

Rocky Mountain News

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CU's offensive line takes positive steps toward lofty goal

By **B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News**
September 4, 2007

BOULDER - Consider the bar raised. In fact, consider it maxed out.

The NCAA doesn't keep statistics, per se, on this kind of thing, but the University of Colorado's offensive line is pushing to be the toughest up-front bunch in the nation.

How to measure meanness? It's not that complicated: by the offensive output and how redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins holds up for the long run.

After one game, CU's front-end loaders and their coach believe they were fairly successful in accounting for themselves and keeping Hawkins out of harm's way.

"I think we came out strong but had some technique issues in the second half," senior left tackle Tyler Polumbus said in critiquing his unit's play during CU's 31-28 overtime victory against Colorado State. "If it was our third game, I know (coach Jeff Grimes) wouldn't be happy, but it was the first. We've got a long way to go to reach our goal of being the toughest group in the nation; we need to be finishing more guys on the ground. And he's made a pretty big point about that."

Grimes, also CU's running game coordinator, said his group fared "pretty well" in line-of-scrimmage communication and pass protection, but he will be looking for running-game improvement when the Buffaloes play Saturday at Arizona State (8:15 p.m. MDT, FSN Rocky Mountain).

Of CU's 330 yards in total offense against CSU, 129 were on the ground, with 60 of that total gained in the second half. Starting tailback Hugh Charles (strained hamstring) was lost in the first quarter and remains day to day.

Hawkins was sacked once in the second quarter, and he came away complimenting "the way my guys took care of me. . . . They overcame a lot; a lot of guys were getting dinged up (and) you could tell some guys were hurting.

"But they toughed it out, persevered and stuck together for us."

Grimes' five starting interior linemen - Polumbus and Edwin Harrison at tackles, Wes Palazzi and Devin Head at guard, and Daniel Sanders at center - played every snap.

Hawkins attributes some of that endurance to only six linemen being available during spring practice, when scrimmaging was limited by the line's meager body count.

"Those linemen got used to going all the time," Hawkins said. "They became a really cohesive unit, got used to playing with each other and playing tough."

Realistically, Grimes knows his "Iron Five" can't play every snap. The master plan is to redshirt as many of his eight true freshmen as possible, but two, Kai Maiava and Ryan Miller, continue to push for playing time.

"A lot of times people get the impression that you've got to make a decision on those guys at the beginning of the year," Grimes said. "Given injuries, how certain guys are playing and the growth of those young kids, that could change a lot - even by the time we get to conference.

"And there are a couple of guys pushing who could be close to be playing in the next week or two. We'll see how they develop and how the (overall) health holds up."

ETC.: Asked to grade his debut, Hawkins said, "Right now, the only grade I know I got was a 'W,' and that's all I really want." . . . Coach **Dan Hawkins** said his son's first game would be "average if he was a junior or senior, but the bottom line is, you have to play. There's the intangibles of being a winner and making plays, and he did that." . . . Dan Hawkins said the Buffs are "miles ahead of where we were last year. We spent a tough year pouring concrete, putting a foundation in."

brooks@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5466

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O-line plays some solitaire

CU linemen adjusting to spread-out scheme

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Tuesday, September 4, 2007

Veteran members of the Colorado offensive line are making a big adjustment this season. But only on certain plays.

New offensive line coach Jeff Grimes is using wide splits between his linemen on some play calls and in certain formations. In some cases linemen can be separated by as much as two feet, an approach more commonly used in spread offenses such as those employed by fellow Big 12 Conference programs such as Missouri and Texas Tech.

Grimes said he became a big believer in wide splits during his three seasons in the same job at Brigham Young, but unlike other programs he won't spread his line out all the time. Fans will usually see the look from the Buffs this season when 5-foot-11 quarterback Cody Hawkins is in the shotgun.

"The benefits are, No. 1, we take the rushers further away from the quarterback," Grimes said.

"No. 2 is it opens up passing lanes, windows for the quarterback to throw through, and when you have a guy like Cody, who is not real tall, he's going to have a few batted down every now and then.

"The challenges are you've got to man a guy up a little bit more instead of just zone blocking everything and working combination blocks."

Grimes said there will be times when senior tackles Tyler Polumbus and Edwin Harrison will feel like they're on an island in the wider scheme. "There are certain times when you have to say, Hey, it's me against this guy right here," Grimes said.

The approach is an adjustment for players like Polumbus, Harrison and center Daniel Sanders, who have never used such wide splits at CU in the past. It's not such a big deal for most of the offensive linemen on the roster because they are new to the team.

The five starting offensive linemen played every snap together in the season-opening win over Colorado State. Grimes was pleased with their endurance and pride. He said the Buffs played well at times but missed some assignments in the running game and the passing game.

Guards Devin Head and Wes Palazzi are the least-experienced members of the group. Head performed much better in this season opener than he did in his only other start in a 2006 season- opening loss to Montana State.

Palazzi also fared well in the first action of his career after sitting out a redshirt year last season as a true freshman. Both guards were called for false starts in the game.

The line surrendered only one sack but allowed Cody Hawkins to be hit on several occasions, including two hard hits on back-to-back plays during one third-quarter series. Hawkins also had at least three balls batted at the line of scrimmage, proving that wide splits can't cure the problem of having a quarterback who is short in stature.

Perhaps the biggest error of the day from the line was committed by Sanders, who snapped the ball to Hawkins on one play in the shotgun before the young signal-caller was ready. The ball caromed off Hawkins' leg and CSU recovered

O-line plays some solitaire

the fumble.

Hawkins and Sanders each said it was a communication problem.

Prior to facing the Rams in the opener, Sanders had never shotgun snapped in a game before. It was his first game playing center since his senior year of high school in Vista, Calif. Sanders, a fourth-year junior, has played guard since coming to CU in 2004.

Sanders said he is getting more comfortable by the day at center, and aside from the botched snap, he believes he performed well in his first college game at the position. Sanders said all five offensive linemen played with a sense of urgency against the Rams.

"No one had that look in their eye that they didn't know if they were going to be able to make it or win the game," Sanders said. "As soon as we got out there, the whole game, everybody was going full speed believing that we were going to win. That's the first step along the way."

This week the Buffs face a talented Arizona State defensive line featuring a senior, two juniors and a sophomore in starting roles. The Sun Devils are led in the trenches by senior defensive tackle Michael Marquardt, who was named to several preseason All-Pac 10 teams.

Sophomore defensive end Dexter Davis was a honorable mention Freshman All-American last season with six sacks and 40 tackles.

The Sun Devils were dominant in their season opener against San Jose State, allowing just 115 total yards of offense. The Sun Devils allowed the Spartans to cross midfield just three times.

Notable

ASU coach Dennis Erickson said Monday that reserve running back Keegan Herring remains questionable for Saturday's game with a sprained neck, but he believes Herring is tough and has a legitimate chance to play. ... Five ASU offensive linemen, including four of the five returning starters, have already earned their undergraduate degrees. ... CU coach Dan Hawkins will have his weekly press conference today and the Buffs return to the practice fields this afternoon. ... The entire CU marching band is planning to bus to the Arizona State game, leaving on Friday.

2007 CU schedule

Sept. 1 — CU 31, Colorado St. 28, OT

Sept. 8 — at Arizona State, 8:15 p.m., FSN

Sept. 15 — FLORIDA STATE, 8 p.m., ESPN

Sept. 22 — MIAMI, OHIO, 1:30 p.m., no TV

Sept. 29 — OKLAHOMA

Oct. 6 — at Baylor

Oct. 13 — at Kansas State

Oct. . 20 — KANSAS

Oct. 27 — at Texas Tech

Nov. 3 — MISSOURI

Nov. 10 — at Iowa State

Nov. 23 — NEBRASKA, 10 a.m. (ABC)



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First look: Arizona State

Game 2

Matchup: Colorado (1-0) at Arizona State (1-0).

Game time: Saturday, 8:15 p.m. at Sun Devil Stadium (71,706) Tempe, Ariz.

On the air: Fox Sports Net; KOA (850 AM). Web site: thesundevils.cstv.com

Last time

Arizona State ran for 182 yards and quarterback Rudy Carpenter completed 21 of 37 passes for 248 yards and two touchdowns, leading the Sun Devils to a 21-3 win last season at Folsom Field. The Buffs missed their best chance at a touchdown when quarterback Bernard Jackson fumbled at the goal line in the second half. CU generated just 219 yards of total offense, with 109 coming from tailback Hugh Charles.

The series

This is only the second meeting in the series. The Sun Devils won the first contest last season 21-3 in Boulder.

The coach

Dennis Erickson is 1-0 in his first season at ASU and has a career record of 149-65-1 at the college level.

The lowdown

ASU defensive coordinator Craig Bray served as the CU secondary coach in 2004 and 2005, and Matt Lubick, son of Colorado State coach Sonny Lubick, is the ASU safeties coach and recruiting coordinator. ... Backup running back Keegan Herring could miss the CU game after suffering a neck injury in the opener against San Jose State. ... ASU ran for 259 yards on 53 carries in its first game, using six different ball carriers. ... Two ASU offensive linemen — Mike Pollack and Brandon Rodd — are on the Lombardi Award preseason watch list. ... The Sun Devils allowed only 115 yards of total offense to San Jose State. ... Linebacker Robert James started his season with 10 tackles and a fumble recovery.

Who to know

QB Rudy Carpenter: One of the best quarterbacks in the nation with 19 consecutive starts under his belt. He has completed 61 percent of his passes and thrown for 4,993 yards and 42 touchdowns in his career.

WR Ryan Torain: A candidate for the Doak Walker award. He has three consecutive 100-yard games to his credit, including rushing for 123 yards and three touchdowns in the season opener. **S Josh Barrett:** One of the premier safeties in college football and one of the best athlete's on the ASU roster. Barrett started the season with just one tackle against San Jose State.

Late Saturday **ASU 45, San Jose St. 3 San Jose St. 3 0 0 0— 3**

Arizona St. 10 21 7 7—45

First Quarter

ASU — Torain 1 run (Weber kick), 10:44.

SJS — FG Strubeck 28, 3:47.

ASU — FG Weber 44, 1:04.

Second Quarter

ASU — Torain 13 run (Weber kick), 11:29.

ASU — M.Jones 27 pass from Carpenter (Weber kick), 8:58.

ASU — Torain 3 run (Weber kick), :27.

Third Quarter

ASU — Taylor 11 pass from Carpenter (Weber kick), 10:21.

Fourth Quarter

ASU — Pettes 5 pass from Sullivan (Weber kick), 8:47.

A — 0.

SJS ASU

First downs 7 33

Rushes-yards 26-40 53-250

Passing 75 270

Comp-Att-Int 11-23-2 23-32-0

Return Yards 17 70

Punts-Avg. 8-45.5 2-38.5

Fumbles-Lost 1-0 2-1

Penalties-Yards 3-30 5-40

Time of Possession 22:50 37:10

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — San Jose St., Tafralis 6-19, Island 2-13, D.Collins 4-10, Callier 6-9, Y.Davis 1-1, LaSecla 2-1, Avila 2-(minus 2), S.Flynn 3-(minus 11). Arizona St., Torain 17-123, Herring 16-76, P.Jones 13-38, Team 1-8, Sullivan 2-4, Carpenter 2-1, Ptacek 2-0.

PASSING — San Jose St., Tafralis 5-13-2-39, S.Flynn 4-6-0-19, LaSecla 2-4-0-17. Arizona St., Carpenter 14-20-0-197, Sullivan 9-12-0-73.

RECEIVING — San Jose St., Richmond 5-32, Callier 2-19, K.Flynn 1-10, Jurovich 1-9, Marah 1-3, French 1-2. Arizona St., M.Jones 4-63, K.Williams 3-63, Gray 3-29, Taylor 3-21, McGaha 2-33, Kimbrough 2-27, Thompson 2-18, Torain 1-9, Pettes 1-5, Miller 1-3, Herring 1-(minus 1).



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Buffs' Dizon starts strong

Linebacker begins Butkus Award chase with solid effort

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Jordon Dizon's quest to become Colorado's third Butkus winner over the past two decades got off to an eventful start Saturday.

The linebacker was credited with a career-high 20 tackles in CU's 31-28 overtime defeat of Colorado State.

Dizon estimated he hit CSU running back Kyle Bell 40 times and had a few missed tackles, leaving him sore on Sunday.

While the Buffs' defense is designed to funnel ball carriers in Dizon's direction, there's much more to his success than just design, according to at least one teammate.

"He's Jordon Dizon, and he has an on and an off switch, and he doesn't get tired," cornerback Terrence Wheatley said. "He loves to play and he loves to hit people, obviously.

"He's smart, and he knows everything. Knowing him, talking to him after the game, he was like me. He was not going to lose, and if he had to get 30 tackles, I'm sure he would've.

"He has always been aggressive, kind of quiet, speaks up when he needs to. He's your typical blue-collar guy who shows up, does his job and moves on."

Dizon deflected credit.

"If you look at our defense, we have a great core," he said. "The D-line does good, they eat up blocks, so I make tackles. When they do good, then I do amazing. I have to give it up to them.

"You watch the film, Brandon (Nicolas) and George (Hypolite) were taking up two blocks at one time, and I was running free the whole time."

Dizon said he expects Arizona State on Saturday (8:28 p.m. kickoff, FSR) to take a similar approach to CSU's.

"They have big guys up front, and they're going to try to ram it down our throats," Dizon said. "Saturday's game opened our eyes.

"Colorado State hurt us with the run a little bit, so they're going to try to do the exact same things."

Redshirt dilemmas: An ongoing story in 2007 will be which true freshmen play and which ones don't.

Assuming running back Demetrius Sumler subs for Hugh Charles, CU will start four redshirt freshmen on offense Saturday.

The others are quarterback Cody Hawkins, guard Wes Palazzi and receiver Scotty McKnight.

"You don't sacrifice long-term success for short-term gains," Buffs coach Dan Hawkins said. "We obviously want to win football games right now; we're going to do whatever it takes to win football games right now. But we also want to be prudent. If there's a guy that we feel like is not quite there, we want to see what his development looks like.

"It's like Cody last year. You go, 'Gosh, we might need this guy. Let's hang, let's hang, let's hang. If we can make it through without



Colorado State running back Kyle Bell, center, fumbles as he is hit Saturday by Colorado linebacker Jordon Dizon, left, and safety Daniel Dykes in the fourth quarter of Colorado's 31-28 overtime win in Denver. **AP/Jack Dempsey**

using him, let's do it.' We're like that with a lot of those guys."

Hawkins said during camp that as many as 25 freshmen — true and redshirt — could play in 2007.

Only two true freshmen debuted against CSU: wide receiver Kendrick Celestine and kicker Tyler Cope.

One true freshman coaches planned to play in 2007 was receiver Josh Smith. His status remains uncertain while he recovers from a bruised kidney. Hawkins said earlier he hoped Smith might return by Sept. 15 against Florida State. Smith said he would have to wait and see.

What they're saying: Arizona State coach Dennis Erickson and quarterback Rudy Carpenter held their weekly news conferences Monday.

"(Hawkins) is a great coach," Erickson said. "I've known him for a long time personally. I've watched him grow as a coach over the years, starting when he took over for coach (Dirk) Koetter at Boise State and the great success they've had and have continued to have, of course. I've watched him at Colorado. He's very good at dealing with players, from what I see. He's got a philosophy that he doesn't vary from. They're obviously good offensively and defensively.

"You watch them against Colorado State this year compared to last year, they're a much improved football team, on both sides of the football. The biggest thing is the quarterback play. (Cody Hawkins) knows what he's doing and understands the offense.

"He's probably been studying it since he was about 6 years old. I think last year they were very good defensively and still are, but they were hurting a little bit on offense just because of that position, and they are a lot better now there."

Carpenter said he expects CU to be more physical than San Jose State, which the Sun Devils beat, 45-3, in their season opener.

"I know their linebackers are good players and are coming back," Carpenter said. "I expect them to be a little bit stronger up front and more physical than San Jose State was.

"Their linebackers are fast, physical players, so I expect them to bring a little more than what we got last week.

"Their defensive backs are new, so I think that's something that we might have to look at and see what we can do with that."

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

cu football

Tricks big treat for Buffs

Unusual plays have usual result in CU's win

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 09/03/2007 11:55:30 PM MDT

Boulder - Call it "Hawk ball."

Quarterback in motion. Direct snaps to a variety of running backs. Quarterback lined up as a wide receiver. Lateral back to the quarterback for a flea-flicker.

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins tried so many gadget plays in the 31-28 overtime victory over Colorado State, it's a wonder he has any tricks left for the second game of the season Saturday night at Arizona State.

Memo to Sun Devils coaches: He does.

"Part of the joy of the game is to put on film of the other team and try to be creative," Hawkins said.

Like some mad scientist, Hawkins must be already wringing his hands in anticipation of his next chalkboard experiment.

Hawkins won't

give away any secrets but admits that pages of his old Boise State playbook haven't been used by the Buffaloes. That will come. Last fall, he couldn't force-

Colorado Football

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- Visit [Tom Kensler's CU blog](#)

feed too much to players adjusting to the new staff and a different system. And he lacked a quarterback who could make all the throws and strike fear in the opponent's defense.

But with Hawkins' elder son, Cody Hawkins, now taking the snaps, watch out.

"That's just kind of his whole deal," offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said of Dan Hawkins' taste for tinkering.

You'll hear other head coaches say they concentrate mostly on what they do and concern themselves less with what the opponent does. Those conventional thinkers need not ask Dan Hawkins to join their fraternity.

"Dan talks about 'pressure over defense' and taking some shots," Helfrich said. "We're always going to be a (taking) shots kind of offense. They're not necessarily all 'trick' plays, but big momentum-gaining type plays.

"You're trying to exploit something vertically as

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much as you can. We've been that way forever as a philosophy."

Dan Hawkins said the genesis for his gimmickry dates to the mid-1980s when he was an assistant at Cal-Davis, his alma mater. Cal-Davis typically lacked the talent to overwhelm its opponents, so the coaching staff won with X's and O's.

"There's no question you have to have players," Hawkins said. "But the other side is, the opponent has players. They have coaches. They have scholarships. They watch film, too.

"So you'd better do some things that can't really be coached against, or at least they haven't prepared for."

Such as quarterback Cody Hawkins setting up as a wide receiver against Colorado State.

"You guys saw me split out there - it was not pretty," Cody joked to reporters after the game.

Make no mistake, Cody loves it. As a youngster, Cody would sit in the stands above Boise State's blue turf and watch Dad create some magic.

"That's kind of what makes the sport fun," Cody said. "Yeah, you're going to need some hard-nosed plays and play hardball. But it's always fun when you can get those trick plays in there and give the other team something they haven't seen and experiment a little bit."

If Colorado's crazy offense didn't keep CSU defenders on their heels, at least it must have got

them thinking. CU scored 31 points without arguably the Buffs' three most explosive offensive threats. Freshman wideout Josh Smith is healing a bruised kidney. Senior Bernard Jackson, last year's starting quarterback who was converted to a run-catch "slash" role, didn't have academic clearance to suit up. And senior

Post Poll - CU-ASU

How will the non-conference football game between Colorado and Arizona State shake out Saturday?

tailback Hugh Charles, who has sprinter's speed, pulled up with a strained hamstring during the game's first series. He did not return.

Even so, Colorado players did not panic when falling behind by 11 points in the third quarter.

"We were still fired up," Cody Hawkins said. "We knew we had a lot of good plays. We knew when we got the ball things were going to pop."

Dan Hawkins should not get all the credit for CU's

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bag of tricks, Cody said.

"Coach (Eric) Kiesau came from Cal, where they run a lot of great stuff," Cody said. "Coach Helfrich came from Arizona State, Coach (Jeff) Grimes came from BYU. Everybody on the staff collaborated on this offense. It's not just my father. It's kind of a hybrid."

The basic strategy is to catch a defense in a certain formation that puts the opponent at a disadvantage and susceptible to a surprise play, Helfrich said.

"Defenses usually line up a certain way against things," Helfrich said. "If we can line them up in something, hopefully we can exploit that."

When a big play works, the benefits go beyond moving the chains, Dan Hawkins said. It's like a basketball team getting a lift from watching a teammate dunk the ball with a thunder jam.

"All those big plays help you in the grand scheme of things," Dan Hawkins said. "They help you emotionally, psychologically, personally."

Staff writer Tom Kensler can be reached at 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com.

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CU's Eberhart earns Big 12 award

By The Denver Post

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University Colorado place kicker Kevin Eberhart, a senior from Broomfield, was named a Big 12 Conference player of the week, the league said.

In Colorado's 31-28 overtime victory over Colorado State on Saturday, Eberhart forced overtime with :13 seconds remaining after a 22-yard field goal, then hit a 35-yard game-winner in the first extra session.

Eberhart, the special teams selection, joins offensive player of the week Marlon Lucky of Nebraska and defensive player Pig Brown of Missouri.

The selections are made by a panel of media.

Wyoming gets two MWC plaudits Wyoming cornerback Julius Stinson and kicker Billy Vinnedge have been named the Mountain West Conference defensive and special teams players of the week.

Wyoming beat Virginia 23-3 in both teams' season opener last weekend.

Stinson is a cornerback and had two interceptions against Virginia. He also had four tackles, including

one for a loss of 10 yards.

The Cowboys' defense dominated the game, holding the Cavaliers to just 110 yards on offense.

Vinnedge kicked three field goals against Virginia, for 48, 40 and 39 yards. He also averaged nearly 50 yards on punts, including one punt that sailed 59 yards.

The Mountain West Conference offensive player of the week was BYU's Harvey Unga. A freshman, Unga had 194 all-purpose as BYU beat Arizona 20-7.

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