



# Walk-on leads CU on special teams

## Sandersfeld was standout player at Limon

By Kyle Ringo

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There is a long history in the Colorado football program of relatively unknown players coming out of nowhere to make a name for themselves on special teams.

Redshirt freshman walk-on Travis Sandersfeld is looking like he might be the next in line based on his performance on three special teams units in the first two games this season.

Sandersfeld leads the Buffs with seven special teams points earned with an unassisted tackle, an unassisted tackle inside the 20-yard line, two wedge breaks on kickoff coverage and three big blocks on returns.

His best moment to this point probably came against Eastern Washington when he derailed a player pursuing punt return man Josh Smith. The peel-back block sprung Smith on a return that ended just short of the goal line. The Buffs scored three plays later.

"He's done a great job," special teams coach Kent Riddle said. "We knew a year ago he'd be a guy who can help us because he's a big guy who can run. We haven't had a ton of bigger bodies that have speed."

Sandersfeld was a part of five state championship teams at Limon High School before coming to Boulder. He played multiple positions for the football team and was named an all-state tight end and quarterback in successive seasons. He also played baseball, basketball and ran track.

After watching Sandersfeld achieve so much in four years, Limon superintendent of schools, Harvey Goodman, put in a call to CU linebackers coach Brian Cabral to let him know about Sandersfeld.

Goodman is a former Buff, who played guard in the program (1972-74) under former coaches Eddie Crowder and Bill Mallory.

To that point, Sandersfeld had been considering attending small Division III schools in Nebraska and Kansas that had offered him academic scholarships. He sent CU coaches film, and he was invited to walk-on when school began last fall.

A year later, he's contributing in a big way.

"Not very many people get picked from small schools to come to Division I," Sandersfeld said. "So playing my second year on special team is a blessing."

Sandersfeld had a brief trial run at linebacker before coaches decided he was a natural safety. He is

reminiscent there of another former walk-on from Limon, Tom Hubbard. Sandersfeld said he has used Hubbard's success at CU as motivation to fuel his own.

Hubbard led the Buffs in special teams points in 2004 and went on to be named the most valuable player of the Houston Bowl that year.

"He was a good athlete and he did," Sandersfeld said. "So I was like, 'Hawk is like a guy who says he rewards people who work hard. So I'll work hard and hopefully it will come.'"

### **Notable**

Tight end Luke Walters underwent surgery this week to repair damage in his left ankle and have a rod inserted in his lower leg. He hopes to return in time for spring practices. ... The Buffs practice today and Friday before taking Saturday off.



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## Taunting rule needs fix

*By Patrick Ridgell*

*Longmont Times-Call*

Cody Hawkins sent a text message to his good friend Jake Locker on Saturday night to offer some encouragement. Locker probably needed it.

For those who missed it, Locker is at the center of college football's first big controversy of 2008.

Last Saturday, Locker, Washington's quarterback, flipped the ball in the air after his touchdown with 2 seconds to play pulled the Huskies within 28-27 of BYU. Officials penalized Locker and Washington 15 yards for excessive celebration on the extra point, making it a 35-yard try.

BYU blocked it.

Hawkins, CU's quarterback who started his friendship with Locker at an Elite 11 quarterback camp in 2005, says the rule must change.

"I think it's unnecessary," Hawkins said. "Guys are having a little extra fun, and you put in so much time during the week. He wasn't taunting anybody. He wasn't even throwing the ball that high in the air. ... Who wouldn't be excited when you score with 2 seconds left.

"I understand the rule. They want to keep it very sportsmanlike, but you can't get in the way of the emotions of the game, and that's going to happen, especially in a tight game like that."

By rule, the official made the proper call. That rule has placed lots of folks in bad spots, though.

Washington coach Tyrone Willingham ripped the call Monday. He told the Seattle Times: "I think we all know it was not the right call. There are rules written for them to use discretion, and in this case we didn't do that. Proper judgment was not used."

BYU shouldn't feel it needs to apologize for anything. The Cougars might have blocked the kick from the regular spot. They beat UCLA in the Las Vegas Bowl by a point last year by blocking a last-second 28-yard field goal try. The fuss overshadows their win.

"It's unfortunate that a call is being the focus rather than two teams playing their heart out and going down to the last play that did decide the game," BYU coach Bronco Mendenhall told the Provo Daily Herald.

Did the refs make a mistake?

That probably depends on which side of the Washington fan spectrum you reside.

But Pac-10 officials have had their recent problems. Remember what happened to Oklahoma when the Sooners lost at Oregon in 2006? Two calls the conference later admitted were blown caused Oklahoma heartache and shamed the Pac-10.

Texas coach Mack Brown served on the committee in the mid-1990s that came up with the rule.

“That was an awful thing for the quarterback and Tryone and those kids,” Brown said. “I don’t think the rule that was put in was meant for excitement, it was meant for taunting, excessive celebration. This young man was just excited.

“The official was right, by rule. He made the call he was supposed to call. I think we need a little more judgment by the official involved.”

Brown is kind of right. Officials should be able to discern between taunting and genuine excitement. Common sense dictates so.

Of course, giving officials such discretion creates scenarios that’ll spur more uproar. But right now, we have a situation in which no one benefits. That’s not going to work.

Meanwhile, I remember how Barry Sanders used to hand the ball to the official when he scored, acting like he had done it before, and knew he would again.

That’d be the best solution of all.

### **Around the Big 12**

In a first, the league went 12-0 last week. Four wins came over Football Championship Subdivision (formerly I-AA) teams. Only one came over one from a BCS conference as Oklahoma defeated Cincinnati.

This week’s schedule is much better with matchups such as Oklahoma at Washington, Kansas at South Florida, and the annual Iowa-Iowa State game.

Has Texas A&M found its future? Quarterback Stephen McGee left its win at New Mexico last week with an injured throwing shoulder, and the more mobile Jerrod Johnson, a sophomore, filled in well, going 10-for-19 for 124 yards and three touchdowns.

Can the Cyclones keep this up? Iowa State already has 10 takeaways in 2008.

This year’s Iowa-Iowa State meeting might have a little more meaning in the flood-ravaged state, said Cyclones’ coach Gene Chizik.

“The state needs this,” he said. “It’s been through a rough 365 days. For at least one day, we can take the minds of people off of their troubles and woes they have.”

Kansas’ Achilles’ heel could be its running game. The Jayhawks are averaging 3.7 yards a carry through two games, against Florida International and Louisiana Tech.

“We have young backs and linemen there, I feel like that part of our game will develop,” coach Mark Mangino said. “I’m not overly concerned about it.”

Patrick Ridgell’s Big 12 notes column runs every Thursday during the regular season. He can be reached at [pridgell@times-call.com](mailto:pridgell@times-call.com)