

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

CU's McKnight wants to add wins to big-time list

By John Henderson*The Denver Post*

The Denver Post

Posted: 09/03/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

BOULDER — The first time in the big time for Scotty McKnight came, appropriately, in an end zone.

No, he didn't score a touchdown. Well, in his mind he did. It came when he was so little, the end zone at Santa Margarita High in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., felt like an entire football field.

There was 9-year-old Scotty, even then about the smallest guy on the field, in pick-up games at halftime of the high school game, catching "touchdown" passes from one of the other ball boys.

"Looking at the crowd, there were a couple thousand but it felt like a million when we were young," said the other ball boy, a guy by the name of Mark Sanchez. "It was like they were chanting for us."

They've been chanting since for the two best friends. Sanchez, the can't-miss prospect, has heard cheers all the way to the starting quarterback job of the New York Jets, where he's ready to start his second season. McKnight, the can't-possibly-make-it former walk-on, has heard cheers that will reach a crescendo Saturday afternoon at Invesco Field at Mile High.

At some point in the season opener against Colorado State, barring an offensive meltdown, McKnight, with 165 catches and 15 touchdowns, will catch his third pass. That will make this 5-foot-11, 185-pounder, who hardly anyone wanted, the leading receiver in the 121 years of Colorado football.

Imagine that. Michael Westbrook. Charles Johnson. Daniel Graham. A walk-on beat them all.

"He's pretty good, man," Sanchez said. "I think he's like a Wes Welker. He's smart. He studies. He knows football really well. He definitely has a coach's feel for the game."

McKnight developed that feel in end zones such as Santa Margarita's, on manicured fields such as UCLA's and on the streets near his home in Coto de Caza, Calif., trying to dodge Honda Civics while catching Sanchez's passes.

His relationship with Sanchez, however, is only the headliner in the Facebook-page

pyramid of McKnight's contact with greatness. Growing up, he was a self-proclaimed "football camp junkie." He went to camps at UCLA, Stanford, San Diego State, Oregon, among others. The Nike Camp. The Elite 11.

The names of quarterbacks he caught for could fill an agent's bucket list: Jay Cutler, Chase Daniel, Carson Palmer, Tim Tebow, Juice Williams, Jake Locker, Kellen Clemens, Chad Henne, Pat White and, of course, Sanchez.

"When I was a sophomore in high school, I was catching for (Kyle) Orton," said McKnight, dressed in shorts and a pale blue ball cap worn backward. "He was at Purdue. I'd just bought this fresh pair of Nike gloves. There was like a dig drill, and Orton hummed this pass over to me, and as soon as I caught it, the laces just ripped the seam of my glove right down the middle. I caught it, but I was like, 'This dude just ripped my \$40 pair of gloves!' "

McKnight met Sanchez through a Pop Warner teammate who lived on Sanchez's street in Mission Viejo. Unfortunately, McKnight's teammate didn't throw like Sanchez could. This is what you would call a give-and-take relationship.

"We were both all about football," McKnight said. "I've always loved to go out there and catch. I don't care if it's 8 o'clock on a Saturday morning and it's my day off. Mark was the same way."

They went to separate high schools. Sanchez, a year older, chose Mission Viejo High and McKnight followed his Pop Warner teammates to Tesoro, a smaller, year-old school in Las Flores.

Off the recruiting radar

McKnight comes from a remarkable family, and his father's stint as Colorado coach Dan Hawkins' teammate at Cal-Davis is only part of it. Scotty's grandfather, Fred McKnight, was a Hollywood writer for such shows as "Dragnet" and "MacGyver."

His mother, Catherine, is executive chef at What a Dish, a high-end restaurant in tiny Dana Point, Calif. (Needless to say, his Pop Warner team had the best team meals in Southern California.)

His father, Scott, worked for the DEA, spending much of Scotty's childhood bouncing from Houston to Miami to Los Angeles breaking up Colombian drug cartels. Having a father putting away drug lords for 35 years meant never having to get a drug lecture.

"He'd say things like, 'All I have to do is pull one hair off your pillow and you're (in trouble), buddy,' " Scotty said. "Obviously, that wasn't an issue for me."

The biggest trouble he had at Tesoro turned out to be big, however. After catching 118 passes for 22 touchdowns his sophomore and junior years, the school suspended him for the first eight games of his senior year. He and a teammate wrote a tongue-in-cheek

paper about their creative writing teacher. She didn't think it was so creative. The suspension made the papers, along with his picture. What was overlooked was his 3.87 grade-point average.

"You're 17, 18 years old, you're stupid," McKnight said. "We wrote some stuff, and it got blown out of proportion."

Already tittering off the recruiting radar because of his size, recruiters asked him as many questions about the suspension as about his speed. Idaho State offered a scholarship. Oregon asked him to walk on. He committed to Boise State, then followed Hawkins and his staff to CU in 2006.

That's because his tapes and pleas to Cal went unanswered by receivers coach Eric Kiesau, now, ahem, Colorado's offensive coordinator.

"Still," McKnight said, "I'll make a play in practice and I go, 'I bet you would've recruited that at Cal!' "

Yes, he would. Kiesau was a huge draw for McKnight, whose father came home raving about a Kiesau talk in a clinic one day. Today, Kiesau says, "I'd take a Scotty McKnight every day of the week, every year for the rest of my coaching career."

Eager to finish a winner

After watching McKnight become a film-room addict with the surest hands on the team, Kiesau should like him more this year. McKnight spent the offseason working up to eight hours a day with mixed martial arts trainer Todd Norman. McKnight is faster, bigger and stronger. He is no longer on a first-name basis with the delivery guy from Cosmo's Pizza on The Hill.

Yet he's hungrier. With added receiver depth, he'll no longer be the only former walk-on with 4.5 speed getting double-teamed.

"In the Missouri game, we were calling plays to Scotty over and over because he was the only receiver doing anything in that game," quarterback Tyler Hansen said. "This year it's a lot different."

That's why on Saturday, McKnight might not do much more than raise the ball aloft if the game is stopped. It has been three years of losing records, never once going to a bowl game and playing in that end zone.

"I think the record is cool, and 10 years from now when I look back, it'll be awesome to have the opportunity to be put in the same category with some of the great wide receivers who've been at this school," he said, "but I'd love so much more to say: 'Hey, we handled business. We won games my senior year.' "

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

SEPTEMBER 3, 2010, 7:01 AM

CU preview: Coaching can always be the key to a season

By TOM KENSLEER |  1 Comment



[1]

Bufs head coach Dan Hawkins watches quarterback Tyler Hansen lead the offense during drills. (Karl Gehring, The Denver Post)

In the 12th and final part of a series of look-aheads at Colorado's 2010 season, broken down by units, we look at the Buffs' coaching ...

Newcomers: The additions of wide receivers coach Robert Prince and defensive backs coach Ashley Ambrose have injected a dose of energy. The fact that both have an NFL background gets the attention of their players. Prince worked for five NFL teams in the previous six years (including two as an intern). Ambrose played 13 seasons in the NFL and was all-pro in 1996 with the Cincinnati Bengals, when he was named AFC defensive back of the year.

Biggest loss: Greg Brown left in December to become co-defensive coordinator at the University of Arizona. His around-the-clock enthusiasm will be missed, as will as his knowledge. Formerly an NFL assistant, Brown received countless phone calls from defensive coaches around the country who wanted to pick his brain.

Strengths: It's a veteran group that has been around a while, and around head coach Dan Hawkins. Before embarking on a career as an NFL assistant, Prince coached under Hawkins at Boise State. Ambrose had been on CU's staff as a defensive technical intern for two seasons prior to being elevated to a full-time position last winter.

Weaknesses: It's hard to pinpoint many CU victories won by coaching decisions. Yes, there have been moments, including the upset of Oklahoma, winning at Texas Tech and seemingly always playing well against Nebraska. But observers continually point out that Colorado players often fail to match the intensity level of opponents. And CU's history under the current regime of starting slowly in games is a trend that must fall at the feet of the coaching staff.

What to look for: Obviously, this is an important year for not only Hawkins but for the entire staff. This year's team finally has experience, and the talent level, athleticism and play-making ability have improved. It's up to the coaching staff to get the most out of this roster and at the very least post a winning season, including a bowl victory. Anything short of that probably will result in a new staff taking Colorado into the Pac-10 Conference.

More from All Things Colorado Sports

- [CU's McKnight: Good start is the key to season](#) ^[2]
- [Timing between Buff QBs and new WRs called 'good'](#) ^[3]
- [Avs GM Greg Sherman speaks in the wake of Stewart signing](#) ^[4]
- [The Mtn. HD channel appears in time for CU-CSU game](#) ^[5]
- [Can't wait to see CU runners in new conference](#) ^[6]

All Things Colorado Sports Recommends

- [Patience could indeed be a virtue for Nuggets](#) ^[7] (All Things Nuggets)
- [Denver Nuggets guard Chauncey Billups talks about a key to defeating the Utah Jazz](#) ^[8] (All Things Nuggets)
- [Denver Nuggets forward Kenyon Martin will be key in tonight's game against the Phoenix Suns](#) ^[9] (All Things Nuggets)



ARTICLE PRINTED FROM ALL THINGS COLORADO SPORTS

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/03/cu-preview-coaching-can-always-be-the-key-to-a-season/12577/>

URLs in this post:

[1] Image: http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/files/2010/09/blog_buffs_09032010.jpg

[2] CU's McKnight: Good start is the key to season:

http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/03/cus-mcknight-good-start-is-the-key-to-season/12690/?source=ARK_sports

[3] Timing between Buff QBs and new WRs called 'good':

http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/03/timing-between-buff-qbs-and-new-wrs-called-good/12693/?source=ARK_sports

[4] Avs GM Greg Sherman speaks in the wake of Stewart signing:

http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/02/avs-gm-greg-sherman-speaks-in-the-wake-of-stewart-signing/12667/?source=ARK_sports

[5] The Mtn. HD channel appears in time for CU-CSU game:

http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/02/the-mtn-hd-channel-appears-in-time-for-cu-csu-game/12665/?source=ARK_sports

[6] Can't wait to see CU runners in new conference:

http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/06/11/cant-wait-to-see-cu-runners-in-new-conference/?source=ARK_sports

All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

SEPTEMBER 2, 2010, 3:10 PM

CU's Polk: We intend to get physical for CSU game

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — Colorado sophomore free safety Ray Polk wouldn't get into particulars, of course, but he told me this about the defensive strategy for Saturday's game against Colorado State:

"We're going to all fly around as a defense and make some plays. We're going to hit some people pretty hard."

Players are more comfortable with the defense this year, Polk added.

"Everybody's pretty comfortable," he said. "We're making the right reads, the right calls. Now we just need to transfer it into a game situation."

"This will be our first real test (Saturday at Invesco Field at Mile High) and I think we're going to rise to the occasion."

More from All Things Colorado Sports

- [The Mtn. HD channel appears in time for CU-CSU game](#) ^[1]
- [CU: Ball security and security for the QB](#) ^[2]
- [CU's Solder not looking ahead to NFL](#) ^[3]
- [CSU preview: Coach staff must see improvements](#) ^[4]
- [CU's McKnight: Good start is the key to season](#) ^[5]

All Things Colorado Sports Recommends

- [Denver Nuggets chef goes back to the Game 1 pregame meal for tonight's Game 5](#) ^[6] (All Things Nuggets)
- [Melo out for today's game vs. Spurs](#) ^[7] (All Things Nuggets)
- [Nuggets to sign George Karl's son, Coby](#) ^[8] (All Things Nuggets)



ARTICLE PRINTED FROM ALL THINGS COLORADO SPORTS

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/02/cus-polk-reveals-defensive-strategy-for-csu/12652/>

URLs in this post:

[1] The Mtn. HD channel appears in time for CU-CSU game:

http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/02/the-mtn-hd-channel-appears-in-time-for-cu-csu-game/12665/?source=ARK_sports

DiStefano sets bar for Buffs, Hawkins

Chancellor wants Buffs to go to 'good bowl game' this year

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/02/2010 08:58:29 PM MDT

Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins and athletic director Mike Bohn have resisted throughout the offseason establishing any rock solid criteria -- such as a win total -- for what will qualify as a successful season this fall.

Chancellor Phil DiStefano has no such reservations.

In an interview with the Camera at Balch Fieldhouse on Thursday following the 22nd annual Boulder Chamber Kickoff Luncheon, DiStefano said he expects to go to "a good bowl game" this season.

DiStefano was answering the following question.

What is a successful season in the context of the coach being able to keep his job?

"I think we have to look at the whole season and see what happens with each game," DiStefano said. "But my goal, of course, is to see us go to a good bowl game."

The Buffs must win at least six games to qualify for a bowl game, but that would likely land the program in one of the third-tier contests affiliated with the Big 12 Conference such as the Texas Bowl in Houston, the Pinstripe Bowl in New York or the Dallas Football Classic.

The Buffs would probably have to win seven or more games to earn a spot in a better bowl such as the Holiday Bowl, Alamo Bowl or Insight Bowl.

Hawkins begins his fifth season at the head of the flagship program in the CU athletic department Saturday when his team takes on in-state rival Colorado State in Denver at Invesco Field at Mile High.

Hawkins is still looking for his first winning season with the Buffs and is 16-33 overall. The closest he has come so far was finishing 6-6 in the regular season in 2007 and losing the Independence Bowl in Shreveport, La., to Alabama, which enters this year as the No. 1 ranked team in the nation and the defending national champion.

Bohn once again stopped short of assigning any measurable expectations for the season, even after being told that his boss had set the bar at a good bowl game.

"I'm not going to put a number on it," Bohn said.

DiStefano, Bohn and president Bruce Benson collectively made the decision to keep Hawkins as coach following a 3-9 season last year. They took plenty of criticism in the months immediately after the season and have fought to stem declines in season-ticket sales this spring and summer with a new season approaching.

The arrival of fall practices last month and daily news about a seemingly improved team has led to increasing optimism in recent weeks.

Hawkins fed that optimism Thursday when he addressed the crowd and began his 5 minutes on the podium by saying "OK, I'm going to tell you a little secret. Get your tickets. You're going to like this team."

Hawkins said the Buffs have been counting down the days and hours to the start of this season almost since last season ended, even using a countdown clock in the locker room.

"That thing is about to zero out and so are we," he said.

Hawkins said it has been "an arduous climb, but a great climb. ... I think we're really ready and poised to summit the mountain."

He said the 2010 Buffs will be a bigger, faster, stronger team than they have been at any previous point in his tenure. He thanked Buffs fans for their support and closed by saying, "I think you're going to see the fruits of your support come true here. I really do believe that."

Fifth-year senior cornerback Jalil Brown addressed the crowd after Hawkins. He shared the story of his recruitment to CU and talked about going through some tough times in the program. He mentioned going to the 2007 Independence Bowl and said based on what he has seen from his teammates during the past month and the entire offseason, he wouldn't want to be the Buffs' opening opponent.

"From watching the guys this week, I think we'll go to a bigger, better bowl game at the end of this season," Brown said.

Close Window

Send To Printer

CU Buffs WR Jefferson OK being off radar

Playing time won't come easily for sophomore

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/02/2010 11:53:48 PM MDT

Big things would have been expected in recent years from a sophomore wide receiver like Will Jefferson in the Colorado football program.

It's not necessarily the case any more.

Jefferson played as a true freshman, making six catches for 45 yards in 11 games last year, and if these were the Buffs of the past four seasons with big depth problems at receiver, he could have probably been expected to triple or quadruple those numbers in his second year. He's smart, reliable and determined, but that might not be enough now.

That isn't to say Jefferson won't have a big season in 2010. He certainly has enough confidence in himself to make it happen. But he has much more competition for playing time and receptions this year.

A plethora of quality receivers could make the difference for the Buffs' offense this fall. Jefferson will have to fight off players such as senior transfer Travon Patterson, junior Kyle Cefalo and true freshman Paul Richardson just to be on the field. That's a good thing for the Buffs.

Don't bet against him.

"I don't really care to be on the radar honestly," Jefferson said. "My entire life I've been that way, a sleeper to other people, but to me, I don't consider myself a sleeper. I'm glad to be in company with these guys. This helps me so much more to be able to learn from this many different types of receivers."

First-year wide receivers coach Robert Prince has talked of playing seven or eight different receivers if he believes they can help the team win games.

Colorado averaged less than 6 yards per pass attempt last year with the offense relying heavily on Scotty McKnight. That number could jump dramatically this year with more speed and athleticism involved, including Toney Clemons, a transfer from Michigan who is the fastest player on the team, and an improved Jefferson.

"He wants to be perfect," first-year wide receivers coach Robert Prince said. "He's one of those guys who not only does he know his assignment, but he is trying to work on learning the whole offense and knowing what the other guys are doing."

Jefferson came to Colorado late last summer as a last-minute addition to the 2009 recruiting class. Offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau heard through a friend about the former high school running back from California who had gone unrecruited because he didn't have ACT scores to report to any coach who might have been interested.

Jefferson's work ethic has brought him a long way in his first year of football at the college level. He learned to work hard and set high standards from his parents, William and Tracy, and an older cousin, Desmond Moore, whom he said are three of the biggest influences in his life.

"Failure is not an option for me," he said. "It hasn't been my entire life. My parents don't accept it and my older cousin is like my older brother is always preaching to me how in life, even when I don't believe in myself, he believes in me constantly."

"He constantly preaches to me. Perfection, perfection. There is nothing less. You can't be average. You've got to be a superior being. That's exactly how he sees it. I believe that. Sometimes I doubt myself and then I talk to him and he puts it back in me that there is no second and there is no almost."

Jefferson's drive to do right by his family has earned him a reputation of being too hard on himself when he does make mistakes. Not beating himself up can sometimes be one of his biggest challenges. He's also not one to go looking for validation.

"I don't need (the newspaper) to put my face on the cover and talk about me," Jefferson said. "I don't read the paper. People tell me when my quotes are in it. The only reinforcement I need is from my family. When I get that, it's all I need to keep me going."

A rectangular button with a light blue gradient and a thin blue border, containing the text "Close Window".A rectangular button with a light blue gradient and a thin blue border, containing the text "Send To Printer".

Flashback: A look back at CU's 1990 championship season

Colorado 31, Tennessee 31

By Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/02/2010 11:56:30 PM MDT

Editor's note: *This is the first of a season-long series on Colorado's march to the 1990 national championship. The Camera will recap each week's game and catch up with a player from the title team every Friday during the 2010 season.*

The first step of Colorado's 1990 national championship journey was very nearly a stumble.

The No. 5 Buffaloes, with the previous season's Orange Bowl national title game loss to Notre Dame still fresh in their minds, opened the season in Anaheim, Calif., against No. 8 Tennessee in the Disneyland Pigskin Classic. It was just another example of coach Bill McCartney's willingness to match his team against a tough non-conference schedule, a strategy many of his peers around the Big Eight and the nation were hesitant to follow.

But that strategy almost exacted a damaging toll. Instead of a win -- which seemed a sure thing halfway through the fourth quarter -- the Buffs were forced to settle for a 31-31 tie after the Vols scored two touchdowns in the final 5:36 of the game.

Colorado was seemingly in a hole before the game started. Tailback Eric Bieniemy, touted as a Heisman Trophy candidate, had been suspended for the first game because of an off-the-field incident. The Buffs moved wide receiver Mike Pritchard to tailback, a position he hadn't played since high school.

Pritchard responded in quality fashion. The CU senior carried the ball 20 times for 217 yards and two touchdowns, helping Colorado amass 368 yards rushing. Pritchard was named Colorado's MVP for the game after recording the Buffs' sixth-best rushing game in program history.

"Pritch was such a good athlete, all of us knew that if we got the ball in his hands, good things would happen," said Buff center Jay Leeuwenburg recently. "The thing about him was that if we gave him a hole, we knew he had the speed to break one."

Indeed. Pritchard did break two long scoring runs, covering 55 and 78 yards. His second touchdown gave the Buffs a seemingly insurmountable 31-17 lead with 7:11 left in the game.

But almost before the Buffs could catch their breath, Tennessee answered with a long scoring drive to cut the gap to 31-24. After a rare three-and-out by the Buffs, the Vols marched down the field again to tie the game.

That's how it ended.

"It's a game we're going to look back at with a lot of frustration," McCartney said after the game.

That feeling is still felt 20 years later.

"We should have won," Pritchard said recently. "We were up 31-17 in the fourth quarter. We had so much hope and expectation from the previous year. We wanted to start fast, and that wasn't the way we wanted our first game to end."

Still, it was evident that the Buffs had the ability to be a potent team. Along with Pritchard's yardage, quarterback Darian Hagan ran 17 times for 77 yards to help the Buffs to 436 yards total offense, and Dave McCloughan returned a punt 55 yards for a touchdown, a harbinger of things to come.

The defense, however, wilted in the heat. Vols quarterback Andy Kelly threw for 368 yards and two touchdowns, with Carl Pickens (eight catches for 141 yards) his favorite target.

That season opener is still a sore point for the Buffs today.

"It felt like a loss," McCloughan said recently. "I know it wasn't, but it still felt like it at the time."

Certainly a loss would have been more damaging -- but it wasn't the manner in which a team seeking a national title wanted to open its season.

Mike Pritchard Q&A

Wide receiver Mike Pritchard played tailback one game in his career -- and finished with 217 yards and two touchdowns rushing against Tennessee. He finished the 1990 season with 773 yards receiving on just 28 catches (27.6 yards per catch) and six touchdowns. A first-round draft choice of the Atlanta Falcons, he played nine years in the NFL. He now works as a television and radio football analyst.

Q: What was your response when Bill McCartney asked you to play tailback in place of Eric Bieniemy in the season opener?

A: "I have so much respect for Coach Mac, I didn't hesitate. When he asked me to play tailback, my first thought was, 'I don't want to disappoint him.' I really didn't have a choice."

Q: Was there any trepidation on your part?

A: "Not really. The only thing that gave me pause was that I hadn't run between the tackles in several years. I had to consult with the best player on the team, Eric Bieniemy, to see if he thought I could do it. He was really supportive, and I got a lot of live reps at the spot before the game. (Offensive line coach Mike) Barry really got into my head about running between the tackles, and by the time the game came around, I had gotten accustomed to it."

Q: What do you remember about the game?

A: "I didn't have a great first half (a fumbled punt and only 30 yards rushing). But I had a better second half. What I really remember is that Eric was my biggest fan in that game. He was in my ear the whole game. The game was in California, where he grew up, and he wanted to play so badly. But when he couldn't, he didn't sulk. He just got so involved and gave me so much wisdom. He was so passionate about the game. You could tell then that he was someday going to be a great coach."

Q: When you look back at that team and that season, what sticks out in your mind?

A: "That era of CU football -- I don't think it can ever be duplicated. We had a lot of talent, but we were also so unselfish. We wanted to succeed, and Coach Mac instilled those qualities in us. He taught us what it takes to be a successful team."

Q: What made McCartney so special to his players?

A: "He got everybody to care. We had people from so many backgrounds -- inner-city Los Angeles, Houston, New Orleans, Las Vegas, Colorado -- but we became a family. You didn't want to disappoint him because you cared about him so much. The essence of Coach Mac ... where I am today is a big part of Coach Mac and the other coaches we had."

Close Window

Send To Printer

CU Buffs officials, Big 12 still discussing exit fees

DiStefano believes agreement can be reached

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/02/2010 11:52:55 PM MDT

Colorado Chancellor Phil DiStefano says there is a lot of ground to cover in negotiations with the Big 12 Conference over exit fees to part ways with the league, but he is confident differences can be worked out.

However, the divide is vast.

Colorado would like to pay nothing. The Big 12 wants CU to forfeit 80 percent of its conference distributions for two years, regardless of the timing of its move. That would come to approximately \$16 million.

"I think that is what we're discussing," DiStefano said. "Is it 50 percent, is it zero, is it 80? We've not come to an agreement on that."

Colorado announced in June it was leaving the Big 12 to join the Pac-10 in 2012. One day later, rival Nebraska announced it was bolting for the Big Ten in 2011. It remains possible the Buffs could leave a year early but someone will have to blink to make that happen. .

DiStefano said Colorado's position mirrors Nebraska's stand that the Big 12 hasn't been harmed by the two schools leaving, and the schools don't owe the conference any damages.

"I don't believe there are damages either because it's my understanding that there has not been a change in the television contracts with ABC or ESPN and the money that they are getting from TV is going to be divided 10 ways instead of 12," DiStefano said.

DiStefano met once with Big 12 officials in August to discuss the timing and cost of Colorado leaving the league. He said the next meeting with Big 12 officials hasn't been scheduled but it should happen some time later this month.

Utah also is joining the Pac-10, but it is scheduled to do so a year earlier than the Buffs at this point in 2011

Colorado is planning, scheduling and budgeting as if it will be in the Big 12 until 2012. None of that will change until an agreement on an earlier departure is finalized, if it can be. DiStefano said he is determined to make the best deal possible for CU.

"Absolutely," DiStefano said. "That is my job. I want to ensure that."

The Pac-10 has committed to help Colorado with the final cost of switching leagues by loaning the school money up front to defray whatever money it loses in exit penalties. CU would pay that money back to the Pac-10 over time by taking less money in Pac-10 conference distributions over its first few years in the league.

The Big 12 is likely counting on that fact in its negotiations, as well as knowing the Pac-10 would like to avoid a school year with 11 teams in its league in 2011-12. That would cause scheduling nightmares.

While DiStefano handles the exit fee negotiations, athletic director Mike Bohn is collaborating with his counterparts in the Pac-10 on revenue sharing, division alignment and possible championship game sites. Bohn said he is scheduled to meet with other Pac-10 athletic directors later this month in California.

He said there is no consensus at this point about North-South division alignment or using the alternate "zipper" option, in which some traditional rivals are in different divisions but play every year. The ADs have agreed a nine-game conference schedule is best in football, meaning team will only have to schedule three nonconference opponents per year.

In Colorado's case, with its commitment to play Colorado State every year through at least 2020, the Buffs only have two nonconference games to fill each year.

Close Window

Send To Printer

[Print page](#)[Close window](#)

Longmont, Colorado
Friday, September 03,
2010

Publish Date: 9/3/2010

Forecasting the Buffs' 2010 football season

By Brian Howell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

A year ago, the University of Colorado football team got off to a horrible start and never recovered.

The Buffs suffered a surprising 23-17 loss at home to rival Colorado State. Then, they went through an even more shocking 54-38 loss at Toledo.

Those games set the tone for what turned out to be a 3-9 season. When it was over, fans called for head coach Dan Hawkins to be fired.

Hawkins, however, kept his job and is now set to begin his fifth season with CU.

The opener is now just a day away — the Buffs and Colorado State play Saturday at noon at Invesco Field at Mile High — and CU is looking for a better start and a better season all-around.

With the season about to kick off, here's a look at what to expect from the Buffaloes this season:

POSITION-BY-POSITION

QUARTERBACK: Junior Tyler Hansen takes the reins of the offense this year. He started the final seven games of 2009, with mixed results. Being the starter coming into the year has boosted his confidence — as well as the confidence the coaches and team have in him. Senior Cody Hawkins is the backup and figures to see the field at times.

RUNNING BACK: Rodney Stewart has led the team in rushing each of the past two seasons. If he can keep his 5-foot-6, 175-pound frame healthy, he should be in line for his best season in Boulder. Brian Lockridge and Quentin Hildreth are good runners to back him up. Justin Torres (6 feet, 215 pounds) is a big back who could play a big role in short-yardage situations.

WIDE RECEIVER: This group is deeper than it has been in several years. Senior Scotty McKnight is the leader of the group, while sophomore Will Jefferson is poised for a breakout season. Newcomers Toney Clemons, Travon Patterson and Paul Richardson are super-talented and will catch their share of passes. Kyle Cefalo is in the McKnight mold and could be a factor, as well. Tight end Ryan Deehan could help the passing game, too.

OFFENSIVE LINE: There is a good deal of experience here, with All-America candidate Nate Solder at left tackle to lead the way. Center Keenan Stevens and right guard Ryan Miller are also preseason award candidates. Left guard Ethan Adkins and right tackle David Bakhtiari have done well in camp. Bryce Givens, Jack Harris, Mike Iltis and Shawn Daniels are among several that could see time, as well.

DEFENSIVE LINE: Marquez Herrod, Curtis Cunningham and Will Pericak are all back after starting every game last year. A lot of guys will see playing time, however, including Josh Hartigan and Nick Kasa at the ends. Regardless of who gets in the game, the Buffs need more than the 27 sacks (eighth in the Big 12) they generated last year and they need to improve upon the 161.2 rushing yards per game (80th in the country) they gave up.

LINEBACKERS: Although it's a fairly new group of starters, there is good talent and experience here. Michael Sipili, Jon Major, Tyler Ahles, B.J. Beatty and Patrick Mahnke have all played quite a bit. This should be an area of strength for the Buffs.

SECONDARY: Likely the top position group on the defense. Jalil Brown and Jimmy Smith are two of the best cornerbacks in the Big 12, if not the country. Safeties Anthony Perkins and Ray Polk are both experienced, and redshirt freshman Parker Orms is a play-makers.

KICKER: Aric Goodman will start, but he has struggled throughout his career, making just 15-of-32 field goal attempts. If the senior struggles again, the Buffs won't hesitate to give freshman Justin Castor a shot.

PUNTER: The Buffs ranked 113th in the country in punting last year. Redshirt freshman Zach Grossnickle won the job, without much competition, and he should help the Buffs improve in this area.

RETURNS: Travon Patterson, a transfer from Southern Cal, is one of the fastest players on the team and he could be exciting to watch. Brian Lockridge could be explosive on kickoff returns, as he showed with his 98-yard return for touchdown against Oklahoma State last year.

QUESTIONS

Can Tyler Hansen lead this offense?: He certainly has the ability to do the job. He also has a lot of weapons to use. The key is going to be whether the CU offensive line improves. If it does, Hansen will have time to make plays.

Will the run game improve?: CU's 87.9 rush yards per game ranked 113th (out of 120) in the country last year. With a better offensive line, and with tailback Rodney Stewart entering his third year with the program, that number will increase dramatically.

CAN THE BUFFS STOP THE RUN?: Linebacker B.J. Beatty knows there is pressure on the front seven. "Definitely there is," he said. "We have a lot to prove up front." As a group, they have done well in camp, however. "All the linemen, they've been playing real awesome — physical and fast," Beatty said. "I don't think I've really seem something like that since I've been here."

HOW IMPORTANT IS A FAST START?: Very important. Two of the first three games are against Colorado State and Hawaii. There are also games against California and Georgia on the early slate. CU has to be at least 2-2 after that stretch if it wants to get to a bowl game.

On the road can the buffs win?: The Buffs are currently riding a 12-game road losing streak. With road dates at California, Missouri, Oklahoma and Nebraska, CU will have a tough time winning. But, a Nov. 6 trip to Kansas could be the game that breaks the streak.

PREDICTIONS

OFFENSIVE MVP: QB Tyler Hansen. He's got the maturity — and the tools around him — to have a great year.

DEFENSIVE MVP: LB Michael Sipili. Although the cornerbacks have been getting most of the attention, Sipili is due for a huge season. He's an extremely hard hitter and he's had a long road to get into a starting role. He won't mess that up.

TOP NEWCOMER: WR Paul Richardson. Really, you could pick any one of three receivers — Richardson, Toney Clemons or Travon Patterson — for this spot. Richardson, however, has turned a lot of heads this summer.

FRESHMEN WHO WILL MAKE AN IMPACT: Richardson isn't the only talented player in the freshman crop. Running back Justin Torres, nickel back Parker Orms, defensive end Chidera Uzo-Diribe and punter Zach Grossnickle — among others — will also play significant roles.

Bottom line: In the end, all that matters is the wins and losses, right? Head coach Dan Hawkins is just 16-33 through his first four years, and he hasn't had a winning season yet. That will change. CU plays six games in the state of

Colorado — vs. CSU, Hawaii, Georgia, Baylor, Texas Tech, Iowa State and Kansas State — and they'll finish 6-1 in those games, losing only to Georgia. The road slate is tougher, but they'll beat Kansas and finish the regular season at 7-5. That will assure Hawkins of his first winning season — and probably another year in Boulder — and get the Buffs to a bowl game. Don't be surprised if the Buffs find themselves at Yankee Stadium on Dec. 30 for the Pinstripes Bowl.



CU's returns, field position are boosted by new receivers

[JOE PAISLEY](#)

2010-09-02 15:46:02



Colorado special teams are enjoying the trickle-down effect from an influx of receiving talent this offseason.

The addition of transfers Toney Clemons (Michigan), voted as the league's top newcomer by the media, and Travon Patterson (Southern Cal), both listed as starters and punt returners, gives the Buffaloes game-breakers they need to compete in the offensive-minded Big 12 and put last season's 3-9 mark behind them. Patterson will start as returner.

"(There's) a ton more depth than since I've been here; guys that can really open up the game and make plays," said senior and top returning (76 receptions) receiver Scotty McKnight, who could become CU's career leader with three catches.

Junior tailback

return specialist Brian Lockridge is back at kickoff return along with Arthur Jaffee.

Aric Goodman holds a slight edge over Marcus Kirkwood and Justin Castor to be the placekicker when CU takes on Colorado State at noon Saturday at Invesco Field at Mile High.

"In terms of what guys are doing as far as kicking, that's been pleasing," coach Dan Hawkins said recently. "I think it helps to have a few more bodies to have a little more competition in there. Zach (Grossnickle) has been punting the ball really well too, so that seems like it's heading in the right direction."

Better field position off punt returns, more potent receivers and improvements in the running game behind an improved offensive line could take the pressure off junior starting QB Tyler Hansen. Forcing the QB to do it all while looking for McKnight to get open has contributed to CU finishing near the bottom of the Big 12 during Hawkins' tenure.

The improved offensive line includes starting center and Lewis-Palmer graduate Keenan Stevens and all-Big 12 preseason first-teamers Nate Solder and Ryan Miller.

A better offense should help the defense, which found itself in bad field position far too often last season. A bigger, deeper defensive line should bolster the front seven, improving the pass rush and giving the secondary — led by talented cornerbacks Jimmy Smith and Jalil Brown — a chance to surpass last season's paltry nine interceptions.

© Copyright 2010 Freedom Communications. All Rights Reserved.
[Privacy Policy](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Site Map](#)

Our Other Publications: | [High Roller](#) | [Friday Real Estate](#) | [Pueblo West View](#) | [Beyond the Fold](#) | [Active Years](#) | [Caminos](#)

Bufs have a Solder to lean on

At 6-9, 320 pounds, CU senior tackle brings strength to offensive line.

0 tweet

Posted: Friday, September 3, 2010 12:00 am

By **TRACY RENCK** | tracyr@chieftain.com |

BOULDER — Every offensive line coach covets a player like Nate Solder.

The 6-foot-9, 320-pound University of Colorado left tackle is hard not to notice on the field. And this season, many media outlets are raving about his potential.

Solder, a fifth-year senior, is a preseason first-team All-America choice of Playboy, Consensus Draft Services and The Kickoff. The Buffs and Solder open the season at noon Saturday against rival Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High in Denver.

Those are high honors for Solder, who converted from tight end to left tackle in the spring 2008. Solder was recruited to CU as a tight end from Buena Vista High School.

“Back in 2008, I didn’t even know what a pass set was,” said Solder, who also played middle linebacker in high school. “This is just a process. I still feel like the same person I was five years ago. I’ve just kind of been blessed. I have had great leadership. Coach (Jeff) Pitman (CU’s strength and conditioning coach) has got me bigger and Coach Hawk (Dan Hawkins) has led me both on and off the field. It is partially my doing because I have listened, but I have needed their guidance.”

Although Solder has gone from an unknown quantity to an All-America candidate, he's keeping his feet on the ground.

"My approach this year is that I would be nothing if I wasn't getting better every day," Solder said. "That's the mentality the guys on this team have and that is the mentality I have. Having a little pressure on you makes it exciting and that's what it is all about. You would not want to play in the game if there were not stakes involved. That's why I love playing."

Solder also is aware of all the ups and downs the CU program has gone through in recent years.

"Things haven't always gone our way, but the character we showed all last season was amazing," said Solder of the Buffs, who went 3-9 last season. "We lost so many games, but we kept bringing it every week. That's the kind of guys we have and when you add that with more experience and bigger and stronger guys, there is a lot of things that can happen (this season)."

Solder stopped short of making any predictions for 2010, and he knows there are aspects that must be addressed immediately.

"As an offensive line, we have to get our run game going and we have to protect the quarterback," Solder said. "Those are two main goals and something we have to get better at this season."

Solder isn't worried about football beyond this year, either.

"There are a lot of great things on the horizon and I look forward to that, but nothing is going to happen unless I put all my focus on this season," said Solder, who received a biology degree last May.



© Copyright 2010, **The Pueblo Chieftain**, Pueblo, CO. Powered by [BLOX Content Management System](#) from [TownNews.com](#). [[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)]