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cu football

CU's little QB one big success

Cody Hawkins shoulders CU offense and arms Buffs with confidence, skills

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Cody Hawkins has provided solid passing statistics - 1,457 yards, 10 touchdowns - in his first season as Colorado's starting quarterback. (AP / Waco Tribune Herald, Duane A. Laverly)

BOULDER - Appearing miscast on the practice field next to offensive linemen and other behemoths, Colorado's 5-foot-11 Cody Hawkins could be mistaken for the water boy or some coach's kid who wandered off. Scratch the last part - he is the head coach's kid.

And through six games of his first season, Hawkins is very much in control as the Buffaloes' quarterback, even if at first glance he might look out of place.

There isn't a stereotype for his position that Hawkins hasn't broken. Weighing 190 pounds, he's not big. He is not particularly quick or nimble, either. Arm strength? Perhaps a bit above average but certainly not a cannon.

"There are other ways to get it done," CU offensive coordinator Mark

Colorado Football

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Helfrich said.

Intelligence. A feel for the game. Natural leadership skills. Throwing a catchable pass that drops softly into a receiver's hands like an autumn leaf.

"One of the greatest quarterbacks at throwing on the run was Joe Montana, and he

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wasn't a great athlete," Helfrich explained. "Don't get me wrong, Cody isn't Joe Montana. But Cody has some of the same attributes."

A redshirt freshman, the 19-year-old Hawkins is getting it done, and the team is getting it done. Colorado (4-2, 2-0) leads the Big 12 North Division entering its game Saturday night at Kansas State (3-2, 1-1). The Buffs already have doubled their total victories in 2006. They stand just two wins shy of becoming bowl-eligible. The kid quarterback is a major reason for the turnaround.

Hawkins has thrown for 1,457 yards and is tied for sixth among Big 12 quarterbacks in touchdown passes with 10. He sat on the sideline last season when Colorado ranked last in the league in passing by a wide margin.

"Getting to watch last year really helped in my mental preparation," Hawkins said. "I had to know the game plan because I was one play away from playing."

Bernard Jackson stayed healthy, so Hawkins preserved his redshirt season. Coming out of the gate throwing in 2007, Hawkins passed for 201 yards and two touchdowns in his debut, a 31-28 overtime victory over Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High.

No family favoritism

Through the midway point of the season, Hawkins has quieted skeptics who figured he got

the starting job because he was Dan Hawkins' son.

On the contrary, senior wideout Dusty Sprague said those who aren't aware of Cody's family ties probably would never suspect anything from watching practices or games. If anything, Dan Hawkins might be harder on his kid. Cody can take it.

"All the qualities we thought he had, they have come out when it matters," Helfrich said. "The main thing Cody has to improve upon is his snap decision-making. He might force one or two balls a game. That's just a learning experience."

Cody has thrown nine interceptions. That's tied for second-most in the Big 12.

Rubbing it in a bit, Dan Hawkins calls them "mulligans." Good golfers don't have them. Good quarterbacks shouldn't, either.

Taking pride in being a tough teacher, Dan Hawkins termed Cody's performance through six games as "OK - not great, but not bad, either."

"I think he's handled everything awesome," Dan Hawkins said. "He's been very polished, very poised. The coach's son thing or the freshman thing or the opponent thing ... to me, he's been a stud through all that stuff."

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"As a player, I think he's done well for a guy his age. With more time, we sure hope we get over some of those glitches."

Two interceptions came off deflections, two others popped off the fingertips of receivers. But a pass that floated against Miami (Ohio) and a late throw over the middle against Baylor suggest Cody Hawkins still has much to learn.

Among Big 12 teams, Colorado is tied with Texas for ninth in turnover margin.

"You always want a clean game," Cody said. "But you can't go out there thinking not to throw an interception. Worrying about that will mess you up."

Cody's height, or lack thereof, has not been an issue. Thus far, he said he has failed to see a receiver only once, against Arizona State. Dan Hawkins said his son is tall enough.

"We've got Tyler Polumbus at 6-7 or 6-8, and Ryan Miller who is about the same," the coach said, referring to his biggest offensive tackles. "I mean, how can any quarterback be tall enough to see over those guys? Cody is able to find lanes, and we create lanes for him."

Added leadership skills

In addition to winning all the games and taking better care of the ball, Cody's resolutions for remainder of the season include becoming a more vocal leader.

"I like to talk and get people fired up, but I've had my feelers out for the first half of the season," he said. "As I continue to get more comfortable with the guys on the team, that will have to step up."

Polumbus, a senior, has been impressed with Cody's confidence and pocket presence. It's easy to forget in the huddle that Cody is only a redshirt freshman, the lineman said.

"I feel like it's Joel Klatt back there again," Polumbus said, referring to the former Buffs quarterback (2002-05) who was regarded as a consummate leader. "Cody's knowledge of the game is unbelievable. He knows where everybody is on the field."

"He's not a freshman. He's our quarterback."

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com

Big 12's young QB starters

Sam Bradford, Oklahoma

Redshirt freshman, 1,423 passing yards, 18 TDs. Was also a prep basketball star, played youth hockey.

Josh Freeman, Kansas State

Sophomore, 1,309 yards, 4 TDs. At 6-feet-6, 250 pounds, he's built like NFL first pick

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JaMarcus Russell.

Cody Hawkins, Colorado

Redshirt freshman, 1,457 yards, 10 TDs. Son of CU coach Dan Hawkins, has a feel for the game.

Colt McCoy, Texas

Sophomore, 1,578 yards, 10 TDs. Showed signs against Oklahoma of snapping out of a sophomore slump.

Todd Reesing, Kansas

Sophomore, 1,466 yards, 14 TDs. Listed at 5-feet-11, he might be closer to 5-9 but is cool under pressure.

Zac Robinson, Oklahoma State

Sophomore, 1,094 yards, 9 TDs. Former Chatfield High School star unseated incumbent starter Bobby Reid.

Blake Szymanski, Baylor

Sophomore, 1,815 passing yards, 15 TDs. Third 400-yard game of season was against CU (410).

Tom Kensler

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Rocky Mountain News

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Opportunity knocks

CU can strengthen division hopes with win at Kansas State

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News
October 12, 2007

BOULDER - At the midway point of the college football season, the University of Colorado was expected to be middle-of-the-pack or lower in the Big 12 Conference's North Division.

As they roll into Manhattan, Kan., for Saturday's game, the Buffaloes can revel in the fact they aren't close to meeting those expectations.

They're atop the North and eyeing a grand opportunity to create early separation in what figures to be a taut division race.

"We're trying not to think about it like that," CU center Daniel "Girthy" Sanders said. "Look forward too much and the present punches you in the face."

Kansas State promises to do that anyway. CU has faced physical teams in its first six games, but the Wildcats appear to have rediscovered the defensive intensity that earmarked former coach Bill Snyder's teams.

"I think the thing that really sticks out is how aggressive and physical they are, and I mean all of them," Buffs coach Dan Hawkins said.

"They come off the ball and come after you, they can run and they have good size and strength. . . . It's hard to block them. They are always playing downhill on you and coming hard."

Hawkins' second CU team also has prided itself in doing all of the above, which could reclassify this game as a last-man-standing-wins event. CU and Kansas State each rank among the Big 12's top five in four major defensive categories.

Smack-down defense aside, though, the more common scenario in these games favors the team that doesn't self-destruct with turnovers and fashions its own breaks with special teams.

After excelling in that two weeks ago in a 41-21 demolition of then-No. 7 Texas, Kansas State slipped in last week's 30-24 loss against rival Kansas. That loss ended a three-game Wildcats winning streak, matching the one the Buffs currently enjoy.

Error-free offensive play usually starts with quarterbacks, and if CU's Cody Hawkins and Kansas State's Josh Freeman are physical opposites - Hawkins is 5-foot-11, 190 pounds; Freeman is 6-6, 250 - their efficiency, and occasional lack thereof, seems to run a parallel course.

Hawkins has thrown 10 touchdown passes and nine interceptions; Freeman four touchdown passes, seven interceptions. Hawkins is completing 57.5 percent of his passes, Freeman 62.4 percent of his.

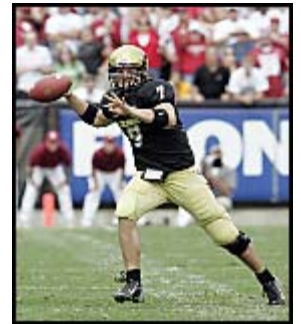
But quarterback play often is graded as much on intangibles as statistics, and Kansas State coach Ron Prince believes Hawkins measures up nicely there.

"If you look at knowledge and ability, there's a lot of guys that have ability . . . probably a few less with knowledge and even a smaller group that have the two together," Prince said.

"But when you have the kind of instincts and guts and toughness - these guys who can stand in there and deliver the ball and understand that they may not be able to see the ball completed - that's what NFL quarterbacks do.

"We have some guys in our league that can do the same thing - and he's one of them."

In addition to coping with Kansas State's physicality, Cody Hawkins and the offense must contend with an every-down odd front (three down linemen, four linebackers) that usually is seen on third, or passing, downs.



Jack Dempsey © AP

Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins will be facing Kansas State's physical defense Saturday night in Manhattan, Kan. Wildcats coach Ron Prince says he's impressed by Hawkins' football knowledge and ability.

"All of their linebackers are about the size of D-linemen, so they stack a lot of big guys in the box and they play hard," he said, adding there seems to be one defender blitzing on every play and "sometimes two or three. . . . They are a very strong defense, one of the better defenses we've played."

After a convincing (43-23) but hardly clean victory at Baylor last week, CU is making the second stop in its only back-to-back trips this season.

Not a factor, said Dan Hawkins: "The good teams get fired up, and it doesn't matter if you're home or away or who your opponent is or when it is. They see an opportunity and they maximize (it)."

That's what the Buffs find themselves staring at Saturday. Maximize the moment, further minimize the chances of getting lost in the Big 12 North.

REGIONAL GAMES

New Mexico at Wyoming

- **The game:** Noon Saturday, War Memorial Stadium (30,514 capacity), Laramie.
- **The records:** New Mexico is 3-2, 0-1 in the Mountain West Conference; Wyoming is 4-1, 1-0.
- **The series:** Wyoming leads 32-27.
- **Who's favored:** Wyoming by 3 1/2.
- **TV/radio:** The mtn.; KEPN-AM (1600) in Denver.
- **Scouting report:** A win against the always scrappy Lobos would keep Wyoming in the conference hunt and brace the Cowboys for a stretch run that features four of six games on the road. Wyoming, on a six-game winning streak at home, is led by a formidable defense that ranks second in NCAA Division I-A in third-down efficiency (18 conversions in 75 attempts) and leads the conference in rushing defense (84.4 yards a game) and passing defense (183.4).

Weber State at Northern Colorado

- **The game:** Noon Saturday, Nottingham Field (8,500 capacity), Greeley.
- **The records:** Weber State is 1-4, 1-2 in the Big Sky Conference; Northern Colorado is 0-6, 0-2.
- **The series:** Weber State leads 1-0.
- **TV/radio:** No television; KFKA-AM (1310) in Greeley, KRKS-AM (990) in Denver.
- **Scouting report:** Northern Colorado's first home game since Sept. 8 offers the Bears one of their best opportunities of the season to record their first league win and snap losing streaks that have reached seven games at home and 14 games overall. The match pairs the two lowest-scoring teams in the Big Sky, with Weber State averaging 13.4 points and the Bears a league-low 11.3.

Western New Mexico at Colorado Mines

- **The game:** Noon Saturday, Brooks Field (4,000 capacity), Golden.
- **The records:** Western New Mexico is 2-4, 2-2 in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference; Mines is 3-3, 2-1.
- **Scouting report:** Mines coach Bob Stitt built a solid program behind a high-octane offense, but it has been the performance of coordinator Marty Heaton's defense that has led the Orediggers to wins in three of their past four games. In those three victories, Mines has allowed only 20 points.

Mesa State at Western State

- **The game:** 1 p.m. Saturday, Mountaineer Bowl (3,000 capacity), Gunnison.
- **The records:** Mesa State is 6-0, 3-0 in the RMAC; Western State is 0-6, 0-4.

Rocky Mountain News

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Local college football, October 12

By B.G. Brooks, Randy Holtz & Jim Benton, Rocky Mountain News
October 12, 2007

CU

Miller to get first start

Ryan Miller's relentless push to enter the starting lineup has come to fruition.

The top signee in CU's 2007 recruiting class will make his first college start Saturday night at Kansas State.

"Ryan has gotten better and better," running game coordinator/offensive line coach **Jeff Grimes** said Thursday. "He's improved to the point where he deserves a shot in the starting lineup."

Miller, a 6-foot-7, 320-pounder from Columbine High School, will open at right tackle, a move that relocates senior **Edwin Harrison** (6-4, 300) to right guard. Harrison, who started the first six games at right tackle, replaces sophomore **Devin Head** at the inside spot.

Grimes said Miller, the state's most coveted prospect during the last recruiting cycle, beamed when he received the news.

"His smile was ear-to-ear - it's what he said he wanted to accomplish," Grimes said. "And he's progressed like we thought he would. We felt like he would come on, maybe by midseason, and here we are (at midseason)."

Miller's redshirt came off three games ago, against Miami (Ohio).

His ascension into the starting lineup is the second this season by a true freshman. **Kai Maiava** has started at left guard for the past two games.

Miller was unavailable for comment after practice because players are off-limits to the media after 2 p.m. every Thursday.

It'll be loud

CU's first Big 12 trip this season - last week at Baylor - was more like a game at a neutral site. Only 32,376 showed up to watch the Buffaloes' 43-23 victory and by halftime, when CU led 30-9, Bears fans had been "taken out of the game."

It won't be that way Saturday night in Manhattan, Kan., and the Buffs know it.

"It's going to be much, much louder," Sanders said. "But it's fun to play in a place like that; it makes you find your energy within your own guys."

"I like that atmosphere - it gets you out of your comfort zone."

Etc.

- Punt return specialist **Chase McBride**, who has been nursing a separated left shoulder, has been cleared to play at Kansas State. McBride was held out of last week's Baylor game after suffering the injury in practice.

- Kansas State's roster includes three Colorado high school products: sophomore defensive back **Chris Carney** (Mullen), sophomore linebacker **Ross Diehl** (Douglas County) and freshman long-snapper **Corey Adams** (Lewis-Palmer).

Numbers game

4 **sacks** yielded in five games ties Kansas State for first in that category in the Big 12 Conference (eighth in Division I-A).



Marty Caivano ©
Daily Camera

Ryan Miller will start at right tackle Saturday night when CU plays at Kansas State.

He said it

"I always tell our guys that the average ought to be good - your average performance ought to be good."

Dan Hawkins, CU coach, on giving the Buffs a midseason grade.

CSU

Lubick a Carney fan

CSU coach **Sonny Lubick** is glad he'll be facing Air Force quarterback **Shaun Carney** for the last time when the senior plays his final game against the Rams on Saturday.

"That kid is sharp," Lubick said. "The best thing about him is his toughness.

"Their quarterbacks have always had a way to break one free here and there, and you always preach to your team not to give up the big running play. But when (Carney) gets in the open field, one guy won't bring him down."

Numbers game

126-88 **career coach- ing record** for CSU's Lubick.

4-2 **career coaching record** for Air Force's **Troy Calhoun**. The 41-year-old rookie coach meets the 70-year-old Lubick for the first time Saturday.

It's good being green

CSU's athletic department and student-athlete advisory committee are encouraging all CSU fans to wear green for the game.

The goal is to create a "green-out" home-field advantage for the Rams.

"It's always nice to leave the locker room and hear our fans," senior defensive end **Jesse Nading** said.

"But when we also can see them, and see them all in green, it just adds another element to our confidence. It adds to the excitement."

CSU expects a crowd of about 25,000 to 28,000 in the 34,400-seat stadium.

He said it

"They're a classy program. Everybody knows Air Force has been a classy, top-notch program for a long time. I know they like to beat us, and we like to beat them as much as anyone in the conference, but there's a respect for each other there."

Lubick, on CSU's rivalry with Air Force.

Air Force

Going to Hall

Receiver **Chad Hall** is one of three players in Division I-A to lead his team in rushing yards (327) and receiving yards (325). The others are **Chris Johnson** of East Carolina (404, 291) and **Kenny Moore** of Wake Forest (245, 360).

"He the one guy for us that does stand out. I think that's pretty obvious," Calhoun said of Hall, who leads the Mountain West Conference with 152.3 all-purpose yards per game.

Passing record close

Quarterback Shaun Carney needs 7 passing yards to break the Air Force career record (4,789) set by **Dave Ziebart** from 1976 to 1979.



Longmont, Colorado
Friday, October 12, 2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

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CU in steady hands

Bufs confident in punt-returner Dykes

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — If Colorado is down to its third-team punt returner Saturday at Kansas State, will coaches fret about it? Probably not.

Some of that confidence stems from last Saturday night in Baylor, when Chase McBride was already out and then Stephone Robinson hurt his leg, leaving junior Daniel Dykes deep to field one late in the second half. The punt was short and wobbly, and Dykes sprinted several yards through charging bodies and calmly made a fair catch. On the next play, Kevin Eberhart kicked his 54-yarder.

That boot would not have been possible were it not for Dykes, and his heady play is not lost on coaches. So if McBride's shoulder keeps him out another week and Robinson's leg doesn't recover enough for him to play Saturday, a few Buffs could get the call. If it's Dykes again, coaches won't hold their breath when the ball's in the air.

"That's one of the reasons he's there: He's just one of those guys where you know the ball is going to get caught," head coach Dan Hawkins said. "And it's always fun and exciting to think about somebody running down the field, but then you also go, 'It could be fun and exciting to see them catch the ball.' And he's very solid at that."

Dykes said he got a pretty good feel for the art of punt returning as a freshman. But when he was a sophomore, Idaho coaches sought a returner with a little more quickness and agility. So he split the duties with others. Last Saturday at Baylor was the first time he'd caught a live punt since he transferred to CU. And no, it wasn't as easy as he made it look.

"When Stephone got hurt, I definitely felt some nerves," said Dykes, who redshirted in 2006 after transferring from Idaho. "But I just feel like on this team, every play matters. I have to contribute and do my role, and I have to do it well for us to win. And I just knew that was another role for me, and I was excited for that."

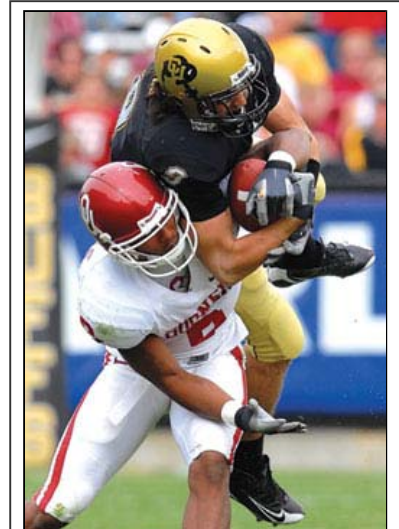
Dykes fielded two other punts Saturday, returning one seven yards and fair catching the other.

He said he enjoys returning punts because he relishes the chance to get the ball in his hands. But from talks with other teammates, he's gleaned that most would prefer to get the ball in their hands through other means.

"I guess it's just something some guys can feel and some guys can't," Dykes said. "I talked to other guys who I think would be good at it on our team, and they're just like, 'I don't know how you do it.'"

"It's really interesting when you get back there. Sometimes it crosses your mind that this is a big role I need to take on. ... You don't really think about everything that's going on. You just concentrate on the ball, play your role and move on to the next play."

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



Colorado's Daniel Dykes intercepts a pass intended for Oklahoma's Juakin Iglesias on Sept. 29. Dykes, a safety on defense, performed well as a punt returner last Saturday against Baylor and could be called upon to fill that role again Saturday against Kansas State. **Times-Call/Joshua Buck**



KSU's Nelson a force to be reckoned with

By Ryan Thorburn

Friday, October 12, 2007

Find No. 27.

If Colorado hopes to continue its impressive start to the Big 12 season it will be vital for the Buffs' defense to have a game plan for Jordy Nelson in Saturday's game against Kansas State (7:15 p.m., ESPN2).

Teams have struggled to keep up with Wildcats senior wide receiver this season. Nelson is second in the nation with 52 receptions while racking up 634 yards and catching three of the four touchdown passes thrown by quarterback Josh Freeman.

CU standout cornerback Terrence Wheatley usually covers the opposition's top receiver and relishes that challenge. But K-State has made it tough for defensive coordinators to match up their best with Nelson.

"It's something that will just have to comewith the game," Nelson said when asked about facing Wheatley. "I get moved around a lot and it's hard for a defense to get matched up. But I'm sure we will get matched up a lot."

Kansas' All-Big 12 cornerback, Aqib Talib, wasn't always able to find No. 27 at the line of scrimmage last Saturday. Nelson finished with 137 yards during a 30-24 loss the Jayhawks.

"He can do it all," CU head coach Dan Hawkins said. "They will hand him the ball, they'll throw it to him underneath and let him run, they'll throw it deep and he makes tough catches in traffic."

"He is a really, really good player. He is big and physical but he can get in and out of his breaks. He is a really good player, he really is. They will do a variety of all those things with him."

Nelson has 10-plus receptions and produced at least 100 yards receiving in three consecutive games. No one else in the program's history has done that before.

"I'm a little surprised with the number of catches," Nelson said. "Josh and I put in a lot of work together during the summer to get ready for this season. ... I think we already had a decent chemistry early on, but now we really work well with Josh as a wide receiver group."

Nelson finished the 2006 season as the Wildcats' leading receiver with a total of 39 receptions for 547 yards and one touchdown. He has already surpassed those numbers with seven games remaining on the schedule.

Last year at Folsom Field, Nelson made his biggest play of the season with a 74-yard touchdown in K-State's 34-21 victory over CU. It was the only road victory for the Wildcats during Ron Prince's first season as head coach.

"We know Colorado is a good team. They caught a lot of people's eyes when they beat Oklahoma, and we've got to play well," Nelson said. "Last year against them, that was probably one of the better games we played offensively. We were able to win on the road and we hadn't done that for a while."

The Wildcats, who nearly upset Auburn on the road earlier this season, stunned Texas in Austin on Sept. 29, the same day the Buffs kicked the Sooners.

CU was able to follow up its impressive victory with a 20-point win at Baylor. K-State was bounced from the top 25

KSU's Nelson a force to be reckoned with

and replaced by KU after falling to its in-state rivals at home.

"College football is tough right now. Any team can win any Saturday," Nelson said. "You have to stay on an even keel. ... It was disappointing. Not because it was KU, but just because we lost."

The Wildcats are averaging 274.6 passing yards per game. And No. 27 is suddenly sixth in school history for receiving yards with 1,850 and counting.

The Buffs would be wise to find Nelson on Saturday and do their best to slow him down.

Kyle Ringo contributed to this report



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