



Hawk says no change in store at quarterback

After rough stretch, frosh Cody Hawkins facing criticism

By Kyle Ringo

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Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins was bound to face the question eventually and it was posed to him for the first time Sunday night.

A reporter wanted to know whether it is possible that Hawkins will consider giving junior Nick Nelson a shot at some playing time with starting quarterback Cody Hawkins — the coach's son — struggling at times and threatening the school's single-season interception record.

The coach seemed a little surprised by the query and quickly said no.

"You always focus on the quarterback and there is definitely some things he needs to improve on, but there is also a lot of things he's doing a great job with," he said.

Cody Hawkins has thrown for nearly 2,000 yards and 11 touchdowns in the first eight games of his career. He also led the Buffs to a remarkable upset win over then-No. 3 Oklahoma three weeks ago.

But the world of major college football is a what-have-you-done lately culture, and the Buffs have stubbed their collective toe in the past two weeks, with losses to Kansas State and Kansas in which he threw a combined five interceptions.

The Buffs travel to Lubbock, Texas, this week to face the 6-2 Texas Tech Red Raiders. CU has never won in Lubbock.

Dan Hawkins acknowledged the need for improvement, but he also said his son is far ahead of the curve for a redshirt freshman in terms of the percentage of the playbook he has mastered and his maturity level.

"I think he handles the whole game plan great, which is a lot for a young guy," Dan Hawkins said. "And I think just in terms of the pressure and intensity and all that, he does an awesome job. Clearly there are some times he misses some throws, but generally speaking, mentally he's done a good job with that stuff."

Offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich echoed those comments and said he doesn't believe Cody Hawkins is feeling any added pressure as his interception numbers have increased and the team has lost the momentum from the Oklahoma win.

Helfrich said he makes it a point to talk to his quarterbacks about ignoring criticism from outside the program. He accurately pointed out that nearly half of Hawkins' 14 interceptions came off the hands of

receivers and were passes that could have been caught.

Helfrich said his quarterback made some wise choices in the loss to Kansas, deciding not to throw the ball into coverage on several occasions. He said Cody Hawkins might not have made those same decisions earlier in the season, but he doesn't believe he's becoming gun-shy.

Cody Hawkins teammates seem to be as united as ever behind him based on comments from some players after a 19-14 loss to Kansas on Saturday. Players said they have to do a better job blocking for their quarterback, establishing a running game and limiting turnovers.

"We've got to coach them better. We've got to execute better. We've got to prepare better. Then we've got to out and play better," Helfrich said.

"There were so many things in that game that were there and we just didn't make plays for a variety of reasons. We had a number of things that fit into the frustratingly obvious category of, 'Why didn't we do this?' Those are things we have to correct."

Cody Hawkins is facing doubters for the first time.

He has been overwhelmingly successful throughout his history in the sport and is a rookie in some ways when it comes to facing adversity. He never lost a game in his high school career.

Sunday night he said he wasn't even aware of any criticism because he doesn't pay attention to media during the season.

"I think I've been around this long enough that when I watch the film, I know what I'm doing right and I know what I need to work on," Cody Hawkins said. "If bad things are still happening, I'm not going to get in the tank.

"I don't have a TV. I don't get the newspaper. I couldn't even tell you what the news channels are in Colorado. I don't hear a lot of that stuff. There is just a lot of self criticism and I'm always going to be harder on myself than anybody else is."

Notable

Dan Hawkins said cornerback Terrence Wheatley should be able to play against Texas Tech after suffering a sprained elbow against Kansas. ... Hawkins was asked if he had any message for his players in regard to being in a two-game hole in the Big 12 North Division race. He said no. "It's always that way," Hawkins said. "I'm not looking at the Big 12 North or the Big 12 or anything else. We've got to play Texas Tech and you got to win that football game." ... A fire alarm in the Dal Ward Center on Sunday afternoon forced the team to change its practice schedule.



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cu football

Buff plot defense against Red Raiders' potent attack

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Texas Tech quarterback Graham Harrell leads the nation in almost every passing category while leading the Red Raiders' pass-happy offense. (Getty Images file / Layne Murdoch)

BOULDER — The week has just begun, but Colorado's defensive secondary already is on the clock.

Colorado players get today off, leaving CU defensive backs four days to prepare for the nation's most-prolific passing attack. Texas Tech (6-2, 2-2 Big 12) hosts the Buffaloes (4-4, 2-2) at 10 a.m. (KMGH-7) in Lubbock.

The ABC network had better allot more than three hours for this one. With all the first downs and stoppages in play, the game could go on for a while.

"It seems like no matter what you do against a team like that, they're going to rack up 70 plays on you," CU safety Daniel Dykes said Sunday. "It can wear you out."

Setting up in the spread formation with four or five receivers

Colorado Football

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on nearly every down, Texas Tech averages 56.5 pass attempts per game. Junior quarterback Graham Harrell leads the nation in total offense (434.8 yards per game), touchdown passes (32) and completions (37.8).

"It makes for an explosive offense and a lot of sleepless nights for defensive coaches," said Greg Brown, who coaches CU's defensive backs.

Texas Tech went down firing in its 41-10 loss at Missouri on Saturday. Harrell completed 44-of-69 passes for 397 yards.

Colorado's defense played about as well last year against Texas Tech as anybody could. In a stunning 30-6 victory over the Red Raiders in Boulder, the Buffs limited Harrell to 236 yards passing. Only Texas Christian held Harrell to fewer yards (204).

Last year's game marked the first victory in Dan Hawkins' coaching tenure at CU.

"We mixed things up (defensively) against them," Hawkins recalled Sunday. "That's what you have to do."

Fortunately, Colorado has played against several teams that employ the spread offense.

"We're not going to see anything new," Dykes said. "Texas Tech just does it better than everybody."

Colorado ranks 34th nationally in pass defense.

That rates in the upper third of major-college programs. But the Buffs have intercepted only six passes in eight games and could not come up with a pick Saturday in the 19-14 home loss to Kansas.

Expect a more aggressive attitude from the CU defense Saturday in Lubbock.

"The last two games (including a 47-20 loss at Kansas State), our defense has been sitting back," CU senior linebacker Jordon Dizon said. "We sit back and see what they're trying to do to us. We have to strike a blow. We have to do something that sparks us. Somebody's got to make a play."

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Local college football notes

By B.G. Brooks, Randy Holtz & Jim Benton, Rocky Mountain News
October 21, 2007

CU

Clean it up

Coach **Dan Hawkins** said Sunday's tape review of the Buffaloes' 19-14 loss to Kansas merely reiterated what he saw Saturday: In defeat, his team remains three or four plays short of success.

"It's just about learning and getting better; it wasn't (a lack of) effort," Hawkins said. "We just have to be more efficient; our margin for error is very slim. It's a lot of little things, some communication things, some technique things.

"You just have to keep working and translate coaching into action. . . . I keep going back to that whole 'talent, experience and depth' thing. You've got to have those three, and we're getting there."



Hanie

McCarty remembered

Hawkins also spoke to the team Sunday about the death of former CU player **Tennyson McCarty**, whose body was found Friday in an area off the Peak-to-Peak highway northwest of Boulder. Authorities still are investigating the cause of death.

Hawkins called McCarty's death "tragic" and said he emphasized to his players the need for balance in their lives and keeping football, schoolwork and their daily routines in perspective.

Meltdown at Missouri

Texas Tech might not be looking forward to the Big 12 Conference's next three-season cycle that returns Missouri to the schedule.

The Tigers' 41-10 dismantling of the Red Raiders on Saturday in Columbia was Missouri's third consecutive win in the series. In those three games, Texas Tech committed 14 turnovers, including five in each of the past two meetings.

Entering the game with only three interceptions in seven games, Red Raiders quarterback **Graham Harrell** suffered four picks, and his offense failed on four fourth-down conversion attempts in Missouri territory.

The Tigers held the Red Raiders almost 200 yards below their total offense average (582-388) and to their lowest point total since CU's 30-6 win in Boulder last season.

In that victory, which snapped a 10-game losing streak (including the first eight games in 2006), CU limited Texas Tech to 276 yards of total offense. The Buffaloes also benefited from five Red Raiders turnovers (three interceptions, two fumbles).

Etc.

- CU received a commitment from receiver **Chance Blackmon**, one of five prospects visiting campus over the weekend. Blackmon, a 6-foot-3, 185-pounder from Tatum, Texas, also was considering offers from Missouri, Kansas State, Houston and Colorado State. He is CU's eighth known commitment.

- **Cody Hawkins'** passing efficiency rating is No. 83 (115.8) out of 100 Division I-A quarterbacks. He has thrown for 1,967 yards, with 13 TD passes and 14 interceptions.
- Harrell's rating is No. 3 (166.3). He has thrown for 3,548 yards, with 32 TD passes and seven interceptions.

Numbers game

0-4 record for CU in games played in Lubbock, Texas. That mark includes two losses in Big 12 play (1999, 2003).

He said it

"There ain't nothing wrong with our hands, legs, ears, eyes, none of that. We've just got to unclutter what's in our head."

Mike Leach, Texas Tech coach, on his team's dropped passes against Missouri.

CSU

Tough schedule looms

The results of this past week's games don't leave Colorado State much room for relaxation as the Rams move through their schedule trying to grab a few more wins.

Utah, which CSU faces at Hughes Stadium on Saturday (3:30 p.m., the mtn.), is coming off an impressive road win against preseason conference favorite Texas Christian. And since the game was Thursday night, the Utes have a couple of extra days to prepare before flying to Colorado.

After the Utes - who have won consecutive games against Utah State, Louisville, San Diego State and TCU - the Rams travel to conference leader Brigham Young.

Even the Division I-AA team on CSU's remaining schedule - Georgia Southern comes to Hughes on Nov. 17 - could pose quite a challenge.

Georgia Southern is 5-2 after defeating Appalachian State in a 38-35 shootout on Saturday. That's the same Appalachian State that pulled one of the most stunning upsets in college football history this season at Michigan.

Joy and relief

CSU players were overjoyed with their losing- streak-snapping win at UNLV, feeling a combination of ecstasy and relief.

"It feels like we have the curse off of us," senior nose guard **Erik Sandie** said.

Those who follow the team closely had to feel good for senior quarterback **Caleb Hanie**, who has been a stand-up guy with the media and fans throughout CSU's 13-game string of misery. He was among the happiest campers in CSU's joyous postgame locker room.

"It feels kind of surreal," said Hanie, who was roundly criticized for his four interceptions against Air Force last week. "I almost don't know what to do because it's been so long. I just wanted to hug everyone and stay on that field forever."

CSU's players presented the game ball to coach **Sonny Lubick**, who was thrilled as anyone to have the losing streak in his rearview mirror.

"Everyone in here thinks he's the best coach in the nation," Sandie said.

Etc.