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cu football

Bufs focus on quick start to foil Cowboys

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BOULDER — Having the mind-set to get out to a fast start will be one of the themes of Colorado's football practices this week. Eleventh-ranked Oklahoma State averages 42.8 points per game. Playing catch-up Saturday probably would not be a good idea.

CU coach Dan Hawkins pointed out that several Big 12 games were decided early when a team jumped out to a huge lead in the first half.

"When you watch teams get hot . . . you see some of those scenarios where a snowball effect just happens," Hawkins said Tuesday during his weekly media luncheon. "It's very tough to counteract that."

To become bowl eligible, Colorado (5-5, 2-4 Big 12) needs a victory against Oklahoma State (8-2, 4-2) on Saturday at Folsom Field or against Nebraska on Nov. 28 in Lincoln.

Colorado Football

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Colorado averages 19.4 points per game, lowest in the Big 12.

"When you play a great football team, you had better take care of business and not give up big plays and not turn the ball over and be sound," Hawkins said, referring to Oklahoma State. "You need to get some momentum going and make some things happen."

It's also important for Colorado's defense to get off to a good start against the Cowboys, Bufs senior linebacker Brad Jones said.

"We need to go out there and show (Oklahoma State) that they're not going to move the ball on us," Jones said.

The 6 p.m. game (KMGH-7) will mark the final home appearance for Colorado's 16 seniors.

"The last time for us in Folsom, we want to make it a memorable one," Jones said.

Cody to start.

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Dan Hawkins named sophomore quarterback Cody Hawkins the starter against Oklahoma State.

Freshman Tyler Hansen started the Missouri and Iowa State games. Cody Hawkins started against Texas A&M.

Footnotes.

Junior defensive lineman Jason Brace (concussion) likely will not play again this season, according to CU. . . . Freshman tailback Rodney "Speedy" Stewart underwent surgery to repair ligament damage suffered when he fractured a fibula against Texas A&M.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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Wanted: Kicker for Buffs

Coaches hold tryouts, but don't find replacement

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

It would be premature to call it desperation, but Colorado football coaches are definitely leaving no stone unturned in an effort to find solutions to their field goal kicking problems.

Multiple CU students who contacted coaches were given kicking tryouts Monday and Tuesday, including Ryan Callahan, a fourth-year junior who works at the campus radio station.

Callahan was the place-kicker at Evergreen High School four years ago before coming to CU to begin working toward a degree in journalism. He conducts a phone interview every Monday with Hawkins for the radio station and took it upon himself to let the coach know prior to this week's interview that he has kicking experience.

Hawkins connected Callahan with special teams coach Kent Riddle, who invited Callahan to tryout Tuesday. Callahan showed a decent leg capable of making kicks from 40 yards or more.

Riddle said there are several students in the group who could be useful in the long term, but the program has found no immediate solutions so far beyond sophomore Aric Goodman and true freshman Jameson Davis.

Riddle said some of those who tried out had an eye-opening experience.

"They realize it's not as easy as it looks from the stands," he said.

Riddle reiterated his belief that both current kickers will overcome the problems that have led to them combining to miss nine of the past 10 field goal attempts dating back to the third game of the season. CU has made four of 14 field goal attempts this season.

Davis aggravated his injured left knee last week in a win over Iowa State and had the knee drained this week. He expects to be able to kickoff this week, but is not likely to attempt field goals. Riddle said Goodman continues to fight through his difficult stretch.

Riddle said coaches are always looking to add more talent to the pool of competition and could bring more kickers into the program next year. It is probably unlikely the program would devote another scholarship to a kicker at this point with holes to fill elsewhere and Davis and Goodman already on scholarship.

Riddle said he has been inundated with emails from students on campus and kickers around the country who believe they can help the Buffs.

Hawkins back

in starting role

After his impressive second half against Iowa State last week, Cody Hawkins will be the Buffs' starting quarterback against Oklahoma State on Saturday, coach Dan Hawkins said.

True freshman Tyler Hansen will continue to get playing time, but Hawkins appears to be the best option right now. Of course coaches have grown accustomed to making changes on the fly this season.

"It has been a very liquid environment," Dan Hawkins said. "Just when you think you're going one way, you go the other way."

Dan Hawkins said Hansen is still working to improve in the passing game, and he is making progress every week.

"The guy is a true freshman, you know," Hawkins said. "Every day is an adventure and every play is an adventure. There is no substitute for experience."

Birthday boy

Dan Hawkins celebrated his 48th birthday on Monday. He spent most of the day preparing for Oklahoma State. When asked what he was given for his birthday he said, "I got another day on the planet, another day at my job, another day with my wife. All that's good."

Hawkins also received a fruitcake.

"I'm one of the last all-time great fruitcake lovers," Hawkins said. "When you're a family of six, the awesome thing is everybody else hates it, and it stays around forever. It's the gift that keeps on giving."

Notable

Rodney Stewart underwent surgery to repair ligament damage sustained when he broke his leg at Texas A&M two weeks ago. Coaches hope to have him back for spring practices. ...

Colorado received its seventh known commitment for the 2009 recruiting class Monday night from Nate Bonsu, a 6-foot-2, 265-pound defensive tackle from Allen High School in Allen, Texas. Bonsu is rated a three-star prospect by Rivals.com. He is the second defensive lineman in the class and helps meet an area on the CU roster badly in need of more depth. ...

Four-star wide receiver Diante Jackson is considering switching his commitment from Oregon to CU. Jackson visited CU last weekend and told Scout.com he loves everything about the program.



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Bufs could give Alabama, Tech something to look at

Title contenders share tough times against Colorado

By Ryan Thorburn

Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Alabama vs. Texas Tech.

If these two programs -- currently ranked No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, in the BCS standings -- can finish the season unbeaten they will play for the national championship on Jan. 8 in Miami.

If that scenario plays out, Nick Saban and Mike Leach might want to take a look at some Colorado film before the taking the field at Dolphins Stadium for the title game.

The Bufs are the last common opponent for the Crimson Tide and Red Raiders. During the 2007 season, CU lost 30-24 to Alabama in the Independence Bowl and defeated Texas Tech 31-26 in Lubbock.

Comparative scores don't always mean that much in college football, but the fact that his team played this year's only unbeaten teams from major conferences tough recently does bring a smile to Dan Hawkins' face.

The Bufs also defeated Texas Tech 30-6 on Oct. 14, 2006, for Hawkins' first win at CU after an 0-6 start.

"It's interesting because there's a team that we've beat the last two years who's poised to play for the national championship. And you go, 'Well, what's the deal?'" Hawkins said at his Tuesday press conference in the Dal Ward Center. "It's confidence. It's getting hot and getting on a roll. And (against Texas Tech) we've been able to get some confidence and get some things going ... and then things start happening for you."

In the 2006 meeting with the Red Raiders, Graham Harrell -- who is currently the front-runner for the Heisman Trophy -- was outplayed by Bernard Jackson.

Harrell was 26-for-39 with one touchdown pass and three interceptions at Folsom Field while Jackson was 11-for-17 for 151 yards with two touchdown passes, a touchdown run and no interceptions.

"I thought at times, especially after some of Colorado's big plays, that our team looked a little deflated," Harrell said after the lopsided loss in Boulder.

The Bufs intercepted Harrell -- who completed 46 of 62 passes for 431 yards with three touchdowns --

four times in last season's meeting. Jordon Dizon had a pick-six and Terrence Wheatley had three interceptions while chasing Michael Crabtree (12 receptions, 131 yards, one touchdown) all over the field.

Cody Hawkins was 15-for-26 for 123 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions in Lubbock. All of the turnovers created by the defense allowed the young quarterback to settle in and avoid having to get into a shootout on the scoreboard with Harrell.

CU's opponent on Saturday at Folsom Field -- No. 11 Oklahoma State -- appeared to panic a little bit after the Red Raiders scored touchdowns on seven consecutive possessions en route to a 56-20 thrashing of the Cowboys on national television last week.

"There is just no relenting. They just continue to score and continue to put it on you," Hawkins said of Texas Tech's offense. "Then what I think happens a little bit on your team is you sort of feel this urgency like, 'Well, we've got to score every time we have it.'"

Oklahoma State currently only has the fifth-highest scoring offense in the Big 12 behind Oklahoma, Texas Tech, Missouri and Texas. Yet Mike Gundy's team averages 42.8 points per game compared to CU's conference-worst 19.4.

Perhaps the Bufs should dust off the game plans they used against Leach, Harrell, Crabtree and Co. for Oklahoma State?

"We're doing the same things this year that we've done the last two years," CU secondary coach Greg Brown said. "Both those days we just happened to have good days against them and it worked out to our favor. Texas Tech is going to get their yards no matter what. Period. It's just a matter of, can you get the turnovers on defense and kind of halfway control them?"

"Luckily last year we got those four turnovers and that was a huge deal. The year before they had to come up here to Boulder and we were the lowly Bufs and we hadn't won a game yet and it just ended up being one of those days where everything we did was just right."

CU did everything wrong against Alabama in the first quarter of the bowl in Shreveport, La., falling behind 20-0. But the coaching staff was able to make some adjustments, the players settled down and it turned into an entertaining and competitive game.

The Bufs finished with 397 net yards of offense on 68 plays compared to 388 yards on 69 plays for the Tide. Hugh Charles matched Glen Coffee yard for yard. And Cody Hawkins threw for 322 yards, three touchdowns and two interceptions.

"Alabama was a good team when we played them in the bowl game," CU linebacker Brad Jones said. "It just goes to show you the type of competition we play here. But I didn't know they would jump that far."

The Tide is rolling towards the BCS title game at 10-0. The Bufs are battling just to get bowl eligible at 5-5.

"For us, we garnered some momentum going into a barn-burner of a schedule. Unfortunately, I wasn't going to mass enough, we started losing guys and sending guys to the M.A.S.H. unit," Dan Hawkins said. "And so then you kind of wane a little bit and your confidence kind of wanes and your young guys are getting knocked around and beat around emotionally and physically. ...

"When you watch those teams that get really hot, it's funny, it's not like there's these amazing plays or schemes. You're just watching and they're just going through their deal and huck it and sometimes the guy is covered and still makes a play. It's just because they're so very confident about how they do things."



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Seniors have found path through adversity at CU

By Justin Williams

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — If battling through attrition winds up defining the 2008 season for the Colorado Buffaloes, it would almost be fitting for the departing senior class.

Celebrating Senior Day on Saturday, when No. 11 Oklahoma State travels in (6 p.m., Ch. 7), the few elder statesmen who remain will have no choice but to reflect on college careers full of trials and tribulations.

“We survived one of the worst times our university has ever been through,” senior George Hypolite said. “We pushed through it, and we’ve all become closer and become better people because of it.

“Hopefully, we’re leaving this program in the right way.”

They entered it under a black cloud of uncertainty.

The infamous recruiting scandals marred Boulder, which — coupled with an imminent coaching change — sent most recruits scurrying for more stable programs.

Those who did show up quickly learned that being known as a CU football player came with a certain stigma, and it didn’t immediately get easier when the Dan Hawkins regime took over.

“We all came in when a lot of Buff fans were closing the door on Colorado football,” Hypolite said. “We stayed here through the tough times — through the coaching change, through the 2-10 season.

“Some guys were scared because of the negative publicity, but for some reason, God brought us all here, and now you look four years later, and we’re all moving in the right direction.”

But not everyone made it through.

This senior class is one of the smallest to ever come through Colorado. Only 16 seniors are on the varsity roster this season, but it’s made this group that much closer.

“I never thought I’d be as close as I am with these guys,” senior linebacker Brad Jones said. “I can literally say that every single person that’s a senior this year is one of my closest friends.”

Hypolite said he’s not sure what type of legacy this class will leave at CU. He said that’s for everyone else to decide.

Sophomore quarterback Cody Hawkins said one mark this group leaves on the program is the ability to deal with adversity and bounce back from it.



University of Colorado seniors Brad Jones (40) and George Hypolite (86) stick it to Oklahoma’s Ian Pleasant at Folsom Field in Boulder during a September game.

Joshua Buck/Times-Call file

“I think it’s a great example for all the young guys on this team to follow,” Hawkins said. “Stuff may happen, but keep pressing forward and you’ll find a light at the end of the tunnel.”

At 5-5, with the Buffs having to win one of their final two games to become bowl eligible, it may not be the storybook ending that many of these players envisioned when they chose CU four or five years ago.

But a win Saturday, against one of the best teams in the country during their final game at Folsom Field, would at least be one more positive memory from a time of consistent ups and downs.

“We must make it a memorable (game),” Jones said. “And we’ve got the chance — we play Okie State.”

Rocky Mountain News

CU report: Pick your poison

By **B.G. Brooks**, Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

Published November 11, 2008 at 10:21 p.m.

"Stopping the run" is a football coach's first axiom in fashioning a defensive game plan, and so it is with the Buffaloes as they prepare for No. 11 Oklahoma State.

The Cowboys are No. 1 in the Big 12 Conference (sixth in Football Bowl Subdivision) in rushing offense, averaging 264.8 yards a game, and they feature the Big 12's leading rusher, **Kendall Hunter** (133.2 yards a game).

But if the run is stopped, then what?

Oklahoma State also can call on conference-leading receiver **Dez Bryant** (114 yards a game, 15 touchdown receptions). Then toss in quarterback **Zac Robinson** - his 181 passer rating is third in FBS, second in the Big 12 - and tight end **Brandon Pettigrew**, a likely first-round NFL draft choice.

While reiterating the Buffs' priority will be slowing Hunter & Co. in the running game, CU coach **Dan Hawkins** conceded the Cowboys "sure are talented and very good in a lot of areas - they have plenty of weapons.

"Part of the reason they have such an explosive offense (42.8 points a game) is that you can't just

shut down one thing."

And the starter is . . .

Dan Hawkins confirmed sophomore **Cody Hawkins** will start at quarterback Saturday. Freshman **Tyler Hansen**, who opened last week against Iowa State, also is expected to play.

After leading CU to its 28-24 win against Iowa State, Cody Hawkins was chosen the Player of the Week (Colorado chapter) by the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame.

Can you kick?

Since CU's place-kicking woes began, special teams coach **Kent Riddle** says he has received e-mails from "everybody on campus" who has kicked - or believed he could.

Several prospective kickers were given a look, including **Ryan Callahan**, the sports/news director at 1190 radio on campus.

Callahan, though, was invited by Dan Hawkins.

Before Callahan, a junior, did a radio interview with Hawkins on Monday, he casually told the CU coach he was a kicker at Evergreen High School. Hawkins told Callahan, "Come on out."

In about 15 minutes after practice, Callahan showed decently from short range but conceded he was rusty from 45 to 50 yards. Riddle said he has found no long- or short-term answers, adding **Aric Goodman** will resume kicking

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Rocky Mountain News

Saturday.

Etc.

* The Buffs have received a commitment from defensive lineman **Nate Bonsu**, of Allen (Texas) High School, according to Rivals.com. Other schools that showed an interest in Bonsu, a 6-foot-2, 265-pounder, included Arizona, Brigham Young, Arkansas, Louisville, Georgia Tech, Iowa State and Washington State. He is CU's seventh known commitment for 2009.

* Freshman tailback **Rodney Stewart**, who suffered a broken right fibula in the loss at Texas A&M, underwent surgery to repair ligament damage in his right ankle.

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