

CU Buffs set sights on fast start

CU kicks off 2010 vs. rival Rams at Invesco

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/04/2010 12:13:29 AM MDT

It has been 277 days since Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins established his own "baseline" set of expectations for the 2010 season that begins today at noon against in-state rival Colorado State at Invesco Field in Denver.

Wrapping up a 3-9 season during his final press conference of 2009, the Camera asked Hawkins what he believed a fair set of expectations would be for his fifth year as coach of the Buffs.

"Beating Colorado State and Nebraska, getting to a bowl game and winning that bowl game -- that ought to be a baseline," he said.

A win today obviously would be a big step toward meeting the coach's goals, and it would provide fans of the program a big sigh of relief and reason to be optimistic about the next three months. A loss will bring all the negativity of 2009 storming back to life and then some.

Calling today's tilt a big game is an understatement to be sure.

The Buffs are beginning their 121st season of football and the 20th anniversary season of their only national championship. They have won 75 of the 120 previous season openers and have gone on to winning seasons in 60 of those 75 years. That means winning the opener has led to winning seasons 80 percent of the time. Losing the first game of the year has led to a winning season slightly less than 50 percent of the time.

Big difference.

But look no further than the past two years for evidence that the outcome of the Rocky Mountain Showdown doesn't necessarily make or break the winners and losers.

The Buffs won in 2008 and went on to finish the season 5-7 while the Rams went to a bowl game. The Rams won last season and finished the season 3-9.

Hawkins was asked this week if he is in somewhat of a no-win situation because he is expected to beat the Rams every year. If he does, he might not get the credit he deserves. If he doesn't, there is hell to pay.

"I never think of it like that," Hawkins said. "I just don't. I've just been on both sides of the fence. So it's a big game and it's a great rivalry and that's the way we look at it."

Both teams enter the game carrying the burden of losing streaks from last year. The Rams are hauling a nine-game load. The Buffs suffered three consecutive setbacks to end the 2009 season.

But these are significantly different teams from a year ago.

The Rams had the advantage with experience in the trenches last year when they fielded the nation's most-experienced offensive line. Colorado clearly has a more experienced offense this year. The Buffs have also added a group of fast, athletic playmakers at wide receiver, a fact they are hoping makes a big difference in production, finally.

The Rams will start true freshman Pete Thomas at quarterback behind a relatively inexperienced line. That fact alone is probably why the oddsmakers have CU as a 11½-point favorite. Thomas is a big guy (6-foot-5, 230 pounds) with a big arm, but he has never played in front of more than 5,000 people.

It will also be the first start in the series for Colorado quarterback Tyler Hansen. The junior from Murrieta, Calif., has played

in each of the past two seasons and took over as the starter in the sixth game last year. He has never played in a nonconference game. Hansen referred to today's game earlier this week as "a must win."

It's an apt way to sum up the feeling on the black and gold side of the stadium today. What a way to start a season.

[Close Window](#)[Send To Printer](#)

Woelk: Confidence, momentum up for grabs today in Denver

Neill Woelk Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/04/2010 12:15:00 AM MDT

Kick it off. It's time.

The 2010 football season is here, and not a second too soon.

University of Colorado fans have been waiting -- with measured amounts of anticipation and anxiety -- for this day for nine months, since the day CU finished the 2009 season with a loss to Nebraska.

Buff players have been waiting for this day for a year.

Both teams on the Invesco Field turf today will be anxious to wash the memories of 2009 away, and for good reason.

Both teams lost nine games last year. But while the Buffs managed to sprinkle in a win here and there as the season progressed, the Rams did it in style, losing nine in a row after putting a 3-0 start on the board.

That means the Rams haven't tasted victory in almost a year, with their last win coming on Sept. 19, 2009, against Nevada.

For the Buffs -- and their coaches and fans -- the drought only seems that long. While CU did win once in each month of the season last year, the game players might remember most is the season-opening loss to their in-state rivals.

At least, that's the one they've been reminded of virtually every day since the end of the season. The 23-17 loss to CSU provided half of the worst possible bookends imaginable to a Colorado season: a loss to the Rams to begin the year and a defeat at the hands of Nebraska to finish it.

The fact that both occurred on CU's home turf only magnified the pain for the Buffs.

Certainly, there's plenty at stake for both squads today.

The winners get to talk about a fresh start, momentum and putting 2009 officially to rest. Optimism will find a home in their locker room, and the future will be looked upon as holding promise. Confidence will grow.

There will be no such rewards for the losers. Instead, they'll only be reminded of how 2010 suddenly seems so very much like 2009. Self-doubt will be the order of the day.

The one thing that won't end today -- no matter who wins -- is the speculation on the future of Buff head coach Dan Hawkins. The man who has a place on just about everyone's hot-seat list won't quiet the critics with one win.

Or two, three, four or five, for that matter. Conventional wisdom suggests that Hawkins needs to have at least a winning regular season and take the Buffs to a bowl game to ensure that this won't be his last CU-CSU game.

There's even some pressure on CSU coach Steve Fairchild. Although he's in just his third season, the glow of the Rams' win over Colorado a year ago was greatly tarnished by nine consecutive losses and a winless Mountain West season. A win today would do wonders for his team's confidence.

But despite the tendency to put the focus on the coaches, this one isn't about the guys on the sidelines.

This one is about the players, two teams who are in need of a boost.

The Buffs enter the game in a confident but cautious mode. Cautious because they remember last year; confident because

they are emerging from what was almost certainly their best overall fall camp in the Hawkins era. They have more talent than any previous Hawkins team, they have more experience and they have -- at least on paper -- better players than the opponent.

But confidence is a fragile thing when there's no history of winning to back it up -- and that's why today's game is so important for the Buffs.

The Buffs need something to buttress that confidence. They need tangible proof that they are indeed a much-improved team from a year ago, a performance that will reinforce the attitude they've been building since the beginning of fall camp.

Simply, the Buffs need a win. They need to play well on both sides of the ball (and special teams, for that matter) and prove to themselves -- not the fans, not the coaches and certainly not the media -- that they are for real.

[Close Window](#)[Send To Printer](#)

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

college football

CU's Stevens and CSU's McDermott share similar playing paths

By Terry Frei
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/04/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

Bearded and built alike, the two starting centers in today's Rocky Mountain Showdown also have had similar football career paths at their schools. It is even a bit eerie: In his first three seasons at CU, Buffs center Keenan Stevens got into exactly one game. In his first three seasons at CSU, Rams center Tyler McDermott got into exactly the same.

Stevens, a fifth-year senior from Lewis-Palmer High School in Monument, was a walk-on, nonscholarship player at CU for four seasons. He started the final nine games in 2009, his redshirt junior year, but he still wasn't on a football scholarship. He finally got the news that he would be getting one after the season ended.

"I was told in my postseason evaluation with Coach Hawk,



Colorado State junior center Tyler McDermott will be making his first career start today against in-state rival Colorado at Invesco Field at Mile High. (Diego James Robles, The Denver Post)

and all the other coaches were there," Stevens, listed at 6-feet-2 and 290, recalled in Boulder this week. "I was pretty happy. I was hoping for one and working for one, and I'm glad they finally gave me one."

In Fort Collins, meanwhile, McDermott (6-2, 286) now is a redshirt junior. He was a highly touted recruit, at least in the sense he came in from his native Florida on a full scholarship. But for his first three seasons at CSU, he was listed behind Tim Walter, who was at the Chicago Bears' camp this summer. McDermott got on the field only against California in 2008.

This week, CSU named McDermott as the starter, at least for today, and he'll be snapping the ball

Advertisement

www.shortlineonline.com
580 S. Havana, Aurora
866-483-6176

SHORTLINE
HYUNDAI
SAVE MONEY...DRIVE BETTER

America's Best Warranty
10-Year/100,000-Mile
Powertrain Limited Warranty

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

to a true freshman, Pete Thomas.

"He knows all the calls, he's a real smart kid, and he's a competitor," said Pat Meyer, who doubles as CSU's offensive coordinator and offensive line coach.

Meyer said McDermott got a lot of practice reps the past three years, often with the second or third units.

"Seeing how I haven't played a game in three-and-a-half years, I think it's natural to be a bit nervous going in," McDermott said after coming off the practice field at CSU this week. "But I'm very confident in what our coaches have done, what they've taught us and what I've been able to learn since I've been here. So I'll carry that into the game and, hopefully, I'll be able to show everybody what I can do."

Leader in the middle

Centers locate the huddle and they're supposed to exert more than organizational leadership, making the blocking calls as they assess the defense in front of them. There's no substitute for on-field, in-game experience at the college level, but all those meetings, all the video, all those practice snaps can amount to a prep school.

Stevens' father, Ed, played at Air Force and is an Air Force pilot. Keenan turned down a scholarship offer to Portland State and decided to accept an offer from the CU staff to be an

invited walk-on for Dan Hawkins' first season as head coach in 2006.

"You only go to college once," he said. "I wanted to go to the highest competition, which was the Big 12."

Finally, in his fourth season, Stevens took over as the starter in Week 4 against West Virginia. "I knew if I kept putting in the work, putting in the time, that my time would come," he said.

Now he's part of an offensive line that because of injuries and other issues was considered to have underachieved last season, but seems potentially formidable this season, with guard Ryan Miller and tackle Nate Solder — also Colorado prep products — as the pro prospects.


Hawkins said Stevens "exemplifies what that offensive line should be about. He's kind of their leader. . . . Nate is very quiet and Ryan is, to some degree, as well. (Stevens) is just a dirt dog, he really is. The other guys kind of gravitate toward him that way and he exudes that whole blue-collar type of mentality."

The "dirt" reference comes with a secondary meaning, too, since Stevens is an anthropology major who wants to be part of archeological digs in Mayan ruins. "I'm hoping to get into that after football," he said.

Humbling times

CSU's McDermott played at Palm Beach Central

Advertisement



Eat Great, Lose Weight!

© 2009 eDiets.com, Inc. All rights reserved. epicurious is a TM of Conde Nast Digital. Redbook is a TM of Hearst Communication, Inc.

Call **1-888-378-3151**
and get a **FREE** week of meals plus
a **BONUS \$25 gift!**

eDiets
**fresh
prepared**
meal delivery

Rated #1 best-tasting
by epicurious.com
"Best bang for your buck!"
- Redbook

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

in Florida. His parents were both athletes at Ohio University, his father, Randy, in baseball; his mother, Johnnie, in basketball.

"My dad tells me the story," McDermott said. "They graduated on a Saturday, they were married on a Monday, and they were in Florida by Wednesday. My dad lived in Fort Lauderdale when he was 15 and loved it. . . . They both got jobs right before the end of college and went down to Florida."

McDermott made a handful of unofficial family visits to colleges but came to Fort Collins on an official visit in December 2006.

"I fell in love with the place," he said. "There was snow on the ground and I hadn't seen snow in, I like, 10 years. I loved the campus and the atmosphere."

Sitting behind Walter for three years, he said, "was very hard. I started every game from freshman through senior year in high school, and I came here and was behind this future NFL player. It's difficult, but it's a very humbling experience."

"You still learn a tremendous amount as a football player in college if you're not playing. But now that I'm getting the reps in practice against our 'ones', I realize there are things you need experience for, such as handling the speed of the game and reading blitzes on the fly, stuff like that."

It might seem a safe bet that neither McDermott nor Stevens will snap the ball early today.

They've shown how patient they can be.

Terry Frei: 303-954-1895 or tfrei@denverpost.com

Advertisement

PROTECT YOUR HOME

FREE Home Security System!

\$850 Value!

CALL NOW and receive a **FREE** wireless remote control with **PANIC BUTTON!**



1-877-246-7519

Mon-Fri 9am - 10pm - Sat 9am-7pm - Sun 11am - 6pm EST

At no cost to you for parts and activation with only a \$99 installation fee and the purchase of alarm monitoring services. Terms & Conditions apply.



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

cu football

CU-CSU game huge for Hawkins' career

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 09/04/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 09/04/2010 01:03:11 AM MDT

There is no need for talking around this subject.

Today's matchup against Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High will be the biggest game of Colorado coach Dan Hawkins' coaching career. Not just his CU career, but his professional career.

If Colorado, an 11 1/2-point favorite, loses, the heat surrounding Hawkins could turn into a blast furnace. Around CU, it's assumed Hawkins needs at least a winning season to keep his job, though athletic director Mike Bohn hasn't stated publicly a specific number of wins his coach needs.

Bufs fans, though, would be hard-pressed to look at the schedule and find six or seven victories if CU loses today, what with nonconference games against California and Georgia, and road

trips to Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska.

Colorado Football

[View slide show of CU-CSU football Sept. 4.](#)

[View slide show of Buffs WR Scotty McKnight.](#)

[View slide show of Buffs QB Tyler Hansen.](#)

[Preview CU's 2010 team, broken down by unit, including QBs, RBs and OLs.](#)

[View slide show of CU scrimmage at Folsom Field on Aug. 12.](#)

[Read a preseason Q&A with CU football coach Dan Hawkins.](#)

[Visit the CU Stats Page for boxscores, Big 12 standings, team leaders and more.](#)

[Find analysis, notes and buzz on the All Things Buffs blog.](#)

Through four years, Hawkins is 16-33, without a winning season.

But first things first. CU has legitimate reasons for optimism heading into Hawkins' fifth season. Offensively, the Buffs have a veteran line and an experienced, athletic quarterback — Tyler Hansen — throwing to a much higher caliber of wideout than in years past.

Advertisement

www.shortlineonline.com
580 S. Havana, Aurora
866-483-6176

SHORTLINE
HYUNDAI
SAVE MONEY...DRIVE BETTER

America's Best Warranty
10-Year/100,000-Mile
Powertrain Limited Warranty

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

"A coach is only as good as his talent," Han-sen said this week when asked about the importance of today's game, and this season, to Hawkins' career. "So if we go out there and lay an egg, yeah, people will look at him."

"But it's really on us. We have to go out there and play. Yes, he's making some calls. But we're the ones playing."

Added safety Ray Polk: "Whatever happens with Coach Hawk, either way, we have no control over it. So it's not going to do us any good to worry about it."

How did it get to this? Wasn't Hawkins considered the "next big thing" when he went 53-11 at Boise State?

Undoubtedly, coaching mistakes have been made, and the cupboard wasn't full when Hawkins replaced Gary Barnett. However, Hawkins did inherit players such as place-kicker Mason Crosby, linebackers Jordon Dizon and Brad Jones, cornerback Terrence Wheatley, offensive tackle Tyler Polumbus, offensive guard Brian Daniels, safety Ryan Walters and defensive linemen Abraham Wright and George Hypolite, all of whom could stand up to the best of the Big 12.

But Hawkins was also handed a roster that included glaring holes, none bigger than at quarterback, where CU has struggled to get quality play on a consistent basis and annually

ranks near the bottom of the Big 12 in points scored.

Depth has also been a huge problem, partially as a result of the inordinate number of players that have left Boulder under Hawkins' watch. Of the 37 high school players signed to the 2006 and 2007 recruiting classes, 12 have already left the program without completing their CU eligibility.

Player attrition is an NCAA-wide issue, but CU has had annual problems in maintaining its roster size at or near the 85 scholarship limit, which is vital to competing at the highest level. Players have left for a variety of reasons, including discontent over playing time, injuries or academic failings.

As for CU's on-field problems, none has received more attention than the struggles of quarterback Cody Hawkins, whom his father named the starter each of the previous three years. While fans blistered Cody when the Buffs struggled, it should be noted he ranks first in school history in touchdown passes (46) and is third in career passing yards with 5,862, trailing only Kordell Stewart and Joel Klatt.

And he's had big moments. In 2007, he engineered the fourth-quarter rally to beat third-ranked Oklahoma. He passed for two touchdowns in a 2008 upset of No. 21 West Virginia.

Trouble was, Cody Hawkins also made big mistakes and failed to hold onto the job the last

Advertisement



SAVE up to **64%**

Plus, get

3 FREE Gifts



Special Code: 45069ZWN

To Order: www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71 or call 1-877-586-4455

Print Powered By  **FormatDynamics™**

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

two seasons, as Hansen was inserted as the starter in midseason. And, perhaps more important, blue-chip quarterbacks may have shied away from CU because they figured it would be next-to-impossible to beat out a coach's son.

In retrospect, Dan Hawkins says he probably would not have brought Cody to Boulder because of the criticism his son has received.

"It wasn't fair to him," he said.

Dan Hawkins doesn't talk about his future. Through the preseason, he's expressed a guarded sense of optimism about his team's ability to win.

"I like these guys, I do," Hawkins said. "I think there's some talent. There's a little swagger there."

Can Hawkins turn things around and save his job? The odds may be against him but it's been done before.

A recent example: Arizona, where administrators showed patience with coach Mike Stoops, who was listed on every "hot seat" list of coaches in trouble two years ago. Stoops rewarded their faith by recording back-to-back eight-win seasons.

And then there was one Bill McCartney, the legendary CU coach who acknowledges he was close to losing his job when his Buffs learned

how to stand toe-to-toe with Nebraska and Oklahoma in the 1980s.

The clock is ticking for Hawkins. An all-out alarm will sound today if the Buffs lose.

"I don't really look at it as pressure, but it's a must-win, so I guess that's pressure," Hansen said. "If we can get a win, and then maybe win (next week) at Cal for a road win, finally, I think we can get this thing going, get some momentum.

"Coach Hawkins is always positive. This year, I think you'll see that positive attitude break out and get some wins."

Everyone at CU, most of all the coach, knows the stakes.

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com

A look at Hawkins' numbers

Coaching records

Career 16-33
 Big 12 10-22
 Home 12-12
 Road 4-21
 vs. Top 25 3-13
 Openers 2-2
 vs. CSU 2-2
 Biggest victory: Beating then-No. 3 Oklahoma at home in Hawkins' second season to open Big 12

Advertisement



Save \$26 a month
and lock in your price for ONE YEAR!
Switch today! 1-877-866-8603

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

play looked to be the spark to get the program going, but the Buffs are 11-21 since that win.

Biggest loss: Tough to pick one. Here are three to consider: The debut loss to Div. I-AA Montana State at home, the 58-0 loss at Missouri in 2008 and last year's 31-28 loss at No. 12 Oklahoma State after CU led 21-10 in the third quarter. *The Denver Post*

80 Percentage of winning seasons for the Buffaloes after they open with a victory

Advertisement

**PROTECT
YOUR HOME**

FREE Home Security System!
\$850 Value!

CALL NOW and receive a **FREE** wireless remote control with **PANIC BUTTON!**



1-877-246-7519
Mon-Fri 9am - 10pm - Sat 9am-7pm - Sun 11am - 6pm EST



At no cost to you for parts and activation with only a \$99 installation fee and the purchase of alarm monitoring services. Terms & Conditions apply.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

SEPTEMBER 3, 2010, 2:29 PM

CU's McKnight: Good start is the key to seasonBy **TOM KENSLER** |  No Comments

BOULDER — This is the final go around for CU senior wide receiver Scotty McKnight. He realizes that, especially what happened last season, there is no sense looking head.

"I've been really focused on winning that first game," McKnight said of Saturday's opener against CSU at Invesco Field at Mile High. "That's going to be huge for us. We have to start off the season on the right foot.

"Last year it was a case where we lost at home to Colorado State, a rival, and then in the same week we had to travel to Toledo and didn't play well there. Guys were looking at each other wondering what was going on. I don't think we ever recovered from that."

More from All Things Colorado Sports

- [Update: Ex-CU QB Bernard Jackson off to impressive start at CSU-Pueblo](#) ^[1]
- [CU's Stewart ready to play](#) ^[2]
- [CU preview: Coaching can always be the key to a season](#) ^[3]
- [CU's Harris-Tunks to make second start](#) ^[4]
- [Timing between Buff QBs and new WRs called 'good'](#) ^[5]

All Things Colorado Sports Recommends

- [Is it time to be concerned about Helton's back?](#) ^[6] (All Things Rockies)
- [Nuggets to sign George Karl's son, Coby](#) ^[7] (All Things Nuggets)
- [Jimenez leaves the park sick, hopes to start tomorrow](#) ^[8] (All Things Rockies)



ARTICLE PRINTED FROM ALL THINGS COLORADO SPORTS

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/03/cus-mcknight-good-start-is-the-key-to-season/12690/>

URLs in this post:

[1] Update: Ex-CU QB Bernard Jackson off to impressive start at CSU-Pueblo:

http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/05/update-ex-cu-qb-bernard-jackson-off-to-impressive-start-at-csu-pueblo/12715/?source=ARK_sports

[2] CU's Stewart ready to play: http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2009/09/16/cus-stewart-ready-to-play/?source=ARK_sports

SEPTEMBER 3, 2010, 3:34 PM

Timing between Buff QBs and new WRs called ‘good’

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER –Colorado wide receivers coach Robert Prince, whose job description also includes the title of passing game coordinator, said the timing between the quarterbacks and a revamped receiving corps is perhaps better than could be expected in such a short time.

Wideouts Travon Patterson, the transfer from Southern Cal, and Paul Richardson, the former UCLA commitment, did not start practicing with the team until into the second week of August camp.

“It is a little bit of a challenge,” Prince said of the timing issue between passers and receivers. “However, with the new guys, Travon and Paul, they’re both very smart. And they run really good routes.

“So I think the transition has been going really good.”

CU coach Dan Hawkins also said he has been impressed with the pitch-and-catch timing.

“Synching up the whole offense (is a challenge),” Hawkins added. “There’s a whole lot of little things that go into it.

More from All Things Colorado Sports

- [Update: Ex-CU QB Bernard Jackson off to impressive start at CSU-Pueblo](#) ^[1]
- [Former Nuggets assistant coach continues donation-only day \(with an Avalanche trip auction\) to honor 9/11 victims](#) ^[2]
- [Bad weekend for Rams, ex-Rams](#) ^[3]
- [No news is good news — Colorado remains fittest state](#) ^[4]
- [CU’s McKnight: Good start is the key to season](#) ^[5]

All Things Colorado Sports Recommends

- [New Nuggets are on Twitter](#) ^[6] (All Things Nuggets)
- [New Rockies caps for tomorrow](#) ^[7] (All Things Rockies)
- [Difference between Qwest and CenturyLink](#) ^[8] (Cover the Spread)



ARTICLE PRINTED FROM ALL THINGS COLORADO SPORTS

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/03/timing-between-buff-qbs-and-new-wrs-called-good/12693/>

URLs in this post:

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

Longmont, Colorado
Monday, September 06,
2010

Publish Date: 9/4/2010

Always Trying to Improve

By Brian Howell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Two things stick out immediately when you walk into the office of Dan Hawkins, the head football coach at the University of Colorado.

First, it looks like a living room — not an office — and the leather sofa and chair are quite inviting.

Second, the view of Folsom Field and the mountains behind it is spectacular.

It doesn't take long, however, to realize that the real attention getters in Hawkins' office are the books.

He has a shelf full of books. He has books laid out on his coffee table and books on his desk. He even has books freshly mailed to him.

Some of his favorite titles:

"Flawless Execution"

"The Winner's Brain"

"Today Matters"

"Peaks and Valleys"

Hawkins, 49, also has books written by well-known coaches Bill Walsh, Sean Payton and Urban Meyer.

Each one of them has been read by Hawkins, who soaks in the knowledge and wisdom each has to offer.

"You're always trying to get better, and you're always trying to build on that," Hawkins said of what he gets out of the books. "I also want to give it to our guys (on the team). I don't read much fiction. The stuff I read, I want it to bear fruit on our football team, I want it to bear fruit in our guys' lives and I want to keep stoking the fire that way."

The books, as well as his own life experiences, have helped Hawkins develop a set of beliefs and a set of morals.

Even as his football team at Colorado has struggled under his watch, he has kept the fire burning, and he remains firm in his beliefs, steadfast in his morals.

"I always feel a tremendous amount of pressure to do things right — to stick to your morals, to stick your values, to stick to your guns, to stick to those things you believe in," he said. "That's where, to me, the pressure comes. It's not the outside stuff."



University of Colorado head football coach Dan Hawkins has a 16-33 record with the Buffs. He is pleased, however, with the work he has done off the field with the CU football program. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

Today, Hawkins will lead CU into Invesco Field at Mile High to take on Colorado State in the season opener for both teams. He brings with him a 16-33 career record and a whole lot of heat from CU fans who want him to win or be fired.

“Whether it’s fair or not, coaches are judged by the results on the scoreboard,” CU athletic director Mike Bohn said. “We’re hopeful that this year will show the work and energy he has put into this program.”

The lack of wins has made Hawkins’ tenure “unfulfilling,” he said. But coaching football is more to him than just winning games.

Coming to Boulder

In 2005, Hawkins completed his fifth season as the head coach at Boise State.

The Broncos went 9-4 that season, wrapping up a tremendous five-year run that saw them go 53-11. At the time, Hawkins was one of the hottest coaches in America.

It would have been very easy for him to stay in Boise and continue winning. Instead, he was courted by Colorado, which was coming off a 7-6 season and was surrounded by turmoil.

“To me, the life outside the fire is safe, and it’s real cozy,” Hawkins said. “Everybody’s got their own (thing), but for me, that’s not me. I want to know when it’s all said and done, you didn’t shrink back.

“I just kind of double-dog dare myself and I go, ‘I’m not going to not do something because I’m afraid.’ If you’re not going to go because you’re afraid, you better check yourself. That’s kind of how I’m wired.”

When Hawkins arrived here, he knew life wasn’t going to be as easy as it was in Boise.

“One of the reasons I came here is that I knew it was going to be tough — I did,” he said. “I knew coming here that this place had tremendous potential. I knew it also had tremendous issues and was going to be a real test for me.

“To me, it’s always about the next challenge and trying to ply yourself and push yourself. I obviously knew it was not going to be a piece of cake.”

It certainly has not been.

Rough road

On Sept. 2, 2006, Hawkins led the Buffaloes onto the field for the first time. He and the Buffs walked off the Folsom Field turf that day with a stunning 19-10 loss to Montana State, a Division I-AA school.

Hawkins and the Buffs lost their first six games in 2006, finishing the year at 2-10.

In 2007, CU went 6-6 in the regular season and qualified for the Independence Bowl. It lost that game to Alabama to finish 6-7.

After a 5-7 mark in 2008, the Buffs failed miserably short of their high expectations in 2009, finishing 3-9.

A year ago, the Buffs were surprised by CSU in the opener in Boulder, losing 23-17. The next week, they were routed by Toledo. Those were games that many had penciled in as wins.

Following the Toledo loss, the Hawkins watch began. Fans wanted him fired, and there were plenty of rumors that he would be.

For what it’s worth to fans, Hawkins is as frustrated as anybody — and probably more so. Before coming to CU, he had 10 years of head coaching experience and had never had a losing season.

“Well, I’m a bad loser,” he said. “I’m the worst. Ask my wife. I hate losing. As a player and as a coach or any kind of competitor, I don’t think you ever want to get in a situation where you lose a game and you’re going, ‘Well, all right.’ You’re not like that.”

“Clearly, you want to win games and you want all that stuff to happen and come forward for you. You just have to keep going back to the process.”

Hawkins, however, insists he will never stray from his values and morals in order to win games.

Schools all over the country, from Southern Cal to North Carolina, are being investigated or getting in trouble for NCAA violations this summer. Colorado has been a clean program under Hawkins.

“One of the reasons I did come here is we want to win a Big 12 championship, you want to win the national championship,” he said. “You want to win the ultimate prize from that standpoint. But you need to be able to feel good about it and not going, ‘Well, OK, we won, but how many corners did we cut?’”

“All those things mean a lot to me, too.”

Hawk’s success

Bohn was asked if CU is pleased with what Hawkins has done to this point.

“Yeah, we’re pleased with the progress the program has shown on all fronts,” Bohn said. “We’re pleased with the improvements we’ve made with facilities and infrastructure of the program, and a lot of that credit goes to Dan.”

“We just all recognize that the scoreboard is one area that we have to now demonstrate that all the positive attributes produce some wins.”

Hawkins is disappointed in the lack of success on the field. But he could not be more proud of what has taken place off the field.

“Internally, we’ve done a lot of really awesome things, with how we do things and our philosophy with the kids,” he said. “All of that stuff is really well entrenched. Where we are academically, with our whole culture and attitude and the way kids approach that and do that, it’s been very, very good.”

While fans and boosters may want to see Hawkins go, plenty of his players have loved playing for the man.

“I wouldn’t want anybody else out here leading us,” senior kicker Aric Goodman said.

Senior cornerback Jalil Brown said: “I think he’s an awesome coach. He’s energetic. He’s constantly in our ears. I think he does a great job of showing he cares for everybody. I think he does a great job as a head coach.”

Hawkins’ job as head coach includes much more than teaching young men how to play football. He’s made tough decisions in getting rid of some players who didn’t follow rules. He’s also focused on preparing his players for life after college.

“What we’re doing is trying to teach young men how to be successful — in football, in life, all that stuff,” he said. “We help them manage their money and their checkbooks. It’s like a personal success seminar. It really is.”

“(Football) is blocking and tackling, but it’s all this other stuff. You don’t want a kid leaving your football program that all he knows is football.”

Hawkins’ commitment to that part of the job is off the charts, Bohn said.

“I believe Dan is working with all of his heart and soul and effort that he has to build a program that represents all the right things about successful programs,” Bohn said. “It hasn’t manifested itself on the scoreboard yet, but indications

are that he is clearly headed in the right direction.”

Focus on the family

This is Hawkins’ 15th year as a head coach — including five at Willamette University in Salem, Ore., and five at Boise State — and he’s got several seasons as an assistant under his belt.

For much of his life as a coach, he’s also had a family. He and his wife, Misti, have four children: daughters Brittany and Ashley and sons Drew and Cody.

Brittany and Ashley are both married, while Drew and Cody both attend CU. Cody, of course, is the Buffaloes’ backup quarterback and has started 28 games at CU.

Throughout his coaching career, Hawkins has worked hard to keep his family life separate.

“I really tried to work at going home and being Dad,” he said of his time in Boise. “I really had to work at it. There’s a lot of families burned in football and a lot of marriages burned in football, and I didn’t want that.”

So far, so good. Hawkins credits Misti for helping him to keep football in its place.

“That’s always been a very grounding influence,” Hawkins said. “I come from great parents, and she comes from a great family. That’s just kind of who we are.”

Hawkins’ focus on his family is evident in how he runs his football team. He views the Buffs as his second family.

“Football coaches talk about their football team being a family,” he said. “If you can’t run your own family, how can you have a family on your football team?”

Moving forward

Because Hawkins views his team as a family, he wants to see them succeed.

He is proud of what CU has done off the field during his tenure, but he’s well aware that wins are what matter to most fans.

They matter to him, too. He admits he thought the Buffs would have more wins at this point.

“You don’t envision having a record like that,” he said of his 16-33 mark.

Despite his losing record at CU, Hawkins said he does not regret leaving Boise State — which is 48-5 since he left — because the experience in Boulder has been good for him.

“I can tell you this for a fact: I’m a better coach right now than I’ve ever been in my life. Without a doubt,” he said. “With everything — leadership, organization, planning, evaluation, implementation — all of that. Without a doubt.”

The question is: How much longer will Hawkins be CU’s coach? Although he has three seasons left on his contract, many believe he has to produce a winning season this fall to keep his job for 2011.

There is some speculation that if he gets off to another miserable start, he could be fired during the season.

Bohn doesn’t deny that winning needs to happen. But he wouldn’t put a number on the games Hawkins has to win this year.

“Everybody wants a number (of wins), and there isn’t one,” he said. “I believe that ultimately, the fans are focused on wins and losses and the competitiveness of the program. Obviously, that is important.”

There is a firm belief within the program that this can be a winning season for the Buffs — and Hawkins.

“I believe this year will be Dan’s best team that he’s had,” Bohn said. “It’s a molding of a great piece of clay. He’s molded it with his hands and his mind and his creativity.”

Hawkins believes in his team as well. But he also insists he is not worried about his job.

“You don’t get up and go to work because you’re afraid you’re going to get fired,” he said. “That’s not what motivates you.

“In this profession, (being fired) is the nature of it. There’s so many transitory things that go on in this profession that you just kind of keep your head down and just keep plowing.”

Whether or not he can win at CU remains to be seen. But he will continue reading his books. He’ll continue holding onto his values. And he’ll continue to try to build a winning team through those values.

“There’s no question you’ve got to have (talented) players,” he said. “But then you’ve got to have the other part of it, too. I believe immensely in that formula, because I’ve just seen it played out too many times on teams I’ve coached and teams I’ve been with. Our livelihood is studying that stuff and living that stuff.

“You want to do the very best job you can. You want to pour yourself into it. You don’t want to cut corners, and you don’t want to cheat or be unethical and do all that stuff. Then, the judges are going to judge. You take it for what it is, and you move on.”

Brian Howell can be reached at bhowell@times-call.com. Read his Buffs blog at www.timescall.com/blogs/howell.

Rams see rivalry game as perfect start to season

BY KELLY LYELL • KellyLyell@coloradoan.com •
September 4, 2010

Zac Pauga was thinking about today's season-opening football game back in February, when he and his CSU teammates were getting up well before sunrise to participate in their grueling offseason "mat drills."

He still was thinking about it through 15 spring practices, two months of summer conditioning work and player-led practices and a month of preseason practices.

For Ricky Brewer, the wait's been even longer - 21 months. That's when he learned he would miss the entire 2009 season under NCAA rules after testing positive for marijuana following the 2008 New Mexico Bowl.

It's time, the two Colorado State University seniors from Denver said, to put the nine-game losing streak that ended last season to rest and start anew.

And Pauga, a fourth-year starter at fullback, can't think of a better way to begin the season than facing the University of Colorado today at Denver's Invesco Field at Mile High.

"It's been a long summer thinking about the year we had last year, and I've been champing at the bit to get out there and play those guys," Pauga said Wednesday, the last day CSU players are available for interviews on game weeks.

Steve Fairchild, CSU's third-year coach, said he's not talking about the losing streak. His players know it's there, and there's no reason to dwell upon it, he said.

But he can't think of a better way to open the season than playing CU in Denver, where an expected crowd of more than 60,000 - divided almost equally between supporters of each team - is expected.

"There's no question I like having it first," Fairchild said. "I think it's unique, not having it at the end of the season. I think it looms over your head the entire offseason that you're going to open up

against a rival and play in an atmosphere like this, so I really like having it the first game."

It's the first college game, period, for CSU's 18-year-old quarterback, Pete Thomas, a true freshman from El Cajon, Calif.

The Rams also are breaking in four new starters on the offensive line and a new crop of receivers while facing a CU defense that returns seven starters from the team the Rams beat 23-17 last year in Boulder, ushering in disappointing 3-9 seasons for both squads.

Fairchild, a former CSU quarterback, said he's confident Thomas has what it takes to lead the Rams this season, but he's not sure how he'll respond the first time out. He's done everything he can, though, to get the four-star recruit out of El Cajon, Calif., ready.

"He's put together some good practices, but practice is practice," Fairchild said of Thomas. "It's hard on true freshmen at any position, let alone quarterback, so we'll just kind of toss him out there to the wolves and see what happens."

CU counters with junior Tyler Hansen, a quarterback who has been the starter at the end of the past two seasons but not the beginning and has yet to face the Rams. He's got seven other returning starters to work with against a CSU defense that has seven starters back and Brewer, one of the team's leading tacklers in 2007 and 2008.

Advertisement

USA TODAY
AutoPilot 

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by: 

SEE HOW IT WORKS »

Print Powered By  **FormatDynamics™**

"This series is tied 2-2 since I've been in college, so this is kind of a winner-take-all kind of thing," Brewer said. "And what could be better for my first game back than for it to be against our rival."



[Purchase this Photo](#)

CSU fans celebrate the Rams beating CU 23-17 in Boulder last year. The two teams meet today at Mile High at Invesco Field in Denver. (Rich Abrahamson /The Coloradoan file photo)

> **Next up:** CU vs. CSU, noon today, Invesco Field at Mile High, Denver
> **TV/radio:** mtn./KLZ (AM 560), KCOL (AM 600), KOA (AM 850)

Advertisement



Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslike.me
where Local moms meet

Print Powered By  **FormatDynamics**

One frosh QB ready to replace the other

BY KELLY LYELL • KellyLyell@coloradoan.com •
September 4, 2010

If freshman quarterback Pete Thomas struggles with the pressure of playing his first college football game today in front of more than 60,000 fans in the Rocky Mountain Showdown, CSU has a backup plan.

Nico Ranieri said he's been preparing all week as if he's the starter and that he'll be ready to go should the need arise.

Of course, he, too, is just a freshman who never has played in a college football game.

"Nico's got the personality that he'll be ready," said Daren Wilkinson, the Rams' quarterbacks coach. "I'm confident in that. He's done a nice job, and he's picked it up these last couple practices."

Ranieri, a 6-foot-2, 204-pounder from Orlando, Fla., was the Rams' scout-team quarterback last fall while sitting out his redshirt season.

"I'm ready to play," Ranieri said after a practice earlier this week. "When you're the backup, one play and you can be in there, so I'm just preparing myself as if I'm the starter, so if my number's called, I can go in there and help produce for the team."

Junior Klay Kubiak, the Rams' backup quarterback in 2008 who missed all of last season while recovering from shoulder surgery, also is available to play today, Fairchild said.

> FREE TV - The mtn., which is televising today's game, is being offered free this weekend to all Comcast cable subscribers in Colorado. Any Comcast customer with a set-top box capable of tuning in to Channel 411 should be able to view the game, as well as pregame and postgame shows. The free preview runs through noon Monday, said Hayne Ellis, a spokesman for the network.

The mtn. also is available on DirecTV for customers with the "Choice" packages and above in Colorado and nationwide as part of the company's "SportsPack" on Channel 611. The mtn. is not available on Dish Network.

Customers with high-definition service through Comcast will be able to watch the telecast beginning with the pregame show at 11 a.m. on Channel 948. The HD broadcast on DirectTV will be available on Channel 616-1.

> SPECIAL-TEAMERS RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIPS - Scott Zick, a senior out of Fort Collins High School, and Derek Good, a junior from Berthoud, both recently were awarded scholarships for the season. Zick and Good have been special-teams regulars as walk-ons for the Rams for the past two seasons.

> FOR OPENERS - CSU is 57-53-1 in season-opening games, while CU is 75-40-5.

> SERIES - CU leads the all-time series 59-20-2, and is 5-4 in games played in Denver. CSU won last year's game in Boulder, 23-17. Eight of the past nine games have been decided by seven or fewer points.

> NEXT UP - CSU's next opponent, Nevada, opened its season Thursday night with a 49-24 home win over Eastern Washington. CSU and Nevada play at 8:30 p.m. next Saturday in Reno. CU travels to Berkeley, Calif., to play California next Saturday.

Advertisement

America's Best Warranty

**10-Year/100,000-Mile
Powertrain Limited Warranty**

SAVE MONEY...DRIVE BETTER

**SHORTLINE
HYUNDAI**

www.shortlineonline.com

**580 S. Havana, Aurora
866-483-6176**

Print Powered By  **FormatDynamics™**