



Hawk hasn't given up on Jackson playing again

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, December 8, 2007

Don't close the book on Bernard Jackson just yet.

The former Colorado starting quarterback, turned team captain, turned academic casualty might have a slim shot at playing again and it's an option coach Dan Hawkins said Friday he would like to pursue.

Jackson started 11 of 12 games under center for the Buffs in 2006. He was named a team captain last December by his teammates but in August was ruled academically ineligible to play his senior season. He didn't play at all this season, his fifth year in the program.

The NCAA occasionally grants a sixth year of eligibility to players with a history of injuries that have robbed them of more than one season of competition. Even more rare are the circumstances under which the organization will grant hardship waivers for players who endure tragic or overwhelming events in their personal lives.

Hawkins said Jackson could be a candidate for such a waiver considering all he has been through since becoming a father during his junior year. Jackson's son, Jayden, was diagnosed with eye cancer two years ago but now is a healthy and growing boy.

Hawkins keeps in regular contact with Jackson and has met with him weekly this fall to monitor his academic progress.

"My big interest for him is to get him graduated," Hawkins said. "The double win is if that happened, he graduated and was able to come back and play."

Julie Manning, CU's assistant athletic director for compliance, said Jackson's chances of being granted such a waiver were next to none when she was asked about it during training camp in August. Hawkins said he hasn't had a conversation with anyone about filing the request since then, but he believes it's worth a try.

"I don't know what the plausibility of that is," Hawkins said.

Jackson could not be reached for comment. Hawkins was asked whether he believes Jackson still has interest in playing.

"No one wants to leave it like he left it, that's for sure," Hawkins said.

On the line

Colorado's 2007 recruiting class featured a bevy of linemen on both sides of the ball. In an effort to

shore up shockingly low numbers in the trenches, CU coaches lured eight offensive linemen and five defensive line prospects to Boulder last year.

The Buffs are much lighter on linemen in the current recruiting cycle with known commitments from just one offensive lineman and two defensive linemen. One of the players listed as a defensive linemen by the major recruiting services is Ponderosa High School linebacker Jon Major. It is unclear whether he will play linebacker or defensive line at the college level.

Hawkins said he intends to add three linemen on both sides of the ball in the 2008 class. He said he is expecting five or six recruits to visit campus this weekend.

Recruiting visits outside the season can be good because coaches can spend more time with prospects and are not distracted by games. The negative for a recruit is not being able to see the campus and the stadium on game days.

'Bama planning

Hawkins said offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich and defensive coordinator Ron Collins have started to begin assembling a game plan for the bowl game, but the Buffs won't focus completely on the Crimson Tide for another week or so.

Hawkins said he has been so focused on recruiting he hasn't started studying Alabama film yet.

Notable

Tight end Riar Geer suffered a hand injury and was looking at X-rays on the sideline Friday with his hand in a splint. ... All-Big 12 first-team defenders Terrence Wheatley and George Hypolite continue to watch most of practices from the sidelines as they allow injuries to heal. Wheatley said he expects to participate in practices beginning next week and will play in the bowl game. He missed the final two regular-season games with a broken bone in his foot. Hypolite played the regular-season finale with a torn hamstring. When asked about his status Friday, he threw his arms open wide and said, "Come on, you know I always play. I don't miss games." ... Hawkins said defensive end Alonzo Barrett's minor arthroscopic knee surgery went well last week and Barrett should be able to play in the bowl.



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Near-miss for Dizon

CU linebacker falls short in bid for Butkus Award

Camera staff report

Saturday, December 8, 2007

ORLANDO, Fla. — Colorado linebacker Jordon Dizon boarded a plane from Florida to Denver late Friday night with two new friendships and a boatload of indelible memories in tow.

He'll take them over a statue any day.

Dizon was named one of two runners-up for the 2007 Dick Butkus Award presented Friday night to Ohio State junior James Laurinaitis. Penn State linebacker Dan Connor also was a runner-up.

The Butkus Award has been presented the past 23 years to the nation's best linebacker as voted by a panel of 39 media members from around the country. Dizon is the fourth CU linebacker to be named a finalist and missed out on becoming the third winner. Alfred Williams (1990) and Matt Russell (1996) are the program's two previous winners of the honor.

"It was incredible," Dizon said in a phone interview with the Camera. "It was something I will never forget."

Laurinaitis was gracious accepting the award, at one point noting that he "felt like I've stolen it from these two guys and am taking it back to Columbus."

Dizon said he spent the day getting to know Laurinaitis and Connor by hanging out by a hotel swimming pool, and got along famously with both. He said he was honored just to be in their company as finalists and as members of the Walter Camp All-American team announced Thursday.

"I'm glad for James," Dizon said. "He's a great linebacker and really good person."

Dizon has made a similar impression on the men who have coached him and the teammates he has had at all levels of football. That was evident Friday with fellow CU captain R.J. Brown spending his own money to travel to Florida and attend the ceremony with his friend.

"He's been there for me through thick and thin," Dizon said.

Dizon's Pop Warner coach, Edmond Acoba, and high school coach, John Kobayashi, joined his mother, maternal grandparents and a cousin in attendance. All made the trip from Hawaii, where Dizon grew up and where longtime Colorado linebackers coach Brian Cabral first discovered him eight years ago as a high school freshman.

Cabral was emotional at times in his introduction speech of Dizon. Both Dizon and Cabral wore maile

leis, a vine from the mountains of Hawaii that some consider very sacred. They represent honor, respect and love.

"He epitomizes and embodies the core values of Colorado football, and that's work ethic, mental and physical toughness, attention to details, and leadership," Cabral said. "Jordon has led by example, outworking, out-sprinting, out-practicing, out-preparing and out-competing the competition."

Dizon has played in every game in his CU career, a span of 50 consecutive contests.

Dizon was named to The Sporting News All-America team on Friday, the second organization to honor him. Already a Walter Camp selection, he needs to make just one of the remaining three recognized teams to earn consensus honors. He was also the league coaches' choice as the Big 12 Conference Defensive Player of the Year and was named first-team All-Big 12 by both the Associated Press and the coaches.

Dizon, CU's defensive captain, had 160 tackles in the regular season, which ranked him second in the nation, though he was first in solo stops (120). He is also the nation's second-leading tackler among active players, finishing fourth all-time at Colorado with 440 career stops.



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Butkus Award eludes Dizon's grasp

Ohio State's Laurinaitis snares honor of nation's top linebacker

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

Colorado linebacker Jordon Dizon won many individual awards in 2007, but not the biggest one.

Butkus Award voters named Ohio State's James Laurinaitis their winner Friday in Orlando. The award, which recognizes the nation's top linebacker, was voted upon by a panel of 39.

"I felt like I've stolen it from these two guys, and I'm taking it back to Columbus," said Laurinaitis, who also was a 2006 finalist.

Penn State's Dan Connor was this year's other finalist.

"A lot of people probably spent more time on planes than they actually did here (in Orlando)," Dizon joked Friday after the announcement. "I have to thank them all for their tremendous support. I've got to give a shout out to my defensive line, who made things easy for me, and to my fellow linebackers and really all my teammates.

"And coach (Brian) Cabral has been such a tremendous influence in my life, my father figure away from home the last four years."

Teammate R.J. Brown, another Hawaiian, spent his own money to travel to Orlando and attend the announcement.

Others there included Dizon's mother and maternal grandparents, a cousin, his high school coach and his Pop Warner coach.

Dizon was named to The Sporting News' All-America team on Friday, the second organization to honor him. Dizon was named a Walter Camp all-American on Thursday, and Big 12 coaches chose him as the league's defensive player of the year.

Cabral and Dizon wore leis made of maile, a vine from the Hawaiian mountains that is considered sacred. Cabral said Dizon epitomizes the core values of CU football and said he enjoyed coaching Dizon more than any other player during his 19-year tenure.

Friday in Boulder, CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins echoed Cabral.

"When we went into the season and started recruiting, we said, 'The ideal guy that we want is Jordon Dizon — good student, good person, great leader,'" Collins said.

INJURY UPDATE: Cornerback Terrence Wheatley (broken foot) said Friday following CU's practice that he had no idea when he'd don full pads, but he guessed it would be in a week and a half. He said he will play in the Independence Bowl (Dec. 30, 6 p.m., ESPN) against Alabama.

Tight end Riar Geer injured a thumb in drills Friday, but head coach Dan Hawkins didn't know if it was severe.

Defensive end Alonzo Barrett had a knee scoped. Hawkins said he will play in the bowl. The coach also said defensive tackle George Hypolite (hamstring) is expected to play.

RECRUITING NEWS: CU has received its 14th commitment. Paul Vigo, a 6-foot-2, 200-pound defensive back from New Brunswick High in New Jersey, said he'd sign with CU, according to Scout.com.

CU is hosting five or six prospects this weekend. The program hopes to sign three offensive linemen and three defensive linemen. It has only one of each among its commitments to date, though Ponderosa linebacker Jon Major could end up as a defensive end in college.

MORE JACKSON? Hawkins said CU could pursue a sixth year of eligibility for quarterback Bernard Jackson. He missed all of 2007 in what would have been his fifth-year senior season to focus on academics, CU reported. Hawkins said his main concern is that the quarterback finishes his degree, but the coach acknowledged that the way Jackson's career ended must not have sat well with him.

"No one wants to leave it like he left it," Hawkins said.

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