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Opportunity knocks for Hawkins

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BOULDER — During Cody Hawkins' time at the University of Colorado, he's experienced a lot of ups and a lot of downs.

He's thrown more touchdown passes (48) than anyone in CU history. But, he's also thrown more interceptions (37) than anyone.

Hawkins has started 28 games, but he's won just 11 of those.

He showed promise in 2007 when, as a freshman, he won the starting quarterback job, led the Buffs to an upset of No. 3 Oklahoma and then guided them to a bowl game.

On the flip side, he struggled in 2008 and 2009 to keep his starting job, and lost it for good in the middle of 2009, when the coaching staff turned to Tyler Hansen.

Now a fifth-year senior, Hawkins actually grew to enjoy some aspects of his role as the Buffs' second-string quarterback. But, he knew his role could change in an instant.

"I knew that at some point, especially when you have a running guy like (Hansen), that eventually, even if it's just a couple of snaps — you never want it to be for the year — you know you have to be ready if the team calls upon you," Hawkins said.

The team called upon him last week when Hansen was injured during the second quarter against Texas Tech. Hansen ruptured his spleen on that play and will miss the rest of the season.

So, with five games left in his career, Hawkins is back in the saddle. Today, he will lead the Buffs (3-4, 0-3 in the Big 12) against 11th-ranked Oklahoma (6-1, 2-1). It'll be his first start in more than a year.

"It'll be nice to go out there and play on the field again," he said. "It might be more of a shock for the fans to see me out there again than it is the players. Everybody (on the team) is used to how I roll around."

Despite the ups and downs of his career, Hawkins views this latest opportunity as a chance to finish his career the way he wants to finish it.

"When you put in a body of work, through your redshirt year and through the first three years, it's nice to know you'll be able to go out and just lay it out on the line," Hawkins said. "(As a backup) it is a little tough when you're working and you're trying to give every single thing that you can to the football team but you just aren't able to go out and test yourself (on game day). You can put in a lot of work, but you never get to put yourself through the fire once again. Just knowing that I'll be able to go out there and throw everything that I have into that fire and see what comes out, I mean, we'll see how it goes, but it's good to know you're going to have that opportunity."



Colorado's Cody Hawkins and Paul Richardson celebrate after a touchdown on Oct. 23. Hawkins will start at quarterback against Oklahoma today. **Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

There are plenty of fans who will cringe when Hawkins runs out on the field today in Norman, Okla. Hawkins has been more scrutinized and criticized than any other CU player during the past four years. Part of that comes from his mixed results on the field. A large part of it comes from the fact that he's the son of CU head coach Dan Hawkins, who has a 19-37 record at CU and has taken plenty of verbal shots of his own.

"Even when he was back playing (as the starter), he was going through a rough time," CU offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau said of Cody. "Just because of everything he's been through, hopefully he can kind of get on the horse and ride out of here on a positive note."

That's all Cody is focused on at this point. He's well aware that he's got his detractors. But, he's playing for wins and he's playing for his team.

"You always want to do something when people say you can't," he said. "I'm going to fight and not really worry about what everybody else is saying, but I want to be the best player that I can possibly be, the best person I can possibly be."

"I think all these seniors deserve to go out on a great note, regardless of what the situation is right now or what people perceive it to be after the season. We have to go out and give it everything we have the rest of the way, because our guys deserve it. Whether they're underclassmen or upperclassmen, we're going to go out and fight like heck."

It's a sure bet Cody will be the one leading that fight. Even when he wasn't starting, Cody was a team captain and an emotional leader. Since the day he arrived in Boulder, he's wanted nothing but the best for Colorado football. A lot has changed since he arrived, but his desire to see the Buffs win has not.

"I'm not going to be Jimmy Clausen; I never guaranteed national championships," he said of the former Notre Dame quarterback who said his goal was to win four national championships. "But, when I signed here, people were going to get an enthusiastic kid who was going to work his butt off, and I was going to be tough and I was going to be a leader. I feel like I've done that every day and I've gotten better since I've been here."

"I have to go out and continue and finish strong in all those facets of my game and leave Colorado on a good note."

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