



Senior Cody Hawkins will be CU's starter Saturday night at Oklahoma -- and beyond. Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com

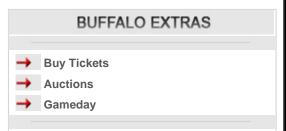


10/25/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: CU Injuries Mount As OU Trip Looms

BOULDER - Slumping Colorado will play at No. 11 Oklahoma Saturday night without its starting quarterback and leading tackler, with both possibly lost for the remainder of the regular season.

Junior quarterback Tyler Hansen, who was injured in last weekend's 27-24 loss against Texas Tech, remains hospitalized, but Buffs coach Dan Hawkins said Monday that doctors had discounted the possibility of removing Hansen's spleen.



Sophomore linebacker Jon Major suffered a torn medial collateral ligament (MCL) against Texas Tech and "will be out for a while," Hawkins said on the Big 12 coaches' weekly teleconference.

"Tyler is doing well," Hawkins said. "His blood levels and all that kind of stuff are great... he's being monitored to see how that whole process heals up, but he's doing as well as could be expected."

Hansen, CU's starter in all seven games this season, was injured in the second quarter Saturday. He was replaced by senior backup Cody Hawkins, who will open Saturday night (7:15 p.m. MDT, ESPN2) and is expected to start for the remainder of the season.

CU medical personnel say there is a possibility Hansen could return for postseason play, but the Buffs (3-4 overall, 0-3 conference) have lost three consecutive games and are three wins short of qualifying for bowl eligibility with five games remaining.

Counting Major, CU has lost defensive starters at nickel back (Parker Orms, Travis Sandersfeld, Paul Vigo), safety (Anthony Perkins) and defensive end (Josh Hartigan) since the season began. Orms and Perkins are out for the season, while the others are at various stages of rehabilitation and could return over the next several weeks.

The plan for Major, said Hawkins, is for rehabilitation "to kind of let it heal on its own (and) see if it takes. If not, they'll have to go in there and tack it down."

Major, who had become CU's leading tackler (8.1 a game) in Perkins' absence, underwent surgery to repair a torn ACL in his freshman season (2007). The current depth chart lists redshirt freshman Liloa Nobriga, junior transfer Evan Harrington and junior Patrick Mahnke at the Will - or inside - linebacker spot. Mahnke also has been used at nickel back.

Of the rash of injuries, Dan Hawkins said, "It's football, it's why you've got to have backups. So that's football. You get to this point of season, there's a lot of guys beat up."

FOURTH-QUARTER FLOP: OU coach Bob Stoops pinned his team's 36-27 loss at Missouri on Saturday night on its lack of consistency and failure in the fourth quarter.

After being stunned by a 86-yard kickoff return for a score to open the game, the Sooners battled back and took a 21-20 lead in the third quarter. But the Tigers outscored them 16-6 in the fourth quarter, defeating OU for the first time in the Stoops era.

Opponents have outscored OU 67-30 in fourth quarters this season, but that stat is skewed by the Sooners' margin in the first three quarters (213-83) of their previous six games.

Stoops called his team "terribly inconsistent in the fourth quarter. You watch us (against Missouri) we fought back after giving the touchdown right off the bat on the kickoff return, we fight our way back and are at 21-20 at the end of the third quarter, ahead, and really the defense has only given up 13 points.

"But then in the fourth quarter as a team we didn't play very well. The offense has three three-and-outs and an interception, the defense gives up 97, 98 yards rushing in the fourth quarter and two touchdowns. So we've just got to keep our consistency and play better in the fourth quarter."

Stoops said because neither teams' schemes change in the fourth quarter, "That's why it's kind of frustrating. Everybody's game plan is kind of out in the open in the fourth quarter, things haven't changed and you're still doing the same things on each side of the ball."

He said consistency and maintaining the same pace will be emphasized this week in practice.

THINK BETTER, THINK OFTEN: Stoops also wants better and more consistent QB play from sophomore Landry Jones, a 2008 CU recruit from New Mexico who settled in Norman rather than Boulder.

Jones completed 32 of 50 passes for 303 yards (2 TDs, 2 INT) against Mizzou. He's third in the Big 12 in passing (299.1 yards a game) and fifth in QB efficiency (142.8 rating).

Stoops says Jones is improving but is "still so young. I think as much as anything, a guy's always a by-product of the guys playing around him. I thought the other night we got pressured a time or two where you'd like to see him make a better decision, take care of the ball a little bit better. That's a big issue."

The Sooners suffered three turnovers last weekend, "Two of them in the red zone," said Stoops. "You're not going to win when you do that against a good football team like Missouri. Taking care of the football is always a big issue."

Despite what Stoops considered a sub-par performance at Mizzou, OU ranks fourth in the Big 12 in scoring (34.7 points

a game) and has been effective with Jones in a fast-paced offense.

The Buffs defense had problems with pace in the past two games (Baylor, Texas Tech), and Dan Hawkins said, "It's hard. The good news/bad news is that a lot of teams do it. We do it ourselves But you're seeing more and more teams kind of go to that *modus operandi*. But it does make it more difficult, there's no question about that."

QB QUANDARY: With Cody Hawkins moving into the starting role, the plan to redshirt freshman Nick Hirschman is in jeopardy. Dan Hawkins said Hirschman, a January enrollee who had the benefit of spring practice, becomes the No. 2 QB.

But aside from Cody Hawkins and Hirschman, the only other player on the roster at the position is walk-on freshman Justin Gorman, whose role this fall has been directing the scout team and running opponents' offenses.

Dan Hawkins was not specific about a plan if Cody was forced to exit a game for only a couple of snaps. In that scenario, Hirschman could lose his redshirt.

"I think it's very hard to ascertain whether you need one snap or two snaps or 14 snaps . . . I think that's the issue you get into," Dan Hawkins said. "I mean, I don't know of too many situations where you're just going to kneel on it at the end of the half and say we're only going to have one play here. So that's hard.

"We've got to get somebody in there who can take some snaps...so it's always a difficult situation. It's a lot like with Terrel (Smith, freshman safety) getting activated last week. Sometimes you've got to put the team before yourself and do whatever you've got to do to help the team out."

Two other current roster players - receivers Scotty McKnight and Kyle Cefalo - have quarterback experience at the high school level.

HE'S SEEN THE SOONERS: As a redshirt freshman in 2007, Cody Hawkins engineered CU's 27-24 upset of then-No. 3 Oklahoma in Boulder. Hawkins completed 22 of 36 passes for 220 yards and two touchdowns. OU intercepted him twice.

With Hansen, CU's offense presented defenses a running element at quarterback - but not so much with Cody Hawkins. That means a priority for the Buffs this week will be reenergizing a ground game that had been mostly productive until last weekend, when Tech limited CU to 28 yards rushing. Leading rusher Rodney "Speedy" Stewart was held to 34 yards on 20 carries and saw his weekly average dip to 93.1.

TIME TO KILL: Dan Hawkins isn't a staunch believer in the importance of time of possession. When the subject of TOP is brought up, Hawkins consistently says maintaining possession for long stretches means little if your offense doesn't score.

The Buffs are a prime case in point: They lead the Big 12 in TOP, averaging 33:30 a game with the ball. But they're No. 11 in scoring offense, averaging just 20.0 points a game.

CU is No. 11 in red zone offense, scoring 75.0 percent of the time (18-of-24 on scoring chances; 14 TDs, 4-of-7 FGs). The Buffs continue to lead the league in third-down conversions (48.7 percent success rate).

BUFF BITS: CU's Nov. 6 game at Kansas will kick off at noon MST and will not be televised Before Saturday night's loss at Missouri, OU was ranked No. 1 in the BCS standings and No. 3 by the Associated Press. This week, the Sooners dropped to No. 9 and No. 11, respectively Dan Hawkins called Oklahoma "one of the best programs in the history of college football; they are year in and year out. They've got great talent and great coaches. They're formidable, no question they can do everything." OU's defense appears susceptible to long plays, and Stoops admits that early in the season, "We had some issues, but I guess in each game it's a little bit different ... a little bit of everything, whether it's a busted alignment, a missed tackle, having our backs to the quarterback and not seeing a throw - it's a little bit of everything." OU's DeMarco Murray is fourth in the Big 12 in rushing (101.7 yards a game) and in all-purpose yards (150.6). But MU held him to 49 yards on the ground and the Sooners to 99 Sooners receiver Ryan Broyles leads the conference in receptions per game (9.9) and is second in receiving yards per game (115.7). He's made 69 receptions for

810 yards and five TDs CU is 0-3 at the start of Big 12 play for the first time in the league's 15-year history.

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Beat-up Buffs to keep battling

By Brian Howell © 2010 Longmont Times-Call

For the University of Colorado football team to become bowl eligible, it will have to patch some holes.

Starting quarterback Tyler Hansen is out for the year with a ruptured spleen.

Starting strong safety Anthony Perkins is out for the year with a torn ACL.

Now, Jon Major could miss the rest of the season with a torn MCL in his knee.

"The plan right now is to kind of let that thing heal on its own, seeing if it takes," CU head coach Dan Hawkins said of Major's knee, which he injured Saturday against Texas Tech. "If it doesn't, they have to go in there and tack it back down. He'll be out a while."

Throw in the fact that the Buffs have lost three nickel backs to injury, and the Buffs are a hurting team.

"It's football, though," Hawkins said. "That's why you've got to have backups. There's a lot of guys beat up."

Several backups will have to step up the rest of the way for the Buffs (3-4), who need three wins in their final five games to become eligible for a bowl.

The Buffs will turn back to senior Cody Hawkins to play quarterback. Hawkins, at least, has a great deal of experience.

That's not the case in some other areas, however. Injuries have forced the Buffs into playing a lot more younger players than they probably planned on playing.

When Major went down on Saturday, redshirt freshman Liloa Nobriga came into the game. True freshman Terrel Smith took Perkins' spot in the lineup.

Adding young players to the mix has led to some miscommunication on both offense and defense.

"We just keep coaching them and keep working on the little details and trying to get one play better or get a practice better and stay with them," Dan Hawkins said.

GAME TIME: Kickoff for CU's game at Kansas on Nov. 6 was set on Monday for noon.

The game will not be televised, marking the second time in three games that the Buffs will not be on TV.

TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED: If the regular season ended today, perennial Big 12 doormat Baylor would play in the Big 12 title game.

Iowa State went on the road to beat Texas last week.

Nebraska lost at home to an unranked Texas team.

With all of that happening so far in Big 12 play, maybe CU does have a shot on Saturday when it visits 11th-ranked Oklahoma (6-1).

"I think it's pretty obvious that anybody can beat anybody," OU coach Bob Stoops said on Monday's teleconference with Big 12 coaches. "For the most part it seems that way. There's a ton of parity. It'll be a dogfight here to the end with everyone."

One reason for that?

"People have playmakers, at all schools," Texas Tech coach Tommy Tuberville said.

AROUND THE LEAGUE:

Missouri (7-0) moved up to No. 7 in the AP Top 25 after upsetting Oklahoma and coach Gary Pinkel said his team keep improving each week.

"Every coach wants their team to do that, but I'd say generally it's less than 50 percent of the time that happens, so I feel fortunate that that's happening," Pinkel said.

The Tigers visit No. 14 Nebraska (6-1) this week.

Texas (4-3) has dropped out of the Top 25 again after its third loss in four games — this time 28-21 at home against Iowa State. Head coach Mack Brown isn't happy.

"What I've told (the players) from Day 1 is we are not good enough to go out there and just play," Brown said. "We have to play with passion to win right now. Hopefully this weekend (against Iowa State), as hard as it was and as tough as it is right now in the program, it'll get their attention."

There is a full-blown quarterback battle at Texas A&M, which is surprising because Jerrod Johnson was selected as the preseason offensive player of the year.

Saturday against Kansas, A&M played both Johnson and Ryan Tannehill.

"I think it's too early in the week to make the decision when I don't have to," coach Mike Sherman said when asked who would start against Texas Tech on Saturday. "I think have two really good quarterbacks."

Five Big 12 teams are already bowl eligible: Missouri (7-0), Nebraska (6-1), Oklahoma (6-1), Oklahoma State (6-1) and Baylor (6-2), while Kansas State (5-2) is just a win away. Texas (4-3), Texas Tech (4-3), Texas A&M (4-3) and Iowa State (4-4) need two wins.

Baylor has not been to a bowl game since 1993.

Since the start of the 2006 season, 10 of the 12 teams in the league have been ranked in the top 25 at one time or another in the AP poll and/or BCS standings. The only two that haven't? Colorado and Iowa State. Both teams were last ranked in 2005. Baylor was on that list until this week.

Kansas has been outscored 159-24 in three Big 12 games.

Big 12 players of the week: Blaine Gabbert, Missouri, and Taylor Martinez, Nebraska (offense); Jacob Lattimer, Iowa State (defense); Gahn McGaffie, Missouri (special teams).

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Knee injury a Major blow to CU's defense

By John Henderson

The Denver Post

Posted: 10/26/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

As if embattled Colorado coach Dan Hawkins didn't have enough problems with wins and losses, now injuries have made future wins even more difficult.

Inside linebacker Jon Major, Colorado's leading tackler, is out indefinitely with a torn medial collateral ligament in his knee, Hawkins said Monday on the Big 12's media conference call.

Major was hurt on Texas Tech's final drive for the winning field goal Saturday in CU's 27-24 loss at Folsom Field. The injury came two quarters after starting quarterback Tyler Hansen (ruptured spleen) was lost for the year.

"The plan right now is to kind of let that thing heal on its own and see if it takes," Hawkins said of Major's knee. "If it doesn't, we may have to go in there and pack it back down. He'll be out for a while."

The injury is significant. The sophomore from Parker's Ponderosa High is leading the Buffaloes with 57 tackles, including 32 unassisted. He will likely be replaced by redshirt freshman Liloa Nobriga.

Hawkins said Hansen remains hospitalized but is resting comfortably.

"Tyler's doing well," Hawkins said. "All his blood levels and all that kind of stuff are great. He's still in the hospital and they're monitoring him there, seeing how that whole process heals up. He's doing as well as can be expected."

Cody Hawkins, Dan's son, replaces Hansen, and the new backup will be true freshman Nick Hirschman, whom the Buffs wanted to redshirt. He was all-region at Los Gatos (Calif.) High, and Dan Hawkins said it's highly doubtful they'll move over a position player with QB experience to spell his son and preserve Hirschman's year of eligibility.

"I think it's very hard to ascertain one snap or two snaps or 14 snaps," Hawkins said. "That's the issue. We got to get somebody in there taking some snaps. It's always a difficult situation, a lot like with Terrel (Smith, freshman safety) getting activated last week. Sometimes you've got to put the team before yourself and do whatever you have to do to help the team out."

Colorado (3-4, 0-3 Big 12) plays at 11th-ranked Oklahoma (6-1, 2-1) on Saturday night. The Buffs had no starters go down with injuries until safety Anthony Perkins was lost for the season



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with a knee injury at Missouri on Oct. 9.

Now the Buffs seek three wins in their last five games for bowl eligibility without their starting quarterback and their leading tackler.

"That's football," Hawkins said. "That's why you've got to have backups. You get to this point of the season, you get a lot of guys beat up."

Footnote.

The start time for CU's game at Kansas on Nov. 6 has been set as noon MDT.

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Missouri exposed OU's flaws for CU

Bv John Henderson

The Denver Post

Posted: 10/26/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins could face Oklahoma with worse timing than right after losing his starting quarterback and leading tackler to injuries. Worse timing like, say, oh, now.

The Sooners (6-1, 2-1 Big 12) host Colorado (3-4, 0-3) on Saturday night at a time when they're angry, when they're deep in self-examination and when they're in need of a feel-good, rebound victory.

Oklahoma's nationally televised 36-27 loss at Missouri exposed some flaws for a team that's not happy about dropping in the BCS standings from first to ninth.

If Hawkins is looking for cracks in Oklahoma's veneer, the Missouri film showed him.

To wit:

 Oklahoma has given up more plays of 20 yards or longer than any other team in the Big 12.

Missouri gashed the Sooners 12 times for at least 15 yards.

- "Early on in the year, we had some issues," Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops said Monday on the Big 12's media conference call. "Guys were in position to make plays and didn't make them, had their back turned to the football on some deep passes and gave some up. And here lately we got caught in a busted alignment against Texas. It's a little bit of everything."
- The Sooners are struggling in the fourth quarter. Opponents have outscored them 67-30. Air Force scored the only 14 points of the quarter in a 27-24 loss, Texas got within one score on a 21-yard field goal with 1:39 left before falling 28-20, and Oklahoma led Missouri 21-20 entering the final period.

That's when Oklahoma quarterback Landry Jones went zip-for-7 passing and Missouri went on a 16-6 blitz, gaining 179 yards, propelled by Blaine Gabbert's go-ahead 38-yard touchdown pass to Jerrell Jackson.

- "Schemes don't change in the fourth quarter," Stoops said. "That's where it's kind of frustrating. Everybody's game plan is out in the open by the fourth quarter and things haven't changed. In the end, it's just maintaining that pace throughout the game."
- Oklahoma is averaging only 3.5 yards per rush, second-to-last in the Big 12. Missouri held DeMarco Murray, averaging 101.7 yards per game, to 24 yards on 10 carries.



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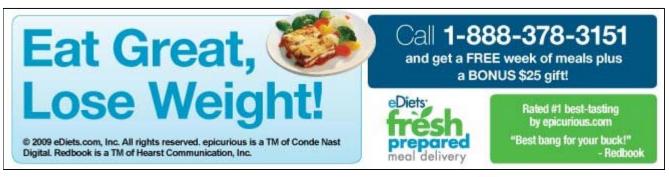
Cincinnati held him to 67 yards on 28 attempts. Missouri's defense is improved, but is it that improved? For the second straight year, OU has questions on the offensive line.

That affects a quarterback such as Jones, whose numbers have improved (2,094 yards, 17 touchdown passes, five interceptions) but did little in bringing back the Sooners in the fourth quarter Saturday.

"He's still so young," Stoops said. "As much as anything, a guy's always a byproduct of the guys playing around him. The other night, we got pressured a time or two. You'd like to see him make a better decision, take care of the ball a little better.

"That's a big issue."

Oklahoma still controls its destiny in the Big 12's South Division. OU ends the regular season with games at first-place Baylor (6-2, 3-1) and at Oklahoma State (6-1, 2-1).



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Ringo: Some fans showing misplaced priorities over CU Buffs Cody Hawkins

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 10/25/2010 11: 41: 07 PM MDT

Cody Hawkins deserves better from some Colorado football fans.

The senior quarterback has given his heart and soul to the program for five years. He has done more than anyone could ever have asked of him in every aspect of being a student-athlete except, winning more games. And there is no question he is as disappointed as anyone in that shortcoming.

His reward for persevering through tough times on the field and thriving off the field?

It's being booed, at times, in his own stadium by the very people he is trying so hard to please.

It's having to walk away from snide and sometimes thoughtless comments on campus or in the community.

It's being mocked on Internet message boards from cowards in comfortable anonymity.

It is a grown man posting an insulting message to Hawkins' Twitter account. And it's much, much more.

It's a sad thing that some former and current players who were arrested and convicted received more support in their efforts to get back on the football field than some at CU ever have given to Hawkins. And all because he is the son of a coach they don't believe in.

Talk about misplaced priorities.

No one is saying CU fans should be happy that Hawkins is once again the starting quarterback in the wake of Tyler Hansen's season-ending ruptured spleen.

It's a totally valid criticism of coach Dan Hawkins and the rest of the coaching staff that Cody Hawkins is the only serious option to turn to in this situation. It's been 41/2 years for Pete's sake. The fact that they haven't recruited and developed a second or third quarterback not related to the head coach is one of the biggest failures of the regime.

But the frustration over that shouldn't be directed at Cody Hawkins.

He has no control here.

It's perfectly acceptable to be upset with the state of things and to want a change in coaches after 19 wins and 37 losses. That energy should be directed at the coach, the athletic director, the chancellor and even the president. All are grown men with plenty of experience in the world who are being paid handsomely to get this stuff right.

Dan Hawkins might get fired, and fans might look back on his tenure in the same way they do Chuck Fairbanks and the late 1970s and early 1980s. But they should always be proud of the effort Cody Hawkins has given them.

Hawkins might be one of the toughest players I've ever covered.

Not to make light of Hansen's injury, but it's seriously surprising that Hawkins didn't end up with a ruptured spleen or worse playing behind inexperienced and patchwork offensive lines earlier in his career.

Three years ago he led the Buffs to a road win at Texas Tech while playing most of the game with a concussion after he was knocked out on a play early in the game.

Two years ago against Florida State in Jacksonville, he got hammered over and over by the Seminoles defensive front seven and kept getting up, kept coming back for more.

I was standing on the sideline right at the goal line at Toledo near the end of a devastating blowout loss last season and watched and heard Hawkins absorb one of the hardest hits I've ever seen on the football field.

Knocked him silly.

At first, I thought he might be seriously injured, but eventually he got up.

Instead of kicking him when he and his teammates are down, Colorado fans should be reaching out to lift him up and doing their best to help Cody Hawkins through his final five games as a Buff. He deserves at least that much.

Longhorns not

learning lessons

Texas coach Mack Brown has coached for a long time and certainly knows how to handle losing, but he is a little out of practice with nine consecutive 10-win seasons to his credit.

Brown's team is reeling, to the extent any Texas team ever is, after home losses this season to UCLA and Iowa State, as well as losing the annual rivalry grudge match to Oklahoma.

The challenge for Brown is getting the Longhorns to stop repeating some of the same mistakes and coming to the stadium prepared each Saturday.

"Half of our kids played with passion and played hard and the other half stood around," Brown said Monday in discussing the program's first-ever loss to Iowa State.

Griffin for Heisman

Brown said Baylor quarterback Robert Griffin has to be considered a candidate for the Heisman Trophy after leading the Bears to bowl eligibility for the first time in their history in the Big 12.

Griffin, who was the star of the game in a victory in Boulder two weeks ago, is third in the nation in total offense averaging 345 yards a game.

Griffin also impressed Kansas State coach Bill Snyder, who lost to the Bears in Waco, Texas, last week.

"He kind of creates plays," Snyder said. "He had a touchdown, improvised reverse against us that really was something that you don't often see out of an individual who plays with confidence that he has to do those kind of things."

Head game

Most of the Big 12 coaches were asked about the growing concerns about head injuries and helmet-to-helmet contact in the game during the coaches` teleconference Monday.

Brown and Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy said kickoff and kickoff return rules should be examined because a growing number of injuries are happening there.

Brown said he will propose a rule change at the end of the year for moving the kickoff up to the 35-yard line once again. The ball was moved back to the 30-yard line several years ago in an effort to limit touchbacks and create more exciting plays on returns.

Numbers game

1,014. The number of points Oklahoma has outscored opponents by during its 34-game home winning streak.

The average score of those games has been 44.6-14.9.

Oklahoma's record in home games in 11 years under coach Bob Stoops is 70-2.

Short yardage

Missouri quarterback Blaine Gabbert and Nebraska quarterback Taylor Martinez shared the Big 12 offensive player of the week award and will face off this week in Lincoln. Iowa State defensive end Jacob Lattimer was the defensive player of the week and Missouri kick returner Gahn McGaffie was the special teams award winner. ...

Toben Opurum was an effective running back at time for Kansas last year. He started at defensive end last week and made six tackles becoming the third player at KU to start games on both sides of the ball. ...

Oklahoma defensive end Jeremy Beal leads the league in sacks (6.5) and tackles for loss (13).

Who is hot?

Gabbert has completed 61 of 89 passes for 669 yards and four touchdowns in the past two games.

Who is not?

Texas is struggling in the turnover department. The Longhorns have 16 turnovers and only nine takeaways.

CU-Kansas time set;

no television

Colorado's road game at Kansas on Nov. 6 will not be televised. The game will begin at noon (MDT).

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