



Alfred Williams (94) was a defensive force for the '90 Buffs.  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



09/16/2010 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

## Brooks: 'Big Al's' Love For CU Makes Every Day Special

**BOULDER** - Bob Simmons' fondest memories of Alfred Williams could fill a couple of volumes. But a couple of them quickly bob to the surface and have stayed afloat in Simmons' mind for the past two decades.

Williams' position coach (outside linebacker) at the University of Colorado, Simmons recalls 1990 bringing a double bonanza for Williams and the Buffaloes. In addition to CU defeating Notre Dame in the Orange Bowl, 10-9, to win its first national championship in football, Williams won that season's Butkus Award, presented annually to the nation's top linebacker.

"When he came back from the Butkus Award presentation," Simmons said, "he walked into my office and we started talking about the event, the season we'd had . . . we talked a long time. He had the trophy with him.

"On his way out, he stopped, turned around to me and said, 'I'm going to leave this here; I'll come back for it later. You hold onto it.' I think it was his way of saying, 'Thanks for your guidance over the past four years.' It was so good to see him grow and mature. But he was always a character."

Still is, too. With his infectious laugh and 1,000-watt smile, "Big Al" is a character's character. He wasn't too bad a

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football player, either. He and fellow "H-Boy" Kanavis McGhee (they both hailed from Houston) were CU's dominant defensive bookends in '90, and Williams never allows an opportunity to pass without acknowledging McGhee as his equal - or better.

"I'll always say Kanavis was the best linebacker at Colorado," said Williams, who captained the Buffs. "He pushed me ... I'd consider us the two best in college football while we were playing."

But one of the pair - guess who? - wasn't always the easiest to coach. His athleticism, size (6-foot-6, 260) and talent made him special, but his inquisitive nature and independence sometimes perplexed his position coach.

"Al would size up a guy on tape and say, 'I can do this or that against him,'" Simmons said. "I would tell him, 'Yeah, but it better be in the framework of the defense.' He was a guy who would ask why and you'd have to explain some things to him - but not enough to complicate the issue.

"I would tell him, 'If you're going to do it like that, something special better happen.' If there was a guy who was going to take a chance, it was him. But he was athletic enough to pull it off. When you've got guys like Al, you watch them, but you also let them play."

Williams, who registered 121/2 of his school career record 35 quarterback sacks in his senior season, went on to a nine-year NFL career. He made the Pro Bowl and won a pair of Super Bowls (1997-98) with Denver, the team he'd hoped to be with from the start of his professional career. Finishing with the Broncos, however, provided him - and Simmons - with a cherished memory.

"I was with him on Draft Day and even though he was a first-round pick (18th overall by Cincinnati), he wasn't happy," Simmons said. "I said, 'Al, you've just been picked in the first round of the NFL Draft.' But his heart was in Colorado ... I was so glad he got back to the place he wanted to be - and won a couple of Super Bowls to boot."

There's no doubt that Williams believes he's home. He married his longtime partner, Kristina, last May and has four sons and a daughter he plans on raising in the Rocky Mountains.

"All my friends are here and many of my teammates ... guys who stood up for me in bad times, stuck by me. They've been mentors to me, best men in my marriage, even babysitters," he said. "It's just who we are. The friendships are unbelievable."

Since retiring from the NFL in 1999, he's been in business with former teammate Charles "CJ" Johnson, dabbled in television work and currently is living his dream - working in Denver radio (104.3 The FAN).

"I love it ... it's fluid and I know it," Williams said of his drive-time sports talk career. "I'm talking about things I'm very familiar with ... To me, it's like being in the locker room still. It feels genuine; there's no good cop, bad cop. The way I talk is the way I feel. Now, people don't always agree with me, but it's locker room talk and it's good."

This season marks the 20th since the Buffs won the national championship. With an 18-year-old son, Williams says he can indeed believe it's been two decades since CU won it. But he still "feels great, and I feel just as great about how my teammates are doing with their lives," he said.

Despite winning the pair of Super Bowl rings with the Broncos and his Pro Bowl appearance, CU's '90 season was Williams' personal football highlight. Aside from defeating Notre Dame by a point in Miami, his most memorable games were CU's 27-12 win at Nebraska and a 64-3 rout of Kansas State in his final home game.

The reasons for each being etched in his memory differ greatly.

"The Nebraska game is special because we came back and persevered under great duress," he said. "Just understanding how important that game was to the university, the team, the entire campus ... it was monumental."

The K-State game remains a personal highlight because good friend O.C. Oliver, a reserve tailback who likely would have played a more prominent role on a less talented team, scored a touchdown.

"We met him and carried him off the field," Williams recalled. "He was important to the program, although he was overshadowed by (Eric) Bieniemy. The look on O.C.'s face was something I'll never forget."

Nor will he forget the ultimate prize at the conclusion of the '90 season. Even two Super Bowl victories can't compare, he said: "Winning the national championship was no doubt the highlight. When you get paid, you're supposed to do those things; that's the way I feel. When you can transform the energy of a campus into something that was magnetic, something magic, it was awesome."

On Dec. 7 in New York, Williams will be inducted into the National Football Foundation College Football Hall of Fame, an honor he calls "huge, no bones about it. People ask me about best career moments - the NFL or in college. That college memory (the '90 championship) will be forever.

"You don't get many opportunities for those types of things, and we had a shot to play for it twice (1989-90). It's really a tougher task to win a national championship than a Super Bowl. You have to have great players and a great coach - we had both.

"There's really no NFL moment to rival it. The amount of talent on both teams (CU, Notre Dame), the way we competed, a pair of Hall of Fame coaches. It was just huge. You can't dream up the kind of experience I had . . . nobody would believe the movie. They'd say it didn't happen."

As a fall prelude to his Hall of Fame induction, Williams will be honored Saturday at Folsom Field when CU plays Hawaii. It's "Alfred Williams Day" and the honoree is overjoyed.

"It's just awesome that they'd do that," he said. "For me, this is the greatest time of year as a former member of the football team . . . the people I'm around now and the people then were just phenomenal. We get together and rejoice in our success.

"I think we all know that not every day is going to be a good day, but we believe it will be. Why have a bad day when you've got the option to make it a good day? This (Saturday) is going to be a good day, I know it. But every time I'm on campus, I believe it's 'Alfred Williams Day.'"

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# CU's Cabral has survived -- with hopes for top job

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COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
Assistant coach Brian Cabral has survived four coaching regimes at Colorado.

BOULDER, COLO. » He's in the front row, first man going from left to right. A 34-year-old Brian Cabral, in his second year as a Colorado assistant coach. The photo is from 1990, the year the Buffaloes won the national championship of college football.

The picture is encased with the hardware earned that magical season, displayed prominently in the foyer of the impressive Dal Ward Athletic Center, which was built immediately following the championship.

Very few people other than Cabral in the photo still work in the school's athletic department.

New head coaches always bring in their own people, but he somehow has survived four sometimes turbulent regimes; those of Bill McCartney, Rick Neuheisel, Gary Barnett and now Dan Hawkins.

"I was really surprised that (Hawkins) retained me. I'm very grateful and thankful," Cabral said in his office yesterday, between preparations for Colorado's home

game against Hawaii on Saturday.

The former Saint Louis School star who went on to stand out at linebacker at CU and win a Super Bowl ring with the Chicago Bears is in his 22nd year on the Colorado staff. His 21 seasons as a full-time assistant are a record for the school, in any sport.

He's coached a Butkus Award winner, Matt Russell, and his most recent All-American was Jordon Dizon of Kauai. Cabral is widely considered one of the best linebacker coaches in the nation.

He's 54 now, and not shy about stating his goal. Cabral wants to be a head coach -- even if it means leaving his beloved Boulder.

"I have applied (at various schools he'd rather not name), and they've all been good experiences. I like to think I'm getting closer," he said. "I'm very hopeful."

The crazy thing now, though, is that continued bad things for the team Cabral loves could lead to him achieving his individual goal -- again.

Colorado was crushed at Cal last week and is now 1-1. Some say it wasn't as bad as the score, but 52-7 is 52-7. Hawkins is 17-34 in his fifth year at Boulder. If CU -- a 10-point favorite Saturday against UH -- were to lose to a team that never beat Hawkins when he was at Boise State, one from a midmajor conference at that, you'd have to think the hot seat might become volcanic.

And if Colorado were to make an in-season change at

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head coach, Cabral is the obvious choice.

He's been down this road before, sort of. Cabral actually was CU's head coach before, and he never lost a game -- that's because he was the interim head man in the 2004 offseason when Barnett was placed on administrative leave due to a recruiting scandal. Although he wasn't personally implicated in any wrongdoing, Cabral did not apply to be the permanent head coach when Barnett was let go the next year. It was extremely unlikely CU would promote anyone from the current staff given the circumstances.

Now, Cabral has plenty of supporters, including former Kahuku standout B.J. Beatty, a senior linebacker at CU.

"He'd be an awesome head coach," Beatty says. "A lot of the time Coach Hawk uses him as an example of what Colorado football is all about. He's been coaching here as long as I've been alive.

"I know he wants to be a head coach, and he'll be a great one if he's given a chance."

Beatty might be biased, and not just because Cabral is his position coach. He's known him since he was a toddler.

"Funny thing, when he came to recruit me, I asked him, 'Did you ever think you'd be coming back to this same house (in Kaaawa) for the little redhead kid who kept bugging you with, 'Uncle this and uncle that?' "

Chris Naeole is Beatty's actual uncle, and Cabral also recruited the big Kahuku offensive lineman to Colorado. Naeole recently retired from a long NFL career due to injury.

Beatty, who is among five Buffaloes with Hawaii ties, and Cabral both say they are excited to play against UH for the first time.

Cabral, though, has competed against the Hawaii coaches for decades, recruiting local football talent.

"I think Colorado sells itself," he said. "But the thing is I can tell them I know exactly how they feel about things. I was in exactly the same place they are now at one time.

"Of course, there are adjustments. When I was a student, I'd wear my flip-flops all year 'round. I'd get

so many colds. Finally I figured out maybe I should put some shoes on."

Beatty said he always knew he wanted to go to college on the mainland, and when UH coaches came recruiting, he politely told them so. Plus, Cabral had been on him since he was a sophomore.

"At that time, I had no thoughts about even playing college football," Beatty said. "But he made me realize at that age that I could do it."

And then the physical beauty of the area sealed the deal, Beatty said -- like it did for Cabral three decades prior.

"It's a place as beautiful as Hawaii, but in a different way," Cabral said. "Blue skies, mountains and snow. That's what attracted me."

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cu briefs

## Freshman Vigo expected to get additional time

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BOULDER — On defense, Colorado opened both of its previous games in a 3-3 formation, which frees up a spot for a nickel back. Considering that Hawaii has passed for 802 yards and run for only 139 in two games, expect CU to retain the extra defensive back for a majority of the plays.

That puts the spotlight on the Buffaloes' new nickel, Paul Vigo. A redshirt freshman from New Brunswick, N.J. Vigo will make the first start of his college career against the pass-happy Rainbows.

Sturdily built at 6-feet-1 and 190 pounds, Vigo was promoted to the first-team unit when junior Travis Sandersfeld went down during last weekend's 52-7 loss at California with what was later diagnosed as a slight fibula fracture in his lower leg.

Sandersfeld, who is expected to be out at least two weeks, had replaced opening-game starter Parker Orms, a redshirt freshman who suffered a season-ending ACL tear early in the first quarter

against Colorado State.

"I'm thankful for the opportunity," Vigo said Wednesday. "The way it happened is unfortunate. Those guys are good friends of mine. But I'm going to do everything I can to play well."

CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins is confident Vigo will be up to the task. Vigo has enough speed and athleticism to be a hybrid player who can be used at cornerback or safety.

"We've known that Paul is a tough guy, having played linebacker in high school," Collins said. "He's still learning the game. But we're very happy with what he has done so far."

Vigo was credited with three tackles against Cal, include one for a 2-yard loss.

"He is a very physical player, and he can run," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "And he's only going to get better."

Vigo expects a passing barrage Saturday from the Warriors.

"We're going to have to play fast and be physical," he said.

### Torres to get carries?

Freshman tailback Justin "J.T." Torres did not carry the football against California, but look for that to change. Hawkins said the 6-foot, 215-

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# CU Buffs' time to run is now

## Hawaii has struggled against run in first two games

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

Posted: 09/15/2010 07:12:19 PM MDT

Coach Dan Hawkins and offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau might need their heads examined if they don't run the ball often Saturday against Hawaii in Folsom Field. At least that's what the statistics say.

There won't be a better opportunity this season to get the running game going, build some confidence in a beleaguered offensive line and get some other running backs involved besides junior Rodney Stewart.

The Buffs haven't been effective on the ground over the past year. They finished 113th in the nation rushing last season and are 103rd in the nation after two games this year. They have produced a 100-yard rusher in a game only 16 times in 51 games under Hawkins.

But Hawaii has struggled to stop the run in its first two games, allowing 248 yards per game.

Hawkins dismissed the notion that Hawaii's defense might be susceptible to the run when asked about it Tuesday. He pointed out that the Warriors' most recent opponent was Army, which doesn't do much passing. A fair point.

But Hawkins left out the results of Hawaii's season opener against Southern Cal. The Trojans ran for 246 yards on 35 carries.

Colorado is averaging 2.4 yards per carry, though that number is affected by losses from the eight sacks it has allowed. Running backs coach Darian Hagan said coaches have tried different strategies for improving the running game this year, including using nine-on-seven inside run drills and Oklahoma drills, which weren't used much in seasons past under Hawkins.

"We've done our part," Hagan said. "We've just got to show up on Saturday in the stats."

Stewart has been the workhorse on the ground so far for CU. He carried the ball 29 times for 80 yards last week and has 45 carries for 147 yards this season. No other player besides quarterback Tyler Hansen has more than five carries.

Hagan said Stewart asked to be the featured back this season instead of sharing carries. Hagan said he is most comfortable with Stewart but he would like to get more players involved beginning this week.

"In the heat of battle, you go with your warriors," Hagan said explaining the heavy reliance on Stewart.

Junior Brian Lockridge has been limited by injuries in the early going this fall but has the ability when healthy to turn any rushing attempt into a sprint to the end zone. Freshman Justin Torres is expected to see more action this week to spell Stewart.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest the Buffs could put themselves in position to win much more often than they have been winning lately if they can build a stronger running game. According to research from the CU sports information department, the Buffs are 79-5-1 since 1989 when rushing for more than 200 yards in a game. They are 127-14-3 when out-rushing an opponent in that same time.

In Hawkins' career as a head coach, his teams are 38-1 when rushing for 200 or more yards in a game, including a 6-1 mark at CU.

"We do practice it," Hagan said of the running game. "It's not an excuse for us not to be a dominant team. When we call it, we should expect more. (Last week) is only one game and things will get better from here. I believe that."

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