



*Cody Hawkins (7) celebrates the gold medal with his USA National Team teammates.  
Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com*



## CU's Hawkins Leads Team USA To Gold Medal

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**BOULDER** - Former University of Colorado quarterback [Cody Hawkins](#) helped the United States National Team to the gold medal last Saturday in the IFAF Senior World Championship in Vienna, Austria.

Team USA rolled to a 3-0 record in Group A (round-robin) play, defeating Australia (61-0), Germany (48-7) and Mexico (17-7), with all of those games in Innsbruck. Then last Saturday, the United States defeated Canada, 50-7, to win the gold medal.

He only played one full game in the four, against Mexico, otherwise the games were well in hand and he played in just 11 quarters, including just the first few series in the gold medal game. Considering that the entire tournament was played in eight days, not playing four full games in basically a week's time



Sport-Pictures.org | Thomas Haumer

likely played a role in his effectiveness.

Hawkins completed 60 of 88 passes (68.2 percent) for 784 yards, with five touchdowns and just one interception; if applying the NCAA rating system to his numbers, it worked to a 159.5 rating. In the title game, he also rushed once, covering seven yards for a touchdown.

Hawkins finished his CU career last fall, establishing all the major passing records, most notably attempts (1,214), completions (667), yards (7,409), touchdown passes (60) and interceptions (41, 14 of which were on tipped balls); he was also second in total offense (7,250), first in touchdowns responsible for (67) and first in 200-yard passing games (21). He started 33 games at quarterback, tied for the third-most in CU annals and owned a 40-to-6 touchdown-to-interception ratio in the red zone. He was one of just two players along with Steve Vogel (1981-84) in CU history to start a game at quarterback in four different seasons.

CUBuffs.com did an extensive Q&A with Hawkins following the USA's victory. Here are his thoughts on

the experience, along with some comments about his time at CU and his strong support for [Tyler Hansen](#):

**Q: What was the overall experience like?**

**A:** "The overall experience was absolutely amazing. I have had a lot of great memories throughout the years, but the World Championships will definitely find its place up at the top. It wasn't just the football that made it great, it was the environment, the people, and the reason we were there. I was able to play with a great group of guys from all around the country, be coached by some legendary men, and wear the USA shield on my helmet and on my chest. That was pretty special."

**Q: Who was the most valuable player for the USA team?**

**A:** "The MVP of the whole tournament, not just for us, was Nate Kmic, the tailback from Mount Union who is the NCAA all-time leader in career rushing yards. No one was more deserving of that honor than him. He played for Coach Larry Kehres (our offensive coordinator) at Mount Union and won three national titles there, so he knew his was around the offense. He was my roommate throughout the trip, and let me tell you, he is a phenomenal player, and an even better person. We are great friends and are actually trying to work out a deal in which we can play internationally together again ... whether it be in Austria, Italy or Canada. He was a great leader, a hard worker, and excelled at three positions for us. He was our best tailback, but also our best slot receiver and fullback. He played everywhere and did everything we asked him to, and he did it better than anyone else in the tournament."

"I was named MVP of the first game against Australia, and was voted to the all-tournament team as the QB, which was pretty cool. I know I am not an all-world QB, but it is nice to have a trophy that says you are ... ha!"

**Q: Compare playing in Division I and the Big 12 to what this completion was like.**

**A:** "Playing in the Big 12 was a great opportunity. Nothing will ever replace the memories of running out behind Ralphie and competing against the best in the country. The World Championship was special on a totally different level. I know the teams aren't composed of the best players from



the United States, but for other teams around the world, they basically were! I was able to represent the greatest country in the world, playing the greatest game in the world, against cultures and athletes from around the globe. It was amazing to see how the countries were totally reflected in their styles of play. Australia was tough as nails, but their fundamentals were rugged. Germany was big and strong, but very much "by the book." Mexico was quick and athletic, but played the game much like in the states, just with a little different flair. Now that flair may have been cheap shots and trash talking, but you can talk to the other teams they played if you really want to see what I mean. Canada was very similar to the USA; they dominated their bracket, but you could tell that playing with 11 guys and only one motion back limited their style. Japan was a team that we weren't able to play, but was able to learn a lot about while I was there. They are not big, but they are quick and come without any regard for their own safety. They are disciplined and have an elaborate game plan for each team. They find your weakness and are very creative in how they exploit it. They are a respectful team and take a strong pride in what they do. The World Cup experience helps to bond a team together. In a different country, where you don't speak the language, but everyone wants to emulate how you play, you don't even know the people you are playing, but you have a target on your back. It brings a team together, and makes the taste of victory even sweeter."



**Q: How good were the teams you played (or, on what level of football in the US would be comparable)?**

**A:** "The teams we played varied greatly in their skill level. To put it one way, Team Austria played a D-3 team a couple months back as a warm-up game and lost in OT. They were the seventh place team in the tournament. I would say some of the teams ranked anywhere from D3 to maybe the FCS level (U.S. and Canada)... Germany was good on defense, but didn't really give itself a chance (we had four non-offensive touchdowns). Mexico has their own college league, and took the last World Championships off to help prepare them for this, so people don't realize how good they really are in comparison to other countries around the world. They had spent six weeks together practicing before the WC, whereas the USA team had six days. The North American teams and Japan are definitely head and shoulders above the rest of the world, but it was clear that the top four teams - USA, Canada, Japan and Mexico, were all playing good football...the other teams will be there soon. They have great athletes, they just don't react as quickly on defense or have quite as refined skills on offense... yet."



**Q: How good was the USA team, in all reality?**

**A:** "The USA team was a great team for many reasons. I thought USA football did a great job starting the team composition with Coach Mel Tjeerdsma, the former Northwest Missouri head coach who has won countless games and has been known for running a first-class program. His good friend, Larry Kehres, the head coach of Mount Union, was our offensive coordinator. Coach Kehres has quietly won 10 of the last 15 national titles at the D3 level, so he knows how to win games."

"Our team had an interesting selection process, with film, resume, and interview components. They chose guys spread out across all divisions, but chose guys that they knew would represent the country well. Every single guy (with the exception of our kicker, Greg Berkshire) had already graduated college and most are playing either in Canada, Arena, overseas, or are coaching in some capacity. Many of the players are currently working on their Master's Degrees. We had a team composed of all-around great people who were able to dedicate their football skills to the USA for three weeks this summer. We had players from D1 (starting center Josh Koeppel of Iowa, tight end Richie Brockel of Boise State, OL/DL Nick Rossi from Boston College, D-end Johnny Dingle from West Virginia) and several guys with NFL experience (CB DeWayne Lewis -Jaguars, and LB Osayi Osunde - Packers). The smaller division guys were all record holders or national champions. We had Nate Kmic (NCAA all-time leading rusher) playing multiple positions and had safety Myles Burnside (former D2 player of the year) helping us out as well. We had a lot of great guys from all divisions, with winning track records on and off the

field. Our team was great for many reasons that extended beyond football. On the field, we were lucky enough to put together four strong games. I think in total, we outscored the competition 176-21. I played in the second half of only the last two games, and only took snaps in the fourth quarter once, against Mexico. I thought we were a complete team; dominant on defense, advantageous on special teams and efficient on offense."

**Q: How much is the QB protected? Like in the NFL or college, or can they tee off on him? Did you receive any cheap shots?**

**A:** "My only regret about the tournament and how it was run was the officiating. Like the states, International Rules do try and protect the quarterback. Unlike in the states, it is rarely regulated. There were times when I was hit late and it wouldn't be called, and there were times when I would take a clean hit and there would be a flag. Just like players around the world, the overseas officials are learning as well. I don't think the WC is exactly the place to have that happen, however. I was not sacked at all in four games, but that was a result of great OL play and my confidence that throwing the ball away would allow us to convert on the next down. The defenses (particularly Canada and Mexico) really tried to blitz us, but our OL was able to pick up the blitz and our players on the outside made them pay for it."

**Q: You are now back in Sweden with the Stockholm Mean Machines; how is that country embracing American football?**

**A:** "Of all the countries in Europe, I would say that Austria, Germany, France, and Italy are at the top of the food chain. Sweden, however, is not too far behind. They missed out on this year's WC, but they have participated in every one with the exception of 2011. My friends from Stockholm followed to USA team religiously, and were always sending their support. The games were broadcast online and were watched by most of my friends all over the globe. American football is still growing in Sweden, but it has a long way to go. I think the players are pushing for it, they just do not have the resources or experience to take it to the next level just yet. They have been rapidly expanding their fan base and are starting to implement national football camps for young kids to come learn and compete for spots on the national team. As in everything, I believe competition will bring out the best!"

**Q: Any funny anecdotes from the experience?**

**A:** "The whole experience was great. Living overseas, you often wish that you had another American with you to take in all the funny little bits and culture gaps that you experience on a daily basis. For those native to Europe, they may not understand the need for public restrooms, the distaste for hot coffee on a warm, sunny day, and the awkwardness of the 250 pound man in the speedo, but for us Americans ... it is always amusing. There were many funny experiences, some of which could be shared, others may be better left unsaid. However, it was a blast jumping off of 45 foot platforms at the public pool ... I would love to see that fly in the United States!"



**Q: Anything we take for granted in the sport that in Europe or in the World competition they are overly appreciative of (like American-type uniforms, etc.)?**

**A:** "I think the number one thing we take for granted is officiating and instant replay. I would guess that most football fans in the states could somewhat referee a game, but that is because we grew up with it. There were some times during the tournament in which the officiating was practically comical. They are so locked in to their job that they ignore things going on around them, and they often miss stuff right in front of their face. We had one referee who would always pick up the ball and bring it to her hash, regardless of where it landed. We had three or four blatant offside penalties not get called, and pancake blocks were called personal fouls or unnecessary roughness on multiple occasions. Surprisingly, the uniforms are probably the most advanced part of the game around the world. Everyone watches the NFL and college games from the states, so they try and imitate what we do and what we look like is even easier. There are sometimes when you will see an offensive lineman with a visor and a Reggie Bush-like towel out the back, and for what reason? He saw it on TV, that is why. I guess the ole adage "If you look good, you play good" resonates globally ... ha!"

**Q: What are your plans once this season (in Sweden) is over?**

**A:** "After this season, I am going to head back to Boulder and cheer the Buffs on for a couple games. Then I will likely try to make a run at the CFL or AFL ... after playing with guys from both leagues at the WC, I really feel like I would like to explore those opportunities. If that doesn't work out, I will likely join Nate Kmic and two other players from team USA, safety Jordan Lake (Baylor) and Joey Sturdivant (SMU) in Italy. We are trying to build a dream team there! After that, who knows... any Buffs out there need a hard working CU-grad?!"

**Q: Do you have any regrets about your CU career?**

**A:** "My biggest regret about my career at CU was obviously not winning enough games. I feel like I played with a lot of great players, made a lot of memories, and grew immensely as a person, but I would have liked to bring a title or two to Boulder. I have been blessed in so many areas of my life, and I wouldn't change much, but I definitely would have liked to treat the Buffalo faithful to a ring or two."

**Q: Any words of encouragement or wisdom for Tyler Hansen?**

**A:** "I have a whole world of things I could say to Tyler. Hopefully I will be able to have a nice chat with him before the season starts, but I wish him nothing but the best. It was unfair the position he was put in because of me, and I wish things could have gone smoother for both of us, but he deserves nothing but love and support from every single member of the Colorado fan base. I am sorry that I was always such lightning rod for both negative and positive energy that often deferred from Tyler getting the credit he deserves. I never liked it when people doubted me, but if you doubt Tyler, you are flat-out stupid. We are different players, but Tyler is a great player, and has a chance to do some amazing things this year. Ever since arriving at Colorado, he has been selfless, hardworking, and relentless in his pursuit of excellence. This year it is great to see so much positive energy around the program, it is what Tyler deserves, it is what the players deserve, it is what Colorado deserves. With new leadership and new energy behind a plethora of great players, the Tyler Hansen-led Buffaloes have a chance to make some waves in the Pac-12. What other way for a California boy to go out than making a big splash?"

For those interested, [here is a feature on Hawkins on YouTube:](#)

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# CU Buffs' Charles Johnson ponders political career

## Former star player leaving athletic department

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

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After six years as the utility infielder of the Colorado athletic department, assistant athletic director Charles Johnson is leaving his post to work with one of the department's most vital partners while he mulls a political career.

Johnson, the backup quarterback of the Buffs' 1990 national championship team, is considering running as a democrat for an at-large seat on the Colorado Board of Regents in 2012.

He obviously would be a friend to the athletic department as a regent, but he said supporting athletics has little to do with his motivation to consider running.

"That's kind of in my DNA," Johnson said. "I've always been interested in governance and it's no different now. And obviously I have a passion and a love for the university."

Johnson said he expects to make a final decision about entering the race later this year. He previously considered running for a Senate seat in the state legislature in 2010, but ultimately decided against it.

In the meantime, the former CU student body president will go to work for Learfield Communications, Inc., as a consultant. His primary job will be negotiating corporate sponsorship deals for CU athletics, something he already did at times in his time in Boulder.

Johnson said he made the decision to leave now because he didn't see opportunities arising in the future in the department for significant career development and he has become more serious about a career in politics in recent months, whether that involves serving as a regent or not.

"One thing I've always been concerned about and I'm increasingly concerned about is how difficult it is for just middle class families to send their kids to school," Johnson said. "They can't afford it."

"I know, in part, that is a legislative issue, but it's an advocacy issue as well. I don't necessarily hear the drum being beat anywhere so that young boys and girls who may not have been born to millionaires have an opportunity to occupy a seat at the University of Colorado like I did."

Johnson was recruited to Boulder in the late 1980s from the hardscrabble streets of Detroit by former coach Bill McCartney.

Johnson later rescued his younger brother from those same streets and brought him to Boulder for his high school years and served as his guardian.

Johnson earned the most valuable player award in the 1991 Orange Bowl, in which CU won the national title, when he came off the bench to replace injured starter Darian Hagan.

Johnson has filled a variety of roles during his time at the university, including community relations, donor relations and corporate sponsorship development.

He also has served as a radio sideline reporter for football games, a color analyst for basketball games and host of the Buff Stampede coaches television show, a role he will continue to fill.

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