



Mike Iltis (64) can play either center or left guard; he's currently at the latter position and is expected to start Saturday at Cal.
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



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

Brooks: Iltis Opens The Way He Ended Against Huskers

BOULDER - He isn't tinkering for the sake of it, but Denver Johnson has no qualms about mixing and matching his Colorado offensive linemen until the right combination is apparent to him - and the guys in the backfield.

In Johnson's Week 2 lineup, junior Mike Iltis is expected to open at left guard in place of junior Ethan Adkins. Iltis' most recent start at the position was last November against Nebraska, but he played extensively in CU's opening win against Colorado State and graded out well enough to merit a start Saturday at California.

"It's not that we've discounted Ethan in any way, shape or form," Johnson said. "We want to be fair and reward performance and we felt like Mike maybe performed a little better in the Colorado State game."

Iltis, a 6-foot-3, 290-pounder, played 35 snaps to Adkins' 25 and earned a 91 percent grad to

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Adkins' 80. Johnson's grading system is based on number of finishes/knockdown blocks, touchdown blocks, quarterback sacks/pressures allowed and penalties drawn.

"I think I definitely had a good game, but there's a lot of technique to get better at," Iltis said. "I honestly don't think it was as good as I played against Nebraska, but I think there are things I've gotten better at."

During his CU career, Iltis has moved between center and guard, starting three games in 2009 at center before opening at guard in the finale. A sprained ankle in last year's CSU game hobbled him in early season play. But he finished strong and caught Johnson's eye against the Cornhuskers.

Johnson called Iltis "a quality player" who showed up particularly well on the Buffs' 82-yard scoring drive last weekend against the Rams. The march opened with five consecutive runs by tailback Rodney "Speedy" Stewart and was easily the Buffs' most consistent offensive series of the afternoon.

"From a total offense standpoint, to go 82 yards was impressive - and Mike was a contributor to that," Johnson said.

Iltis said he entered preseason camp knowing the competition at left guard would be keen: "But I felt like if I had the opportunity to get in there and take advantage, I'd have a chance to make it into the starting group.

"I believe we've got a good group of backups we can rotate without skipping a major beat - and that's a good thing because you never know when you're going to need somebody to step up. That's important for me and everybody else. Whether you're starting or not, you've got to be ready to go."

The Buffs accumulated 307 yards in total offense against the Rams, but 115 yards on the ground wasn't as high a number as they anticipated. Overall, Johnson characterized his group as hit and miss. The misses: the O-line allowed one of quarterback Tyler Hansen's two sacks and was flagged for three false starts and a tripping penalty.

"That's disappointing to you; you'd like to eliminate that," Johnson said. "But overall, it was a good start - a lot of good but a lot yet to improve on. We want progress and improvement certainly. I still think we've got a long way to be what we want to be as a unit."

Iltis doesn't believe plugging in a new starter this early will disrupt any continuity. To the contrary, he believes the rotation used in the opener "gives the defense a different look. Every guy has different things they're good at . . . When you're switching it up, it keeps a defense on edge.

"It can give us an advantage when we're rotating, as long as we continue to realize when you're in there you've got to know your assignment 100 percent, block it 100 percent and trust the guy next to you. That's what's important; when you get in you've got to know what to do."

Johnson used eight offensive linemen in the opener, but likely will go with seven or fewer at Cal, which he said will show his O-line a "very athletic, long, lean and quick" defensive front. The Golden Bears usually employ an odd front - a noseguard, a pair of defensive ends and outside linebackers. But the most prominent defender is senior inside linebacker Mike Mohamed, a preseason All-Pac-10 selection and second-team *Playboy* All-American.

"Overall, their athleticism really stands out," Johnson said.

Iltis concurred: "They're definitely no CSU, and I don't mean that with any disrespect. But they have strong, fast, very technical guys on the D-line. It's obvious they've practiced their pass rush. They're definitely in unison; they're like clockwork.

"And they're bigger, stronger and faster than CSU. We're big enough, strong enough and fast enough to block these guys - it just comes down to the technique. We've got to dial in to the technique and focus, make sure we're doing everything to a 'T.' The slightest mistake can leave you on the ground giving up a big play."

AIR IT OUT: The Buffs' past two days of practice haven't been hampered by sometimes smoky conditions due to the Fourmile Canyon fire.

Coach Dan Hawkins said an air quality test revealed "the air is better here than in a lot of metropolitan areas around the country - even with the smoke A lot of these guys are used to the air not being too clean."

NO FAVORITES: Hawkins was born and raised in Pac-10 country (Northern California) and visited Cal's Memorial Stadium several springs ago to observe spring drills. He also has watched a couple of games in Berkeley.

In his youth, however, he didn't wear the colors of any Pac-10 team - for a good reason.

"We were so out in the woods that we didn't have a (favorite) team," he said. "My team was the Big Valley Cardinals. Back in the olden days, you'd get one college game (on TV) on Saturday, and typically that would be a UCLA or USC game - or somebody back east."

BUFF BITS: Five Cal players made their first collegiate starts last week in a 52-3 rout of Cal-Davis - Hawkins' alma mater. Four true freshmen also played for the Golden Bears, who also had 17 other players see their first collegiate action Hawkins said CU's entire linebacking corps played well against CSU: "Everybody did . . . (but) it all starts up front and I thought guys (in the D-line) did a good job neutralizing and getting in the gaps . . . if your front line gets knocked around, then it's tough for your linebackers to do anything." Eight walk-ons have joined the CU squad since the fall semester started Freshman receiver Paul Richardson made one catch for 11 yards in the opener. Hawkins said receivers coach Robert Prince is "just trying to get him in there in spots where he can be successful and knows what he's doing, knows all the adjustments and can be confident in what he's doing." Cal has averaged 8.4 wins a season in its first eight years under coach Jeff Tedford. The Bears' victory against UCD was Tedford's 68th at Cal, putting him in third place (68-35) on the school's all-time win list.

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SHOW MENU



SPORTS

CU Buffs to face Darian Hagan Jr. at Cal

By John Henderson

The Denver Post

The Denver Post

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

BOULDER — Darian Hagan Sr. sees a lot of himself in Darian Hagan Jr. For every Colorado fan watching the Buffaloes' football game at California on Saturday, they too will see a lot of Darian Sr. — every time Darian Jr. takes off his helmet on the Cal sideline.

Folks, his son isn't just a chip off the old block. Hagan Jr., a California senior cornerback, looks like the same block. Same round, cherubic face. Same scruffy chin hair. Same 180-, 185-pound frame. At 6-feet, Darian Jr. is 2 inches taller. That's about it.

"I see everything," said his dad, Colorado's running backs coach. "From my walk to my competitiveness, he has it all."

Darian Sr., who helped quarterback Colorado to its only national championship in football, isn't just talking as a proud papa whose son happened to follow in his footsteps. He's talking as a dad who watched his son carve his own path, one blocked by the emotional gut punch of an infant daughter's near death.

Darian Jr.'s daughter, 2-year-old Kaiyana, is fine after beating cancer. So this season Darian Jr.'s new mental stability earned him his starting job back across the line from where his father became famous.

Darian Sr. doesn't know what his son went through, but he knows the anguish of being a young father. He had Darian Jr. when he was a freshman at Colorado. He almost moved back to his native Los Angeles to raise a family. Instead, he stayed and his son made frequent visits. In his dad's footsteps in Boulder, at age 1, Darian Jr. took his first steps.

"I was running before I was walking," Darian Jr. said in a phone interview. "I guess I saw him and started running toward him."

Yes, Darian Sr. knew he had a football player on his hands. Turns out, though, his son wanted nothing to do with playing quarterback. In the sprawling Pop Warner leagues in Los Angeles, the young Darian found his niche in the secondary.

Funny, that's where Darian Sr. found his in pro ball, bouncing around the Canadian Football League as a cornerback. One time, when his son was 7, Darian Sr. came home during the offseason and asked his son who was his idol.

"Deion Sanders," he deadpanned.

"Then I knew he was going to be a DB," Darian Sr. said.

And what a DB he became. In 2005, in his senior year of high school, he led Crenshaw, only about 15 minutes from his dad's alma mater at Locke, to its first city championship.

You could package his fourth quarter of the title game and make a Gil Thorpe cartoon out of it. At the L.A. Coliseum, with both sides packed from field to rim, he helped beat powerful Taft High of Woodland Hills with an 85-yard touchdown reception and a clinching interception, the state-record 25th of his career.

And his father beamed from the stands.

"It was like a fairy tale game," Darian Jr. said.

The honors poured in. He was named first-team all-state. Rivals.com ranked him the No. 5 cornerback in the country. And he just happened to be in his dad's recruiting area.

Hey, Darian, new CU coach Dan Hawkins asked him, know any good cornerbacks in Los Angeles?

"I tried to recruit him here," he said. "Mama outrecluted me."

Darian's mother wanted him to go to UCLA, where Eric Bieniemy, Hagan's tailback during that magical 1990 national title season, recruited him. But Bieniemy soon after left for the Minnesota Vikings, and USC had recruited a dozen five-star recruits. Meanwhile, California was only one year removed from a 10-2 season.

"I wanted to go somewhere else and do my own thing," Darian Jr. said. "I would've been in his shadow even if I did make some things happen."

He was on his way as a sophomore, tying the Cal record for pass breakups with 18. But last fall, tragedy hit. During a routine checkup, doctors diagnosed Kaiyana with Wilms' tumor, a form of kidney cancer. With her in Los Angeles, Darian Jr. had an awful season in Berkeley. He lost his starting job and was suspended one game for academic issues, yet he never told a soul the source of his slump.

"Out here and being young, I didn't know how to react to what was going on," he said. "It was pretty overwhelming. I tried to hide it the best I could. In the end, it didn't really help me."

But by May, she had beaten it. Her dad could tell. One day doing pushups back home, he turned and saw her doing the same right next to him. Now he's back in the Bears' starting lineup and ready to face Colorado's new fleet of fast wide receivers.

"He's really good," Darian Sr. said of his son. "He has really, really good instincts. He's cat quick. He has long arms. And he can run."

Sound familiar?

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CU BRIEFS

CU's Sandersfeld draws first start at Cal

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

BOULDER — Travis Sandersfeld will hear something Saturday he never has before in his college football career: "Starting on defense for Colorado . . ." And then his name.

"Growing up in Colorado, I always dreamed of being a starter here," Sandersfeld said. "This is my time. So I've just got to do the best I can do."

The junior will start at nickel back when CU plays Saturday at Cal. The Hugo native took over the nickel back duties not long into the season opener against Colorado State after starter Parker Orms suffered a season-ending knee injury.

"(Sandersfeld) played great," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "He's a very steady player and he does a nice job, and he's been in the mix at safety too. This day and age, everybody wants everything to happen overnight and 'I want to start today and I want to play right now.' That's great, but sometimes it takes a little while. All he does is show up and work, and make plays and be humble."

Sandersfeld, a walk-on who graduated first in his class at Limon, would have preferred to have gained the starter's job without the misfortune of another.

"I hate to see Parker go down. That's a bad deal," said Sandersfeld (6-feet, 205 pounds). "It's a little different mind-set now, getting a few more reps, but really it's mostly the same in practice."

Sandersfeld intercepted a pass and had five tackles in the win against CSU.

"I made some mistakes (Saturday) that need to be corrected," Sandersfeld said, "but I made some plays and was pleased for the first time coming out."

Many in Sandersfeld's family will make the trip to California to see his first start.

"I'm blessed with the opportunity I've got and just have to keep going and give all I have to give," he said.

Clean air.

After Wednesday morning's two-hour practice, Hawkins was asked whether any restrictions had been placed on the workouts because of the smoke from the nearby Fourmile Canyon wildfire.

"You know, actually we ran an air-quality (test, on Tuesday)," Hawkins said. "And the air

was better here than in a lot of metropolitan areas around the country, even with the smoke.

"We talk to the docs about it. If you have an asthmatic guy, you have to keep an eye on him. But nobody (has had any problems)."

Footnotes.

Colorado has lost 12 straight true road games and has dropped 13 in a row outside Colorado. Quarterback Tyler Hansen said he's growing more than tired of quiet trips home after road losses. "I'll tell you what, that plane ride home is no fun," Hansen said. . . . Hawkins said "about eight guys, roughly" have been added as walk-ons after the season opener.

Adrian Dater and Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

SEPTEMBER 9, 2010, 10:00 AM

CU frosh WR to get more opportunities vs. Cal?

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER – After Colorado receiver Paul Richardson earned almost folk-hero status among his teammates during August scrimmages with circus catches and nifty running in the open field, the true freshman caught just one pass – for 11 yards – Saturday in the 24-3 victory over Colorado State.

I asked CU coach Dan Hawkins if Richardson, a native Californian, might see more action this weekend in the road game against the Cal Bears.

“Yeah. We’ll continue to work him in there,” Hawkins replied. “We’re just trying to make sure we get him in spots where he can be successful and knows what he is doing, where he knows all the adjustments and has some confidence in what he’s doing.

“There’s a fine line there in how much they can handle,” Hawkins added. “It’s not just that you don’t want to put them in a bad spot. You want to make sure they’re functional in what we’re doing as well.”

My take: Look for Richardson to play a more visible role in CU’s offensive game plan this week. However, I’d guess the majority of the third-down passes will be directed at more experienced receivers. I can’t blame coaches for that, even as much as I’d like to see Richardson get opportunities to strut his stuff.

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

SEPTEMBER 8, 2010, 2:58 PM

CU's Hawkins grew up fan of his HS team, not Cal

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

BOULDER — The University of California was the closest Pac-10 school to where Dan Hawkins grew up, in the logging country of far Northern California. But the Buffs coach said he was not particularly a fan of the Cal Bears, who are CU's opponent on Saturday in Berkeley.

The area high school, Big Valley High of Bieber, Calif., was the big thing in his life.

"We were so out in the woods, you didn't have a (college) team," Hawkins told reporters Wednesday after practice. "My team was the Big Valley Cardinals.

"Back in the old days, you'd get one college game (on TV) on Saturday. And typically, usually at that time it would be a UCLA or USC game, or somebody back East."

Hawkins has been to Cal's Memorial Stadium.

"I was there for string ball a few years ago and been there for at least a couple of games; it's been maybe seven or eight years ago," he said.

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[1] CU's Hawkins not yet concerned with Pac-10:

http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2010/09/07/cus-hawkins-not-yet-concerned-with-pac-10/12763/?source=ARK_sports

Switch to defense pays off for Pericak, CU Buffs

Tackle teaming up with Cunningham to form backbone of defense

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 09/08/2010 06:53:41 PM MDT

The contributions made by defensive tackles on the football field often go unnoticed or underappreciated. Colorado's unheralded duo of Curtis Cunningham and Will Pericak seem to prefer it that way.

They were well on their way to a solid day stuffing the run and pressuring the passer last week in the season opener against Colorado State. Standard stuff that would earn them slaps on the back from teammates and coaches, but generally doesn't make headlines.

Then Pericak had to go and block a field goal.

The big play earned the sophomore from Boulder High School the weekly award from coaches for special teams play and it also meant suffering through interviews.

Pericak joined the program as a tight end but only spent three practices at the position before switching to defense two years ago.

He has come a long way.

"He has done a nice job. He is extremely tough, he is extremely strong," coach Dan Hawkins said. "He is one of those guys on your defensive line that you may look at and go, 'Well, I didn't see him with any sacks.' But he takes on a tremendous amount of double teams in there and holds his ground.

"On running plays, those guys try to fit it exactly right. He and Curtis fit that thing almost perfect every single time. So you feel good that they are going to cancel their gap, and get in their gap and be where they're supposed to be."

Pericak and Cunningham played next to each other throughout last season. It was the second year of major playing time for Cunningham and the first for Pericak. They took some lumps but also enjoyed some successes, particularly as the season wore on. The chemistry between them continues to develop.

"I feel like we trust one another and we don't have to over play to compensate for the other one," Cunningham said. "We know what the other guy is doing and I feel confident in him."

They are quickly becoming the backbone of a defense that is charged this week with stopping a potent California offense on the road in Berkeley. The Bears feature a senior quarterback in Kevin Riley with 40 touchdown passes and more than 5,000 yards passing to his credit.

Cunningham said he goes into games now not having to worry about anything but his assignments. He said he noticed Pericak had put most of his rookie mistakes behind him by the time October arrived last season, and he has improved much more in the past year. "I am a ton more comfortable. It is a huge difference from last year to this year," Pericak said. "I know the defense, I know how to play the position, what to expect. I am really kind of figuring it out."

Colorado defensive line coach Romeo Bandison was somewhat spoiled during his first three years in Boulder. He inherited veteran linemen such as Abraham Wright, Brandon Nicolas and George Hypolite.

Nicolas and Hypolite played next to each other in the middle of the defense for three seasons. The more Pericak and Cunningham play, the more they are beginning to remind coaches of the good old days.

"I think those two guys, just because they played together last year and started all those games, I think they kind of know each other well," Bandison said. "They know how to communicate. A look will get it done rather than having to talk and

signal."

While Hawkins compared Pericak to Nicolas this week, Bandison stopped short of comparing his current pair of tackles to his former stalwarts.

"Last year they weren't quite like those two," Bandison said. "We're getting more like it now."

Notable

Hawkins said eight new walk-ons have been added to the roster. One of those players is former Mullen High School running back Josh Ford, who said during the summer that he planned to join the program after originally attending Kansas State. ... Hawkins said the poor air quality in Boulder from the Fourmile Fire hasn't affected practices this week. "Actually we ran an air quality deal and the air was better here than a lot of metropolitan areas around the country even with the smoke," Hawkins said.

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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, September 09,
2010

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Buffs hope to utilize Stewart

By Brian Howell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — During the first week of the college football season, three Big 12 running backs topped the 200-yard mark.

That made the 67 yards by Colorado's Rodney Stewart look rather pedestrian. Not that Stewart minds.

"They had good games," Stewart said. "I'm sure I'm going to have mine.

"As long as we're winning, I don't really care too much about what my stats are looking like. I'm just trying to better the team."

Although Stewart didn't have the statistical start that some of his Big 12 mates did, his opening week was solid.

"I think I had a pretty good game," he said.

On his 16 carries in the 24-3 win over Colorado State, Stewart averaged 4.2 yards. That's right in line with the 4.1 he averaged a year ago.

The slow pace of the game limited Stewart's carries a bit, but CU running backs coach Darian Hagan was pleased with Stewart's start.

"What I saw in him, I hadn't seen in the last two years," Hagan said. "In the past, he's been guessing. Now he's understanding our scheme and the basic blocking of it and he's getting downhill."

The Buffs began the CSU game concentrating on the passing game, with a few Stewart carries sprinkled in.

Stewart's best stretch of the game came when CU handed him the ball five straight times to open the second quarter. He had 33 yards on those five carries.

"I don't try to tread on (offensive coordinator Eric) Kiesau's territory a whole bunch, but I was pretty adamant on the headphones that our O-line and backs needed an opportunity to feel it and kind of get going," CU head coach Dan Hawkins said of that stretch of plays. "I think they were feeling it at that point."

Overall, it wasn't a bad game for Stewart. And, Hagan said it could have been better.

Hagan listed four plays in particular in which Stewart left yards on the field. On two of those, Stewart outran his blockers and into trouble, including one where Hagan said, "he got about eight yards and he probably could have got about 30 yards."

Stewart could have an opportunity to have a big game on Saturday at Cal.

“This week, I think we’re going to have to get the ball in his hands,” Hagan said.

Stewart isn’t the only ball carrier the Buffs will rely on, however.

True freshman Justin Torres had 26 yards on five late carries against CSU, and Hawkins said, “Of all the guys we have, he might be the smoothest zone runner.”

Junior Brian Lockridge (four carries for six yards) could also see an expanded role.

“I think B-Lock probably got underutilized in the game,” Hawkins said.

NO CONCERN: While St. Vrain high schools continue to postpone outdoor events because of the smoke from the Fourmile Canyon Fire, the Buffs continue to practice outside.

CU’s practice field is located just below the mountain where the fire is burning. Billowing smoke could be seen from the field and slurry bombers routinely fly above the field.

“Actually we ran an air quality deal (on Tuesday) and the air was better here than a lot of metropolitan areas around the country, even with the smoke,” Hawkins said. “We talk to the docs and stuff about it and if you have an asthmatic guy, you have to keep an eye on him.”

EXTRA POINTS: About eight new walk-ons joined the team this week. Hawkins said he waits until after the first game to add the walk-ons because then they don’t count against the team’s numbers. ... On Saturday, Hagan will get a chance to watch his son, Cal starting cornerback senior Darian Hagan. “It’s exciting because I haven’t seen him play (in person) since high school,” coach Hagan said. “I’m going to be all in his ear on the sideline.”

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

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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, September 09,
2010

Publish Date: 9/8/2010

CU preparing for Cal's QB

By Brian Howell
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Reading the quarterback was fairly easy for University of Colorado cornerback Jalil Brown last week.

Brown said all he had to do was watch the eyes of Colorado State's Pete Thomas, a true freshman.

That won't be as easy this week. CU plays at Cal on Saturday, and the Bears are led by senior quarterback Kevin Riley, who is in his third year as a starter.

"He probably knows where the open spot is going to be a little quicker out there on defense," Brown said of Riley. "We know we're going to have to step it up a little bit, or I should say a lot, compared to last week."

CU head coach Dan Hawkins is familiar with Riley, who is from Portland, Ore.

"We recruited the heck out of Kevin when he was coming out of high school," Hawkins said. "I think he's a very, very good player. He's a very competitive guy, a very smart guy and a very heady guy. I think he's highly underrated. I think Kevin is a really good player; I really do."

Riley is not often mentioned among the top quarterbacks in the Pac-10 Conference. But he's had solid numbers.

During his career, Riley has completed 54.6 percent of his passes (371 of 679) for 5,031 yards, 40 touchdowns and 15 interceptions. He has thrown at least one touchdown pass in nine straight games, including three in a 52-3 win over UC Davis on Saturday.

"He knows tricks of the trade," CU linebacker B.J. Beatty said. "We just have to be more technique sound and get after it even more with the pass rush and all of that."

The Buffs also are wary of Cal's sensational true freshman Keenan Allen. A defensive back and receiver, Allen caught four passes for 120 yards and a touchdown last week.

"He looked great on film," Brown said. "From the first play, he was going at corners and safeties, blocking them and knocking them on the ground like he has been around for a while, and he was confident he was going to make some plays."

Brown said CU's secondary is eager for the challenge of facing Cal's passing attack.

"We made a few mistakes out there against CSU," Brown said. "There were some things we realize we need to fix. Going against a team like Cal, we're definitely going to step it up."

IMPROVEMENT NEEDED: Several times against CSU, Buffs punter Zach Grossnickle used a rugby-style technique.

It had mixed results. Grossnickle had some solid punts, but he also hit hard line drives directly to CSU returners a

couple of times. Those kicks are asking for big returns.

Hawkins said the rugby kick will stay, however.

"We were a little inconsistent, clearly, in that, but I think whenever you move the pocket, that gives the punt return team something to think about," Hawkins said. "(Grossnickle) actually kicks it better, in general, that way, and I think it's a more natural stroke for him. He'll get better."

SET OF NICKELS: CU plans to use a committee of players at its nickel back position.

Starter Parker Orms is out for the year after tearing his right ACL against CSU. Travis Sandersfeld had a good game in his place.

In addition to Sandersfeld, Hawkins said CU will use Jonathan Hawkins and Patrick Mahnke in the nickel spot.

EXTRA POINTS: In Dan Hawkins' tenure, the Buffs are 2-20 outside of the state of Colorado. But seven of those losses came by a touchdown or less. ... CU has not played a game in California since beating UCLA on Sept. 21, 2002, in Los Angeles. ... The Buffs' only trip to Berkeley came on Sept. 28, 1968. CU lost that game 10-0.

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

[ESPN.com: Pac-10](#)[\[Print without images\]](#)

Wednesday, September 8, 2010

Frosh WR Allen raising expectations for Cal

By Ted Miller
ESPN.com

While fans tend to swing with toward wild extremes -- we're awesome! we stink! -- you get a sense that California fans are trying to be measured about what happened last weekend.

[Keenan Allen.](#)

Sure, any 52-3 win feels good, but UC Davis didn't offer much of a test.

Keenan Allen.

And the Bears have been here before with a fast start. They were an impressive 3-0 last year and ranked sixth in the country before consecutive blowout losses to Oregon and USC stuck a needle in high hopes.

Keenan Allen.

They were 2-0 in 2008 before an inexplicable flop at Maryland. And they were 5-0 and ranked No. 2 in 2007 before a home loss to Oregon State triggered a swoon that included six losses in seven games.

Keenan Allen.

Would you stop it with the Keenan Allen stuff!

No.

"He's pretty special with the ball in his hands," Cal coach Jeff Tedford said.

Allen is the 6-foot-3, 195-pound true freshman receiver who caught four passes for 120 yards, including a 48-yard touchdown against UC Davis. He also rushed three times for 38 yards, including an 18-yard touchdown. It doesn't matter who the competition was, Allen's performance was impossible to ignore.

When you consider that most bits of preseason punditry centered on whether quarterback [Kevin Riley](#) would break through his senior year, a question that on a deeper level hung on the apparent lack of quality among Cal's receivers, you then can start to see dots connecting that lead toward... what?

Well, hope. And the possibility the Bears are better than the seventh-place spot they were relegated to in the preseason Pac-10 media poll.

Allen's presence means defenses can't gang up on junior [Marvin Jones](#) -- and vice versa -- as well as tight end [Anthony Miller](#), so suddenly there are passing game weapons that will stop defenses from



Cal wide receiver Keenan Allen had a huge game last week against UC Davis.

solely focusing their attention on running back [Shane Vereen](#). That could be a game-changer for Riley and the Bears offense, which has been wildly inconsistent the past few seasons.

"You've got to be very aware of where they are at all times," Riley said of Allen and Jones.

Colorado, fresh off a surprisingly easy whipping of rival Colorado State, will offer a far stiffer test Saturday than UC Davis, particularly for Allen and Jones. Buffaloes cornerbacks Jimmy Smith and Jalil Brown are both returning senior starters who are over 6-feet.

In fact, with 17 returning starters, more than a few folks -- including Phil Steele -- are projecting a Buffaloes turnaround in embattled coach Dan Hawkins fifth year in Boulder.

An added level of intrigue: Either next year or in 2012, Colorado will leave the Big 12 and join the Pac-12. This is a preview of a future conference game.

Riley said Cal has no plans to be terribly welcoming in Strawberry Canyon.

"You definitely want to show them what they're going to come to in the Pac-10, show them what type of conference we are, how we play football," he said. "I feel the Pac-10 gets a bad rap every single year, West Coast football in general. We've just got to show them what Cal football is all about and what the Pac-10's all about. That's all you can really do, and it's exciting because it's kind of a preview."

Hawkins doesn't see things the same way. Coaches often adopt tunnel vision, and what the Buffaloes do this season likely determines whether Hawkins ever coaches a game in the Pac-12.

"I think we just look at it as a game against Cal," he said. "We're not in that league now. We're still in the Big 12, so for us it's not so much that we're trying to make a big statement in the Big 12. It's that we're trying to make a statement this weekend in this game."

Cal fans are hoping for a statement, however. It goes something like this: "There's a new sheriff in town. And his name is Keenan Allen. So y'all be cool. Right on."

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