been an interesting season for the Buffs thus far. Despite three wins and two losses, the pervasive feeling -- at least if you listen to radio talk shows and read Internet message boards -- is that the Buffs have played poorly every week.

That's not the case.

Colorado has indeed looked bad in its two losses, a 52-7 beatdown at Cal and a 26-0 thumping at Missouri. When they're bad, they're very, very bad.

But the Buffs also have wins over Colorado State, Hawaii and Georgia, and the latter two may yet prove to be quality wins.

Hawaii hasn't lost since its visit to Colorado, beating Charleston Southern, Louisiana Tech and Fresno State. The Warriors face No. 19 Nevada this weekend, a game that should be a good barometer as to how good Hawaii actually is.

Georgia, meanwhile, bounced back after its loss at Colorado to soundly beat Tennessee last weekend, and is a 17-point favorite over Vanderbilt this week.

At home, at least, the Buffs might not be as bad as the criticism would suggest.

Which brings us back to the next two games.

Win the next two, and Colorado will still have a legitimate shot at seven wins and an outside shot at eight. Seven would likely include two more home wins (Kansas State and Iowa State); eight would include a victory at Kansas.

Would seven wins be enough for Hawkins to keep his job? Could anyone in the CU administration say no to eight?

Similar situations have played out at other programs in recent years, with Arizona being perhaps the most notable.

Mike Stoops won just 17 games at Arizona in his first four years before finally getting over the hump with a 7-5 regular season finish and a bowl win in Year 5. Despite strong public sentiment for a change, Arizona officials kept Stoops on board.

Last year, Stoops went 8-4 in the regular season (plus a bowl loss to Nebraska), and this year he has the Wildcats ranked in the top 25.

Not to say such a situation could -- or would -- play out in Boulder.

But you can bet CU officials will ponder such scenarios if the Buffs do get to seven or eight wins this year.

Today, however, Hawkins' assessment has never been more accurate: the next game is CU's most important.

"We need to get back on the right track," said Buff wide receiver Scotty McKnight. "We realize we have a lot of season left."

True enough. The schedule says Colorado has seven games remaining.

But it's the next two that will go a long way in deciding how important those remaining seven actually are.

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