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cu football

There's no challenge Dizon can't tackle

By Tom Kensler Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder - There's no truth to the rumor Jordon Dizon once wrestled a bear to the ground. That's only because Colorado's senior linebacker hasn't had the opportunity.

But Dizon did chase wild boar through steep terrain near his hometown of Waimea on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Waimea is a small town known for its statue of Captain James Cook that commemorates the explorer's first contact with the islands in a nearby harbor in 1778.

Far removed from trendy tourist destinations, folks in Waimea take pride in doing things for themselves, without thinking twice. That's how Dizon plays football. Instinctively. Passionately.

It also might explain how Dizon, although undersized for a major-college linebacker at 6 feet and 220 pounds, leads the nation in tackles per game (13.8). He had 19 in the season opener against Colorado State.

Colorado (2-2) might need at least that many stops from Dizon on Saturday for the Buffaloes to

slow down third-ranked Oklahoma (4-0) at Folsom Field.

This much is certain: Every one of the Sooners' offensive players will become aware of No. 44 before the game is over.

"Jordon never stops until the play is over," Colorado cornerback Terrence Wheatley said. "When I almost intercepted a pass against Miami of Ohio, I looked up and there was Jordon. I said: 'What are you doing here? You're supposed to be playing linebacker.'"

The Flatirons reminded Dizon of the craggy mountains

near Waimea. He verbally committed to Colorado during his junior year of high school after having attended a CU football camp. Assistant coach Brian Cabral, who grew up in Hawaii, first spotted Dizon while visiting a Waimea practice to check out a big lineman he was recruiting. near Waimea. He verbally committed to Colorado during his junior year of high school after having attended a CU football camp. Assistant coach Brian Cabral, who grew up in Hawaii, first spotted Dizon while visiting a Waimea practice to check out a big lineman he was recruiting.

Cabral determined the lineman was too slow, but Waimea coaches suggested he keep an eye on a freshman running back. That was Dizon, who would become Kauai's top player as a do-everything contributor splitting his time between tailback and linebacker.

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"We had no idea what position he would play when he first got here," Cabral recalled. "We put him at safety because we were low on numbers there. But after two days (of August drills) it was obvious we needed to get him closer to the ball. He's been starting at linebacker ever since."

Always practicing like he plays, Dizon became a leader and this year became a team captain. It took awhile, however, because he didn't say much during his first year in Boulder.

"There were communication problems because of the way we talked in Hawaii," Dizon said. "When I wrote my first paper here at Colorado, I think I got a D-minus. I had sentence structures that were all wrong. There were words that were misused, and I thought it sounded perfectly."

Other freshmen might have quit and gone home. Not Dizon. He is an honors student majoring in economics.

"I just had to adjust," Dizon said. "I remember (former CU defensive tackle) Vaka Manupuna taking me out to buy some winter clothes. I didn't even have a jacket."

A sprinter in high school, Dizon is able to adjust and adapt on the field as well. Linebacker Brad Jones recalled Dizon making a rare mental mistake against Florida State when he lined up in the wrong spot.

"He realized it right at the snap and ran over to where he was supposed to be and still made the tackle," Jones said, shaking his head. "I just said,

"Wow."

Not meaning any disrespect to Matt Russell, Chad Brown, Greg Biekert, Ted Johnson, Jashon Sykes, Hannibal Navies and others, Cabral calls Dizon the "most complete" linebacker he has coached.

"I've had big, tough guys," Cabral said. "But in reality, they were run-stoppers. Jordon can do everything."

CU linebacker R.J. Brown can vouch for that. Brown and Dizon played against each other in high school. They have roomed together.

"I remember one time our toilet was overflowing. It was bad. I really didn't want to go in there. But Jordon stomped right in and fixed it, didn't even hesitate.

"That's the way he plays linebacker. He doesn't need to think about things first. He just goes foot-by-foot and fixes the problem."

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Former CU recruit set to face Buffaloes

Fountain's Loadholt checks in at 6-8, 352 for Sooners

By Ryan Thorburn
Friday, September 28, 2007

Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford and running backs Allen Patrick and DeMarco Murray are getting most of the attention and credit for the Sooners' sensational start on offense.

And they all deserve to share the spotlight.

Third-ranked OU is 4-0 and averaging 61.5 points per game entering Saturday's game against Colorado at Folsom Field (11:30 a.m., FSN).

But the revamped offensive line — led by Fountain product Phil Loadholt — is the reason why the faithful in Norman believe the Sooners will be competing in the BCS championship game in January.

OU is averaging 5.8 yards per rush, 11.1 yards per pass play and has only allowed two sacks in 112 pass attempts.

"We've done pretty well up to this point," Loadholt said. "There are still a lot of things we can do better."

The 6-foot-8, 352-pound Loadholt is the Sooners' new starting left tackle. After his father was stationed at Fort Carson in 1993, he grew up to become a three-sport star at Fountain-Fort Carson High School.

And, yes, Loadholt was recruited by CU coming out of high school. He even gave Gary Barnett a verbal commitment before "some grade problems" led to his enrollment at Garden City Community College.

Loadholt was a two-time junior college All-American, the Jayhawk Conference lineman of the year in 2006, and was also named to the school's 3.0 student excellence list.

Enter, Bob Stoops.

"After junior college I pretty much knew where I wanted to play," said Loadholt, who enrolled at OU in January. "During the recruiting process the coaches told me that we were going to have a special team here."

So far it certainly looks like the Sooners staff was right.

Despite losing Adrian Peterson to the NFL, OU is averaging 252.2 yards rushing and 310 yards passing per game.

"We've always been known as a great university for tailbacks and we have a lot of talent at tailback this year," Loadholt said. "We also have a lot of talent at quarterback, and when you have guys like that it gives the offensive coordinator the chance to open it up."

Allen and DeMarco have already combined for 602 net yards rushing and 11 touchdowns, and Chris Brown and Mossis Madu have added 235 yards and two touchdowns on the ground.

Bradford, a redshirt freshman who didn't emerge as the starter until the preseason, has 14 touchdowns and two interceptions this season while completing 78.1 percent of his passes.

"He's done a great job," Loadholt said. "He takes control in the huddle and he's the real leader on this team."

Loadholt said he is "very excited" to play at Folsom Field and will have a large number of family and friends in attendance at CU's homecoming game.

But is there a chance the rest of the visitors are looking ahead to the Oct. 6 Red River Shootout against Texas?

"We're definitely not overlooking Colorado," Loadholt said. "They're one of the best defenses we've faced up to this point. We're definitely not overlooking them. ...

"We have to prepare week-in, week-out. And as long as we do everything right and don't stop ourselves, we feel like we should be all right."

CU's starting right defensive tackle, Alonzo Barrett (6-3, 235), is looking forward to the challenge matching up with Loadholt on Saturday.

"He's a big guy," Barrett said. "I go against Tyler Polumbus (6-8, 300 pounds) every day, so I get that picture."



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Longmont, Colorado
Friday, September 28,
2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

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Toughest of tests

Improved Buffs to face high-flying Sooners

By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — The steps toward steady improvement Colorado's defense has taken each week are about to get steeper to make.

With No. 3 Oklahoma coming to town Saturday, the Buffs face an offense that leads the Big 12 in scoring, at 61.5 points per game, and is second in yards at 562.2 per game. Those figures place it first and third in the nation, and its balance of 252.2 rushing yards and 310 passing yards shows there's no weakness.

CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins has been pleased with his group's work. But he knows Saturday offers a challenge it hasn't faced in 2007.

"This is a fantastic football team we're playing this week, and they don't have a lot of chinks in their armor," he said. "They have a great running game with three solid running backs, and they have a great passing game with two great tight ends and a bunch of wide receivers. They're going to attack us in every area, and we have to be ready for that."

Statistically, the Buffs have become one of the nation's better defenses. They're fourth in the Big 12 and 18th nationally in yards allowed, 288.2 a game, and fifth and 31st in scoring, allowing 19.2 points per contest. CU's 42-0 shutout of Miami-Ohio last week helped those figures, but more impressive were the 221 yards the Buffs limited Florida State to the week earlier.

Collins continues to say his team will try to stop the run first and the pass later. CU's numbers indicate marked improvement in defending the pass this year. In 2006, teams hit 67 percent of their throws; this year, that percentage is 51.

"We've been a good defense for a while, and we know we're good," linebacker Jordon Dizon said. "When everyone does everything right and does their own job, we can be good."

In a trend that contrasts with the tradition of many Big 12 programs, six of the nation's top 17 passing offenses are in the league. That means the CU pass defense, while apparently improved, has yet to face its toughest days.

What is working for the Buffs is the cornerback play of Terrence Wheatley and Ben Burney. Wheatley has two interceptions and leads the league in passes defended with seven. Teams aren't really picking on Burney, the junior who plays right cornerback. Coaches suspected opponents would stay away from Wheatley this year, but that hasn't been the case.

"It doesn't surprise me," Burney said. "I just think teams are running their offenses."

Head coach Dan Hawkins isn't sure that will continue during Big 12 play.



CU cornerback Terrence Wheatley, right, shown last season against Arizona State, and the Buffs' defense will have their hands full Saturday against high-scoring Oklahoma. **Times-Call / Joshua Buck**

“Particularly as the season wears on, you’re going to see teams that don’t want to attack T-Wheat and they’ll try to go after (Burney),” Hawkins said. “But he’s really improved.”

Oklahoma’s Malcom Kelly and Juaquin Iglesias will be the best receivers CU has faced in 2007. Combined, they average 198.2 yards per game, and they’ve scored nine touchdowns.

Burney said it’s important the Buffs pressure Oklahoma’s redshirt freshman quarterback Sam Bradford and cause mistakes. CU has forced only four turnovers in 2007, and the Buffs are minus-6 in turnover margin. Coaches acknowledge that’s the next area of improvement they seek defensively.

But Burney and Wheatley will be asked to keep up Saturday with a pair who could be All-Big 12 come December. They say they’ll try to keep it simple.

“They’re big guys who can run,” Wheatley said. “You just have to play fundamentally sound and know where your help is. You can’t take too many chances with these guys; you have to pick and choose your shots.”

Said Burney: “They’re human, just like you. You can’t mythologize them.”

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

Rocky Mountain News

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Big opportunity for Buffaloes

No. 3 Oklahoma is highest-ranked team in Hawkins' tenure

By **B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News**
September 28, 2007

BOULDER - To say they have been counting the days until this rematch would be a stretch; to say the University of Colorado football team has anticipated it would not be.

A season after losing 24-3 in Norman, Okla., the Buffaloes - contrary to the opinion of oddsmakers - believe they are better equipped on several fronts to confront Oklahoma.

The chance to prove it arrives Saturday (11:30 a.m., Folsom Field, FSN Rocky Mountain). And it is a chance never before offered to a Dan Hawkins-coached team; the No. 3 Sooners will be the highest-ranked opponent he has prepared a team to face.

"They are really good," Hawkins said of an opponent confidently perched in the top 10 in six NCAA Division I-A statistical categories, including first in scoring (61.5 points a game).

Continued Hawkins: "There are no real weaknesses; they can throw it, they can run it, they are big up front, they've got speed, they have receivers, running backs. Same thing on defense - big and fast. . . . They are a very complete football team."

Others think so, too.

After watching his Conference USA team succumb 62-21 last week, Tulsa coach Todd Graham said Oklahoma "is in a different league" - and he was referring to something on a plane above the Big 12 Conference.

"We tried to blitz the quarterback early and make some things happen and, you know, you kind of roll the dice because the two wideouts are so good," Graham said. "We bracketed, double covered, (Malcolm) Kelly early, and then they went to (Joaquin) Iglesias. Then we balanced it back up and they went back to Kelly.

"The biggest matchup we had was their wide receivers one-on-one with our corners. . . . When you blitz, you have to play one-on-one coverage, (and) when you're playing a team of that caliber with that type of athletes, it really accentuates your mistakes."

Kelly (17 catches, 349 yards, seven touchdowns) and Iglesias (27 catches, 444 yards, two touchdowns) will be the best pair of receivers the Buffs have faced this season.

CU's best cover corner is Terrence Wheatley, who leads the Big 12 in passes defended (seven) and is tied with six other players for the interception lead (two).

But CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins says Wheatley won't be "singled up" on either Oklahoma receiver.

Instead, the Buffs will continue to play "sides," with Wheatley primarily on the left and Benjamin Burney on the right.

"I've expected teams to come at me more than they would at 'T-Wheat,' " Burney said. "But as the season's gone along, it's kind of evened out, for whatever reason."

Still acclimating to a new coach, new coordinators and new scheme, the Buffs went into last season's game against the Sooners "with two base (defense) calls," Collins said. "We'll have more this time, and we understand more of what we're



David Crenshaw © AP

Oklahoma receiver Malcolm Kelly forms half of one of the best receiving tandems the University of Colorado will face this season. "There are no real weaknesses," CU coach Dan Hawkins said of the Sooners.

doing."

Plus, CU figures to not be as limited offensively this time. Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops recognizes the upgrade redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins has brought to the offense.

"There's more (for the Sooners) to deal with," Stoops said. "There's good balance in what they're doing (and) their defense is one of the better ones we played last year. They're a solid football team."

Or at least they're trying to be.

Beating a ranked team would be a start. CU hasn't done that in five seasons (14-game losing streak), with the most recent win over a Top 25 team coming Nov. 8, 2003, against Missouri.

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Local college football, September 28

By B.G. Brooks, Randy Holtz, Jim Benton & Pat Rooney, Rocky Mountain News
September 28, 2007

CU

Carries by the bulk

Senior **Hugh Charles** will get the majority of the work Saturday against No. 3 Oklahoma, running backs coach **Darian Hagan** said Thursday. But Hagan again will use **Demetrius Sumler**, **Brian Lockridge** and **Byron Ellis**.

Charles, who recorded his sixth career 100-yard rushing game (123) in the 42-0 rout of Miami (Ohio), had a good week of practice, Hagan said.

"He's running hard, making effortless cuts," Hagan said. "I'm happy with him; he's going to get the bulk of the carries, but I'm playing all four of them."

Earlier in the week, Hagan said Charles could have surpassed 200 yards had he broken three more runs available to him against Miami.

"He's not trusting himself, not trusting the guys in front of him," Hagan said earlier this week. "You can't do that as a running back. You have to be decisive (and) hit it hard downhill."

Time well spent?

With Oklahoma leading NCAA Division I-A in scoring, the argument could be made time of possession will be important Saturday. Just don't try to make the case to Buffaloes coach **Dan Hawkins**.

He sees the category as overrated and Big 12 Conference statistics seem to strengthen his belief.

CU is third in the league in time of possession, averaging 30:55, while Oklahoma is fourth at 30:54.

Having an edge in time of possession is "OK, if you score," Hawkins said. "We had nada in a 14-play drive against Florida State, so it didn't help us that week."

Bottom line: Oklahoma averages 61.5 points a game, CU 23.2.

Etc.

- She says ABBA, he says "Aaargh." Hawkins is more of a Nitty Gritty Dirt Band kind of guy, but he gallantly, graciously attended Thursday night's ABBA concert at Red Rocks with wife **Misti**.
- Thursday's Boulder Buffs Club "Super Luncheon" drew a record audience of about 600 to the Millennium Harvest House.
- As of Thursday afternoon, about 3,000 tickets remained for Saturday's game.



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Colorado tailback
Hugh Charles can
expect to get the bulk
of the carries for the
Buffaloes on
Saturday against
Oklahoma, but three
other backs also will
get the ball, an
assistant coach said.