



# After DIA weather delay, Buffs arrive in Shreveport

## Wind, cool temperatures greet CU for practice

Wednesday, December 26, 2007

SHREVEPORT, La. -- Seems strange for a football team from Colorado to travel to Louisiana for a college bowl game only to face questions and concerns about cold weather upon arrival.

The Colorado Buffaloes arrived here Wednesday afternoon after a long delay with their chartered airplane that kept them grounded at Denver International Airport for several hours. They checked in to their downtown hotel and practiced in Independence Stadium in a cold wind and temperatures they would expect back in Boulder.

"It's a nice problem to have," CU coach Dan Hawkins said.

CU will face Alabama on Sunday night on ESPN in the 32nd annual Independence Bowl. It is the first bowl game of the Hawkins' era at CU and the first for Alabama coach Nick Saban in his tenure in Tuscaloosa.

Temperatures are expected to rise here to more mild conditions by game day.

All 99 Buffs who were eligible to travel to the bowl game made it to Shreveport in time for practice, Hawkins said. Coaches won't know if all players are academically eligible to play in the game until Friday when fall semester grades are due to be posted, but Hawkins isn't expecting to have to send anyone home.

Many members of the team traveled to Shreveport separately after going home for Christmas. Senior cornerback Terrence Wheatley was one such case.

He drove home to the Dallas area from Boulder on Sunday and was given a speeding ticket on his way. Wheatley, who graduated this month and is expected to be drafted by an NFL franchise in the spring, said he won't return to Boulder until pro training day in March or April. He plans to spend the next several months working out with a personal trainer in Florida.

The bowl game is truly his last hurrah. When he walks out of the locker room Sunday night, he will part ways with a program he has been a part of since 2003.

Once they made it to the field and despite the fact that many didn't have cold-weather practice attire, the Buffs performed well. They had the previous two days off for the Christmas holiday but returned upbeat.

"I thought they ran around pretty good," Hawkins said. "Execution is never what we want it to be, but in terms of their effort and hustle, that was good."

Hawkins said the Buffs are accustomed to playing on the surface offered at Independence Stadium. It is the same Astroplay surface the Buffs use in their practice bubble. It also should make a speedy Alabama team even faster.

Several veteran Buffs said they were excited to finally be in to game week after more than a month of down time and practices since beating Nebraska at Folsom Field in the regular-season finale. Arriving at the bowl site has a way of getting the blood pumping a little faster and boosting everyone's spirits, even if the weather isn't what players dream about when they're youngsters dreaming of playing in bowl games.

"It's good to get here, even though it's cold," senior tailback Hugh Charles said. "We would have liked to be in the Insight Bowl in Arizona because we know it's warm there. But we're happy to be here, and for the seniors, it's good for us to be able to help the program like this."

This is the third bowl experience for most members of the CU senior class. They played in the Houston Bowl in 2004, beating Texas-El Paso, and lost to Clemson in the 2005 Champs Sports Bowl in Orlando.

Charles said getting to the bowl game will help young players realize why they're working so hard during the offseason and the summer.

"This is going to be good for them," he said. "I'm happy I was able to help this program get back to a bowl game before I leave."

## **Notable**

The Buffs will visit Barksdale Air Force Base today from 1-3 p.m. and Alabama will visit the LSU Medical Center Hospital from 4-5 p.m. Alabama practices at Independence Stadium at 1 p.m. and the Buffs practice at 7 p.m.



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## CU bowl report: Better late than . . .

By B.G. Brooks

Wednesday, December 26, 2007

Holiday travel can be the pits - even for an official bowl traveling party. The University of Colorado's contingent of coaches, players and school officials arrived in Shreveport, La., about three hours late Wednesday after on-ground problems with their chartered aircraft.

As a result, the Buffaloes' afternoon schedule for on-site Independence Bowl preparation was altered, but only slightly.

The site of a team welcoming party was shifted from a local restaurant to CU's downtown hotel and the time of players' position meetings was pushed back. A night practice at Independence Bowl Stadium was unaffected.

Coach **Dan Hawkins** said CU's charter "wasn't ready when we showed up. Then when we got (aboard), they had to do something with the air conditioning."

Result: The Buffs spent far more time on the ground than anticipated, which allowed players such as junior safety **Ryan Walters** time for an unscheduled but welcome nap.

Said Walters: "I slept the whole time. I got caught up (on sleep)."

About 25 players boarded the charter in Colorado. The remainder of the 99 Buffs on the travel roster made arrangements to get to the bowl site after celebrating Christmas out of state.

### All accounted for

All players scheduled to arrive at the bowl site made it. But that doesn't mean there couldn't be a late academic casualty. Officially, the school can post first semester grades as late as today.

Hawkins, though, isn't expecting any players to become academically ineligible for Sunday's game against Alabama.

### Moving the needle

During his five seasons at Boise State, Hawkins initiated a mind-set among his players that was gauged by "the cluster meter." In a nutshell, it represented the idea of shutting out whatever goes wrong, whatever frustrations might be uncontrollable and still performing at maximum efficiency.

He tells the story of taking one of his Boise State teams to Tulsa, Okla., and discovering - too late - the Broncos' road headquarters also was the weekend site of simultaneous conventions for optometrists and clowns.

"It was a zoo, a real zoo," Hawkins said.

No matter. Boise State won that road game and went 4-0 against Tulsa, and he is trying to instill the same attitude at CU.

Of Wednesday's charter delay, Hawkins said, "When the cluster meter gets high, we get good. That's our motto. "The worse it gets, the better we get."

### Their choice

For the first two nights of their bowl trip, the Buffs must meet a 1 a.m. curfew. It will be earlier the two nights before Sunday's game. Curfew violators face this penalty: They won't receive the bowl's primary gift - a \$300 Sony Bravia theater system, with a digital media port, five-disc DVD/CD player and five-speaker surround system with subwoofer.

### Like old times

Alabama apparently will use an offensive line in the bowl that hasn't started as a unit since a 30-26 win against Houston on Oct. 6.

Junior **Antoine Caldwell**, who has started in four of the five line spots this season, has returned to center, with senior **Justin Britt** (left) and junior **Marlon Davis** (right) at guard, and sophomores **Andre Smith** (left) and **Mike Johnson** (right) at tackle.

Smith, a 6-4, 340-pounder, was first-team All-Southeastern Conference and the winner of the Jacobs Trophy as the league's outstanding blocker.

### Numbers game

3-5 is Alabama coach **Nick Saban**'s bowl record.

### He said it

"We'll see. . . . Of course, we're coming off sitting on the plane (for almost three hours). I just think they're excited to be off the plane."

**Hawkins** on his team's excitement level upon arriving at the bowl site

### Etc.

\* Athletic director **Mike Bohn** said the school picked up travel expenses for the families of CU's assistant coaches.

\* Former Buffs quarterback and current radio analyst **Charles Johnson** has relatives in the Shreveport area he never has met, but he plans to find them and introduce himself. His mother, the former Mary Swann, was reared there.

\* The Buffs practiced for the first time at the game stadium with the temperature about 40 degrees, but Hawkins said "We ran around pretty good." There was some familiarity with the stadium, but only because of its AstroPlay surface, which is inside CU's newly erected practice bubble.