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Bowl awaits Buffs

*By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — George Hypolite described it best.

He and his University of Colorado teammates will go to a bowl game next month, a guarantee they received Saturday thanks to Fresno State's 45-29 defeat of Kansas State.

The Wildcats were striving to become the ninth bowl-eligible Big 12 bowl team. They failed, leaving the league with eight eligible programs for eight bowls games.

So CU is in. Against whom, when and where were trivial details Saturday, the day after the Buffs beat Nebraska, 65-51, to finish 6-6.

"A bowl game is like a vacation — as long as it's not home, it's great," Hypolite said.

The junior defensive tackle had other things to discuss Saturday. For starters, he appears to have played against the Cornhuskers with a hamstring injury that's more serious than he earlier indicated.

Asked Saturday if it's torn, Hypolite answered, "Maybe." "We know for sure what it is, but I'm not telling you what it is," he said.

Hypolite laughed when a reporter observed a "maybe" is not a "no."

Last week, Hypolite said his leg was fine, and following Friday's game, he conceded he played with "a little hamstring thing."

"My teammates give me so much, and to be able to fight through an injury and play for them on Saturdays, that's the least I can do," Hypolite said.

Meanwhile, Hypolite left the door open to the possibility he won't return to the football program in 2008.

He is on pace to graduate in May as an ethnic studies major, with an emphasis in American Indian studies and a counter emphasis in African-American studies. He wants to go to law school, and has also developed into an NFL prospect.

Hypolite said he has not decided for sure if he'll play football at CU in 2008, but added he's "probably coming back." "It's like 99.99999 percent that I will be playing football here next year," he said.

"It's just, you know, when you have opportunities out there ... I'll look and see what they are, but I'm coming back to school."

Hypolite said he did not know if he could attend law school and play football at the same time.

"To me, it's just such an honor for me to be in this position right now," Hypolite said.

Others in the program own similar feelings today. CU has gone from a frightening 2006 in which it went 2-10, lost to its biggest rivals — as well as a Division I-AA team — to 6-6 and postseason play in 2007.

Their bowl invitation won't be officially unveiled until next Sunday, but the Buffs' most likely destinations are the Insight Bowl in Tempe, Ariz., on Dec. 31, or the Independence Bowl on Dec. 30 in Shreveport, La.

The Insight has the sixth pick of Big 12 bowl-eligible teams, and the Independence selects seventh.

The Texas Bowl in Houston, on Dec. 28, has the eighth pick, should the Buffs fall that far.

Coach Dan Hawkins didn't mention a preference.

He lauded Fresno State coach Pat Hill for defeating Kansas State and answered questions about what his program's improvement means.

"I believe very strongly in what we do and how we do it," Hawkins said. "It's probably not accurate to say I can 100 percent guarantee it's going to work. But in my mind I feel like it's pretty close to that."

CU will lift weights, run and focus on school work this week.

The team will practice next Saturday and Sunday. Coaches will also be out recruiting.

Finally, Hawkins called Friday's introductions by South Park's Eric Cartman "awesome."

It turns out they were weeks in the making.

CU sports information director Dave Plati came up with the idea while brainstorming with ABC producer, Chris Pfeiffer. ABC and ESPN use celebrities for pre-game introductions prior to games they televise, and there's a contest to find the "most original guys to do the deal," Plati said.

Plati contacted the South Park people via e-mail with the help of a CU professor of film studies. His answer didn't come for three or four weeks. The idea was born the week before CU played Florida State on Sept. 15.

Trey Parker and Matt Stone, CU alums, create the popular TV show.

"One of the things we're always trying to do is reach out to our alums and get them engaged, which Dave did a great job with that," Hawkins said.

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Eligible Buffs await bowl fate

Insight, Texas among possible destinations

By Tom Kensler

The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Destination Houston? Tem-pe? Shreveport?

The Colorado football team may not know where it's headed for a bowl game until the official announcement Dec. 2, but will be happy wherever it winds up.

"No matter where you go, it's a new town with a new team and you get to enjoy it," coach Dan Hawkins said.

Colorado (6-6, 4-4 Big 12) had to beat rival Nebraska on Friday to become bowl-eligible with a sixth victory. The Buffaloes accomplished that mission in stunning fashion, scoring 34 straight points to overcome an 11-point halftime deficit for a 65-51 win.



CU cornerback Cha'pelle Brown returns an interception 51 yards to set up a fourth-quarter TD against Nebraska on Friday. (Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post)

"We didn't want the season to end today," junior cornerback Benjamin Burney said while receiving pats on the back from delirious fans as he floated off the field.

Colorado Football

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"Going to a bowl game is huge. The school gets the money, there's presents, we get all those extra practices, it's just a joy going somewhere with your teammates."

Hawkins said the players are off until Saturday, except for running and weight room.

"It's a great opportunity for us," Hawkins said. "It'll be great to get some extra practices in. It's great for the fans."

With Kansas State's 45-29 loss Saturday at Fresno State, there are only eight Big 12 teams eligible for bowls. The conference has tie-ins with eight bowls. Had K-State won, they would have been the ninth Big 12 team with at least six wins.

Fiesta Bowl vice president Shawn Schoeffler said CU looks like a bowl-worthy team to him. At Friday's game, Schoeffler was representing the Insight Bowl, which is conducted by the Fiesta Bowl organization. The Insight Bowl, played New Year's Eve in Tempe, Ariz., pits a Big 12 team against a Big Ten team.

"I don't think there's any doubt that Colorado is a bowl team," Schoeffler said Friday. "They've had a great season and Coach (Dan) Hawkins has done a great job with them. They have improved every week. They'll certainly be a team on our list."

Schoeffler was not about to reveal how high CU might rank on the Insight Bowl's list, and it may be too

early for those decisions anyway. Other possibilities for the Buffaloes are the Dec. 28 Texas Bowl in Houston or the Dec. 30 Independence Bowl in Shreveport, La.

The Insight Bowl gets the No. 6 choice of eligible Big 12 teams. Following the Insight Bowl in the pecking order are the Independence Bowl and Texas Bowl.

At 6-6, Colorado didn't finish with the sixth-best overall record among Big 12 teams. But adjustments can be made among bowls in the selection process. Each bowl seeks a good fit and does not make decisions based solely on a team's record.

"We want the Insight Bowl to grow (in stature)," Schoeffler said, "so for us it's about getting a matchup that's intriguing."

Colorado has a lot going for it. Whereas some 6-6 or even 7-5 teams had losing records in conference play, the Buffs went 4-4 in league play and finished with an impressive showing against their archrival.

Mid-level bowls look for something interesting to promote, and Colorado's Sept. 29 win over then-No. 3 Oklahoma sets it apart. The father-son relationship of Hawkins and quarterback Cody Hawkins draws media coverage wherever CU plays. And the Buffs have some star power, with Butkus Award finalist Jordon Dizon at linebacker, all-Big 12 candidates Terrence Wheatley at cornerback and George Hypolite at defensive tackle, and running back Hugh Charles, who rushed for 169 yards and three touchdowns against Nebraska.

Also, mid-level bowls love teams on the rise. In Hawkins' second season in Boulder, the Buffs showed a marked improvement over the 2-10 record in 2006.

It remains to be seen whether Colorado's reputation of lacking a fan base that travels in large numbers to bowl games will hurt its chances with the Insight Bowl. The fact that the Buffs have already played in Tempe this season (a 33-14 loss to Arizona State on Sept. 8) can't help, either. On the other hand, Colorado is a western university, and CU officials have known Schoeffler and Fiesta Bowl president and CEO John Junker for years.

Colorado, which had lost four games during a five-game stretch before Friday's win, will be happy wherever it goes. "We've definitely had an up-and-down season," said Hypolite. "But 6-6 looks a whole lot better than 5-7." And, he added, 7-6 with a bowl win would be even sweeter.

Looking ahead to 2008

Quarterbacks

Who's back: Starter Cody Hawkins (sophomore next season), Nick Nelson (Sr.), Matt Ballenger (redshirt Fr.). Who's not: None. *Comment: Ballenger has size (6-5) and a strong arm, but it's unlikely Hawkins (2,693 yards, 19 TDs) will lose his job.*

Offensive line

Who's back: Three starters — C Daniel Sanders (Sr.), OT Ryan Miller (Soph.), OG Kai Maiava (Soph.). Who's not: Two starters — OT Tyler Polumbus and OG Edwin Harrison. *Comment: Two or three 2007 freshmen redshirts could make an impact, including OG Mike Iltis (6-3, 285) and OT Sione Tau (6-6, 310).*

Running backs

Who's back: Brian Lockridge (Soph.), Demetrius Sumler (Soph.), fullbacks Jake Behrens (Jr.) and Maurice Cantrell (Sr.). Who's not: Hugh Charles, Byron Ellis. *Comment: Lockridge showed some flash, and help is on the way with the arrival of former junior-college star P.T. Gates and four-star oral commitment Ray Polk of Phoenix.*

Wide receivers

Who's back: Josh Smith (Soph.), Scotty McKnight (Soph.), Patrick Williams (Sr.), Kendrick Celestine (Soph.), Cody Crawford (Sr.). Who's not: Dusty Sprague, Stephone Robinson. *Comment: Smith and Celestine provided an infusion of speed and athleticism.*

Tight ends

Who's back: Riar Geer (Jr.), Nate Solder (Soph.), Patrick Devenny (Jr.). Who's not: Tyson DeVree, Joe Sanders. *Comment: Look for Geer to bounce back from an injury-plagued 2007; coaches love Solder's potential.*

Defensive line

Who's back: Three starters — DE Maurice Lucas (Sr.), DT George Hypolite (Sr.) and DT Brandon Nicolas (Sr.). Who's not: DE Alonzo Barrett. *Comment: Likely a team strength, with Hypolite a potential All-America candidate.*

Linebackers

Who's back: Two starters, Brad Jones (Sr.) and Jeff Smart (Jr.). Who's not: Jordon Dizon. *Comment: Wild cards are whether Michael Sipili (suspension in 2007), R.J. Brown (concussion) and Marcus Burton (academics) will return.*

Defensive backs

Who's back: Three starters — CB Benjamin Burney (Sr.), FS Ryan Walters (Sr.) and SS Daniel Dykes (Sr.). Who's not: CB Terrence Wheatley, S Lionel Harris. *Comment: This will be a veteran unit, but the loss of Wheatley's speed will be a concern. Coaches love freshman redshirts Anthony Perkins and Anthony Wright.*

Special teams

Who's back: P Matt DiLallo (Jr.), PK Tyler Cope (Soph.), snapper Justin Drescher (Jr.). Who's not: PK Kevin Eberhart, returners Chase McBride, Wheatley. *Comment: Cope will battle newcomers for starting job.*

Colorado (6-6)

Sept. 1 Colorado St. W 31-28 OT

Sept. 8 at Arizona State L 33-14

Sept. 15 Florida State L 16-6

Sept. 22 Miami (Ohio) W 42-0

Sept. 29 Oklahoma W 27-24

Oct. 6 at Baylor W 43-23

Oct. 13 at Kansas State L 47-20

Oct. 20 Kansas L 19-14

Oct. 27 at Texas Tech W 31-26

Nov. 3 Missouri L 55-10

Nov. 10 at Iowa State L 31-28

Nov. 23 Nebraska W 65-51

2008 schedule

Aug. 30 * vs. Colorado State TBA

Sept. 6 Eastern Washington TBA

Sept. 20 at Florida State TBA

Sept. 27 West Virginia TBA

Oct. 4 Texas TBA

Oct. 11 at Kansas TBA

Oct. 18 Kansas State TBA

Oct. 25 at Missouri TBA

Nov. 1 at Texas A&M TBA

Nov. 8 Iowa State TBA

Nov. 15 Oklahoma State TBA

Nov. 28 at Nebraska TBA

* at Invesco Field at Mile High

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Hypolite had torn hamstring vs. NU

'Rabid Goldfish' will also explore his NFL options

By Kyle Ringo

Sunday, November 25, 2007

There is a very slim chance Colorado defensive lineman George Hypolite might have played his final game in Folsom Field on Friday in a win over arch-rival Nebraska.

He made the most of it.

Hypolite played 44 plays with a torn hamstring, after missing most of the practice time leading up to the contest. He chose to play against the Cornhuskers when his teammates told him they needed him.

"That's what I do," he said. "I'm here when guys need me, when guys call."

He was introduced to an ABC national television audience as the "Rabid Goldfish" by a cartoon character from the Comedy Central show "South Park." It is a made-up nickname that might be gaining traction now.

"My mom got a kick out of it," he said. "She thought it was hilarious."

And when the game was over he went into the stands in the south end zone and began conducting the Golden Buffalo Marching Band. He has developed a relationship with the band on campus and during the season on Friday nights at the Buffalo Stampede on the Pearl Street Mall.

"I feel like they don't get enough credit throughout the entire season," he said. "The cheerleaders, the band, the people working the stadium, so on and so forth, the custodians. They're a major part of this thing, too. Frankly it wouldn't run without them."

Hypolite is not a senior, but he is the only CU junior already considered a lock for a career in the National Football League. ESPN draft analyst Mel Kiper Jr., lists Hypolite as one of the top five interior defensive linemen in the country in the junior class.

After learning his team was assured of a bowl game Saturday, Hypolite said he will explore his options after the season. The NFL has a system in place for advising underclassmen at what point in the draft they might be taken if they choose to come out early.

Hypolite, who is slated to graduate in May with a degree in Ethnic Studies, said he is "99.9999" percent sure he will be back for his senior season. He is interested in attending law school.

He has had an All-Big 12 caliber season with six quarterback sacks despite facing double teams much of the time.

"It's an honor to be in this position right now and I'm kind of focused on graduating," he said.

If Hypolite did choose to turn pro, he would be the seventh Buff to do so. The last CU player to leave school for the NFL before using all of his eligibility was running back Chris Brown in 2003.



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