



Buffs hand off chickens to charity

Entire squad turns out to fight hunger

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, December 27, 2007

SHREVEPORT, La. -- A common misconception about college bowl games is they're a pool-side party for the football players.

There are good times to be had by all to be sure, but most of the games also offer opportunities for players to learn about the communities they're visiting and even help the people in them in the time leading up to game day.

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins is helping his players make the most of those opportunities this week as the Buffs prepare to face Alabama in the Independence Bowl on Sunday.

Every member of the CU team and six members of the Alabama roster took part in helping unload and distribute a tractor trailer filled with 30,000 pounds of frozen chickens on Thursday morning at Independence Stadium. The chickens were donated through the Lift Up America charity which is dedicated to eliminating hunger.

The strong showing from the Buffs inspired Independence Bowl Chairman Joe Darwin to send an unsolicited e-mail to CU media members commending the players and Hawkins' program. Darwin also boarded all four CU buses to thank the players before they left.

"Their response to this event was overwhelming," Darwin said. "It was not re-quired attendance and we anticipated that only a handful would participate. Without their assistance, the work would have not been completed in a timely manner. (CU) athletic director Mike Bohn was in attendance as well and assisted us in the endeavor.

"The football players had smiles on their faces and were extremely enthusiastic to help."

Darwin singled out three CU players -- backup longsnapper Austin Bisnow, defensive lineman Christopher Perri and running back Demetrius Sumler -- who went out of their way to help a local man who had come looking for food not realizing that the food was supposed to be distributed through approved agencies.

Bisnow and Perri gave the elderly man three boxes of food and then offered to carry it to his house two miles away when they realized it was too heavy for him.

When the players began to walk with the man, Shreveport police stopped them because they believed it was not a safe neighborhood for visitors to walk through. The police gave the man and the players a ride to the house where the players helped the man carry the food inside.

"I want you to know how much this means to not only our bowl organization but also the community at large," Darwin said in his e-mail. "... These fine young men made a difference in the lives of numerous families in our community and will be remembered long after the lights of the stadium fade on Sunday night."

The Buffs also visited Barksdale Air Force base on Thursday afternoon to view the largest fleet of B-52 bombers in the nation.

"It was really neat to see our kids taking in the entire experience of the bowl game," Bohn said.



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Buff miss bowl party

Mechanical woes postpone flight

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Terrence Wheatley, left, goes through a drill as Colorado worked out for the first time in Shreveport, La., for Sunday's Independence Bowl against Alabama. (Greg Pearson, The (Shreveport) Times)

SHREVEPORT, La. — The charter airplane service hired by the Colorado football team apparently had not heard the "start fast" theme used all season by Buffaloes coach Dan Hawkins.

CU's flight from Denver to Shreveport on Wednesday was delayed by about three hours. The traveling party spent most of that time on the plane while a mechanical repair was made. It's a wonder the players, especially big linemen, didn't cramp. There was no room to stretch out.

The delay also cost the players a trip to a restaurant for an Independence Bowl welcoming party. Instead, food was brought to the team hotel. Players almost inhaled the finger food before heading to an evening practice in the bowl stadium across town.

"We'll be fine,"

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Hawkins said. "You know stuff is going to happen like that. We talked to the team about that before we left (Boulder). It's not all going to go perfect."

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The charter included only about a fourth of the 99-man travel squad. A majority of players chose to come on their own after spending Christmas with family. Senior offensive guard Edwin Harrison flew up from Mississippi, via a connection in Memphis.

"I heard about the misfortunes (of those on the team charter) and I'm glad I didn't have to go through that," said Harrison, a 6-foot-4, 300-pounder.

Excitement builds.

CU began installing its offensive and defensive game plans for Alabama almost three weeks ago. But there's something different about practices at bowl sites, senior running back Hugh Charles observed. The 32nd Independence Bowl is Sunday, with an ESPN telecast at 6 p.m.

"Now that we're here, we can feel it getting close," Charles said.

Different look.

Under new head coach Nick Saban, the Crimson Tide switched to a 3-4 defensive alignment. Kansas State, which defeated the Buffs 47-20, is the only Big 12 team that primarily uses three down linemen and four linebackers as its base defense rather than a 4-3.

"It's an adjustment for us," said CU senior offensive tackle Tyler Polumbus.

"The thing is, Alabama changes up and runs more than just a 3-4," junior center Daniel Sanders said. "We have to be prepared for

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whatever they do and just roll with it."

Footnotes.

Of the first onsite practice Wednesday night, Hawkins said: "We ran around pretty good, we really did. The good thing is the surface (AstroTurf) is what we're used to in our bubble." The deadline for posting final grades for the fall semester is Friday but Hawkins said he does not anticipate losing any players to academic issues. Assistant athletic director Charles Johnson figures he might bump into some distant relatives this week. His mother, Mary Swann, was born in Shreveport and lived here for a dozen years before moving with some of the family to Detroit. Freshman running back Brian Lockridge and freshman deep snapper Austin Bisnow took turns on the lobby piano while waiting for the team charter to arrive. Both can play a variety of musical instruments. "Those guys just amaze me," junior linebacker Brad Jones said.

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