



Bufs aim to reverse road woes

Hawkins still hasn't won on enemy turf at CU

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, September 8, 2007

TEMPE, Ariz.— The Colorado Buffaloes were 2-10 in the 2006 college football season, but it wasn't because they were road kill.

In Dan Hawkins' first season leading the program, his team traveled well. The Buffs narrowly missed pulling off what would have been one of the biggest upsets of the season at No. 9 Georgia and they were in every game away from Folsom Field going into the fourth quarter.

The Buffs won a game on neutral turf to start this season last week in Denver, and tonight they will experience the first hostile environment of 2007 at Sun Devil Stadium against Arizona State in a late game that will begin with temperatures still well above 90 degrees.

The Sun Devils might not be known most for an imposing home-field advantage, but they are 17-2 over the last decade in home games played in August and September heat. They started this season with a 45-3 home victory over San Jose State last week in sweltering conditions.

The Buffs have been hydrating all week with a special blend of Gatorade in preparation for high temperatures.

Despite playing well on the road last season, the Buffs never did win a road game. They carry a six-game losing streak in true road games into tonight's contest (8:28 p.m., Fox Sports Net). The last time CU won on the road was in 2005 on a last-minute field goal at Kansas State.

"Traveling is a fun part of the game, but it's a business trip," senior tailback Byron Ellis said. "We're there to handle some business. We have to be on our Ps and Qs because crowd noise and all that. It's when you've got to be the most focused.

"I think we really zone in on what we have to do when we go away."

Ellis and redshirt freshman Demetrius Sumler will once again be relied upon to carry the load in the CU ground game with senior starter Hugh Charles out with a strained hamstring. Sumler rushed for 85 yards and a touchdown last week in his college debut against Colorado State.

Last year the Buffs were competitive on the road even with one of the worst offenses in college football. They attribute that success, in part, to a key element of each game-day called "clap session."

The Buffs could be seen conducting clap session in hotel ballrooms and parking lots last season before boarding their buses for the unfriendly confines of opponent's stadiums. Clap session amounts to a walk-

through of key plays or schemes, a final chance to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Players are instructed to clap on snap counts during the sessions to show coaches they are paying attention. The rest of the walk-through shows coaches the players know their assignments.

"It basically helps us get focused and gives us a chance iron out the wrinkles in the game plan," defensive tackle George Hypolite said.

Today's clap session for the CU defense might be a little more lengthy than some in the past. The Buffs face a potent, veteran offense led by five returning starters on the offensive line, a star quarterback in junior Rudy Carpenter and a tailback, Ryan Torain, who could be playing in the NFL at this time next year.

"They have no weaknesses there whatsoever," Hawkins said this week.

First-year ASU coach Dennis Erickson watched his offense rack up 520 yards last week. This week the Sun Devils will be facing a CU defense that hasn't been able to consistently defend the pass or get off the field on third downs under this coaching staff. Both problems persisted throughout 2006 and carried over to the first game of this season.

While the defense has its hands full to say the least, the biggest test for the Buffs tonight might come on offense. It's the first road game for redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins and four other offensive starters.

Fighting the Sun Devils, the heat and the crowd is only part of the battle. The Buffs must be mentally sharp for a game plan that coach Hawkins said featured 40 different personnel groupings. Cody Hawkins said the biggest challenge this week for players was mastering that game plan in such a short time after having all summer to prepare for Colorado State.

"We've got so much new stuff in this week," Cody Hawkins said. "We kind of threw everything out the door."

Last week Cody Hawkins began what CU followers hope was the beginning of an offensive resurgence that will lead to the kind of record-setting days on offense Dan Hawkins enjoyed during his days as head coach at Boise State.

Cody Hawkins threw for a modest 201 yards and two touchdowns, but it was a better day on his first day than any CU quarterback had all of last season. He led the Buffs back to win in overtime after trailing by 11 in the third quarter, improving to 60-0 as a starting quarterback since the fifth grade.

He puts his undefeated streak on the line tonight. It might be the first time in his life Cody Hawkins has started a game as an underdog. The Sun Devils are favored by 15 points.

"We do a good job when we step on that plane that we're all business," Cody Hawkins said. "I got to see it last year, even though I wasn't really a part of it.

Hopefully, it's the same this year. I think we've had a great mentality at practice and in the film room. Hopefully it will carry over on to our road trips."

Notable

Arizona State wide receiver Rudy Burgess is expected to play tonight after missing the season opener and the last month of last season due to injuries. ... Former Denver Bronco quarterback Jake Plummer will be among seven inductees into the Arizona State Hall of Fame on Sept. 22.



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Colorado vs. Arizona St. matchups

Camera staff

Saturday, September 8, 2007

CU RUN OFFENSE VS. ASU RUN DEFENSE — The Buffs were average on the ground in their season opener, gaining 129 yards on 28 carries. They were missing starter Hugh Charles (hamstring) and will be again this week. Redshirt freshman Demetrius Sumler proved capable. The Buffs are still green in the middle of the offensive line. ASU allowed only 40 net yards and 1.5 yards per carry to San Jose State to start the season. The Buffs will present a bigger challenge. **Edge: EVEN.**

CU PASS OFFENSE VS. ASU PASS DEFENSE — The Buffs proved last week they are no longer one dimensional on offense with smart, capable play of quarterback Cody Hawkins. He threw for two touchdowns and 201 yards against CSU and wideouts Scotty McKnight and Patrick Williams showed they can be threats. The Buffs will enjoy being able to surprise people in this area for at least half the season because they never could show much of the passing game last season. ASU can produce a stong pass rush and will likely find creative ways to blitz CU's young line and quarterback. The Sun Devils intercepted two balls last week. **Edge: CU.**

ASU RUN OFFENSE VS. CU RUN DEFENSE — The Sun Devils feature a veteran offensive line with all five starters back this season. The rolled to 250 net yards in Week 1 with three different tailbacks doing most of the damage. Ryan Torain is a possible future pro and will likely get the bulk of the work this week with backup Keegan Herring questionable (neck). ASU ran for 180 yards against the Buffs last season. CU allowed just 2.8 yards per carry against a formidable opponent last week, but this is a step up. **Edge: ASU.**

ASU PASS OFFENSE VS. CU PASS DEFENSE — Once again, the big, smart, experienced offensive line is a key factor. Quarterback Rudy Carpenter will probably eclipse the 5,000-yard mark in career passing with his first completion. He has thrown 42 touchdown passes in less than two full seasons as the starter. The receiving corps is talented. The Buffs continued to allow an absurd completion percentage and a lot of third-down conversions last week. Those issues must be corrected. **Edge: ASU.**

SPECIAL TEAMS — The Buffs were two plays away from a great performance in the kicking game a week ago, and they still managed to win the game with special teams. The punt and kickoff return teams were good with Chase McBride and Terrence Wheatley providing some fireworks. ASU wasn't bad in special teams in its win over San Jose State, but it's difficult to tell how strong the Sun Devils are in this area because of the lack of competition they have faced. We will give CU the edge because they made big plays in this area last week. **Edge: CU.**

PREDICTION — Arizona State 31-21.

— Kyle Ringo



Woelk: Opportunity awaits CU in the desert

By Neill Woelk

Saturday, September 8, 2007

TEMPE, Ariz. — All the warm fuzzies created by last weekend's Colorado win over Colorado State are on the line tonight in the heat of the desert.

Dan Hawkins' Buffs can't afford to step into Sun Devil Stadium and wilt under what is sure to be a fast and furious attack from Dennis Erickson's Sun Devils.

Of course the oddsmakers say that's exactly what will happen. The Buffs are 15-point underdogs, a number that's actually crept up as the week has progressed.

No doubt, a blowout loss would be a big step back for a team still getting used to that winning feeling — but along with the chance of such a blowout, the opportunity for a signature win for Hawkins also exists.

Conventional wisdom would suggest that the Buffs' best chances lie in keeping it close early, then making their play late. In order for that to happen, the Buffs need to do several things:

Come up with a couple of quick defensive stops. A week ago against CSU, the Buffs gave up long touchdown drives on each of the Rams' first two possessions, then allowed another seven-play drive before finally stopping CSU deep in Colorado territory on downs.

The Rams punted only once in the first half and only four times the entire game. While Colorado's offense seized momentum early with two quick scores, the defense gave it right back each time by allowing the two long scoring drives.

That has to change. Stop the Sun Devils early and the crowd edge will disappear.

In the same vein, CU's defense can't allow itself to be on the field as much as it was against the Rams. CSU held the ball for 37 minutes against CU — and the Buffs somehow survived by actually getting stronger in the final period and coming up with four consecutive stops.

CU can't count on the same thing happening tonight. If the defense is forced to be on the field for 37 minutes against ASU, the heat will exact a toll by the second half and the Sun Devils will wear CU down and put the game away late.

Limit turnovers and force a few. Colorado gave the ball away three times against the Rams, including a costly miscue on a CSU kickoff that gave the Rams a short field for their



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Third is word for CU 'D'

Bufs aiming to clamp down on third downs tonight against ASU

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Ron Collins hadn't enjoyed Colorado's victory over Colorado State for more than 30 minutes before he pinpointed what improvement the Buffs' defense must make immediately.

"Third-down conversions, everybody can see that," CU's defensive coordinator said. "We're there to make plays, and we just aren't making plays. I thought we had guys in the right position. We just need to do a better job; that's the bottom line."

As it is for any football team, getting off the field on third down is pivotal.

But since CU allowed opponents to convert third downs 47.8 percent of the time in 2006 — that was 113th in the nation and the worst rate in the Big 12 — it was a major topic in spring drills and August camp. Yet entering today's game at Arizona State (8:28 p.m., FSR), the Buffs appear just as befuddled as they were a year ago.

CSU converted 11 of 19 third downs last Saturday, with several coming from long distances. As Collins said, many times defenders were where they needed to be; they just didn't do what they had to do. Which leads to this: What prevents them from making the play?

"I'd say we were in the right position most of the time," CU corner Ben Burney said. "We were kind of caught off guard a little bit from what we thought (CSU) was going to do and what they actually did. They ran a lot of slants in that game. From film, we were expecting more deep routes.

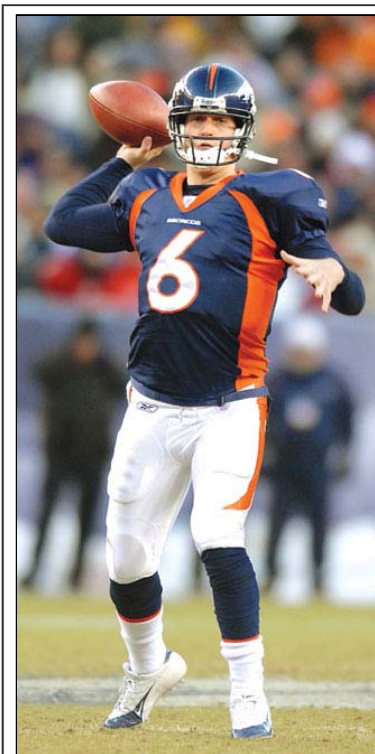
"So it kind caught us off guard a little bit. The defense just has to make a play."

Said safety Jalil Brown: "It's like a positioning thing. You know it's a pass, but you're not sure if they're throwing to your man. You might have a step on him, and you look back to see if they're throwing the ball, and at that second they throw the ball and you lose a step on your man.

"It's paying attention and doing your part instead of trying to do something a little extra. Sometimes you might want to see if someone else is open and go help them out, then your spot on the field becomes open. It's really being disciplined and doing what you have to do."

Head coach Dan Hawkins said making those plays comes down to confidence and being able to "cut it loose."

Arizona State has an experienced offense that converted 13 of 17 third downs in its defeat of San Jose State last week. The Buffs acknowledge that their inability to get off the field is frustrating. And they know that if they want to have any chance tonight in the desert, they'd better figure it out.



Safety Ryan Walters, one of the Buffs' defensive standouts last Saturday against Colorado State, knows CU needs to show improvement tonight against Arizona State. **Times-Call/Joshua Buck**

"We have to get off the field to give our offense a chance," safety Ryan Walters said.

"We have to pay attention to details. We are always in the right call; it's just one person would take a wrong step or wouldn't make the play, and it cost us. It wasn't any coach's fault. We have to take ownership as players and get the job done."

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

Rocky Mountain News

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Hawkins, Erickson go way back

Now, CU coach finally gets to match up with the wandering winner

By **B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News**
September 8, 2007

Their roots are deeply imbedded in western and northwestern college football, but Dan Hawkins never has coached with or against Dennis Erickson. He has watched with interest, but seldom been puzzled by, Erickson's nomadic starts, stops and sometimes brief stays in the college game.

"It's funny," said Hawkins, the University of Colorado's second-year coach. "I've known him for a long time, and he's always been great to me. When he was an NFL coach and I was a Pop Warner coach, he was one of those guys who always remembered me."



Dennis Erickson

That might be because Erickson has looked at the football landscape as an ever-evolving opportunity, with almost every head coaching job worth his consideration.

Erickson, 60, is in his first season at Arizona State. In December, he left Idaho after 10 months on the job to come to Tempe, Ariz., and his résumé includes one- and two-year stints at another pair of western schools (Wyoming, Washington State).

Arizona State is the latest stop - and, don't snicker, but he claims the last - in a coaching career that spans nearly 25 years and has planted him in the NFL twice and on seven college campuses (Idaho twice). This is his eighth head coaching job since 1982.

Hawkins, who sends his team against Erickson's tonight (8:15 MDT, FSN Rocky Mountain) at Sun Devil Stadium, doesn't question the here today-gone next season lifestyle that has naysayers in the desert and elsewhere jokingly asking (or maybe not) before every kickoff if Erickson still is on the Sun Devils sideline.

"My take on that is that sometimes you're damned if you do, damned if you don't," Hawkins said. "You know what I mean? If you were to jump a bunch of jobs for whatever circumstances - your wife wanted to move or you made more money or you didn't like (your current job), whatever - people go, 'OK, hey, that's your right.'"

"But when a football coach . . . Look at poor Lloyd Carr (Michigan). The guy has won a lot of (games), but now they want to run him out. Then if he leaves, it's like, 'Aw, you big traitor.' I think (Erickson) had to look at whatever opportunities were there and if they were where he wanted to be."

Erickson, who spent 2005 out of coaching after being fired following a two-season stint with the San Francisco 49ers, told ESPN.com last spring, "There's no question . . . I regret some of the moves that I made. I do think I've left something positive at every place that I've left. I guess I look at it from the other side than some people would. I've got to."

But there's only one way to view Erickson's coaching ability at the college level: He gets it done.

If the Sun Devils win tonight, it will be his 150th college victory. He is No. 11 among active Division I-A coaches in career wins.

Hawkins said Erickson's teams rarely stray from an attack mode. "His guys play hard and physical, that's been his style."

Erickson returned the compliment like this: "He's a great coach. I've known him for a long time. I've watched him grow as a coach over the years, starting when he took over for coach (Dirk) Koetter at Boise State and the great success that they've had and have continued to have."

"I've watched him at Colorado. He's very good at dealing with players, from what I see. He's got a philosophy that he doesn't vary from."

Erickson's most notable success was at Miami, where he coached the Hurricanes to two national championships (1989, 1991). But he counts his four-year tenure at Oregon State as perhaps his most rewarding. Reeling before his arrival, the Beavers blasted Notre Dame 41-9 in the 2001 Fiesta Bowl, their only Bowl Championship Series game, and finished No. 4 nationally (11-1).

Now, Erickson believes Arizona State harbors that brand of potential in the Pacific-10 Conference. Believes it strongly enough, in fact, to make this statement:

". . . this is really going to be fun, because this is a great opportunity to have success. People are dying for it around here. That's what's fun about it. And so are the players. This is a good way to end my career. It really is."

Forgive the folks in Laramie; Moscow, Idaho; Pullman, Wash.; Corvallis, Ore.; and elsewhere if they have trouble believing it.

Dennis Erickson: the college years

School Years Record Pct.

Idaho 5 36-23-0 .610

Wyoming 1 6-6-0 .500

Washington State 2 12-10-1 .543

Miami (Fla.) 6 63-9-0 .875

Oregon State 4 31-17-0 .646

Arizona State 1 1-0 1.000

Totals 19 149-65-1 .695

brooks@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5466

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Local college football notebook, September 8

By B.G. Brooks and Jim Benton, Rocky Mountain News and Rocky Wire Services
September 8, 2007

Jackson stays home

Senior **Bernard Jackson's** status for the season remains uncertain.

Listed on the most recent depth chart as the No. 3 quarterback, he was not on the team's 69-man travel roster for the game tonight at Arizona State, and his role as offensive captain will be filled for the remainder of the season by senior offensive tackle **Tyler Polumbus**.

Because of academic issues and reported personal matters, Jackson's practice participation has been spotty since training camp began Aug. 6. Offensive coaches say he has practiced when his schedule allowed, most recently Wednesday, when he directed the scout team.

Also left behind on the Buffaloes' first trip were tailback **Hugh Charles** (strained hamstring), receiver **Josh Smith** (bruised kidney), linebacker **Michael Sipili** (suspended), defensive tackle **Chris Perri** (suspended), guard **Erick Faatagi** (academics) and receiver **Alvin Barnett**, who is academically ineligible and will redshirt this season.

Time is on his side

Although they registered three sacks in the opener, Buffs defenders hope to be able to put more pressure on Arizona State's **Rudy Carpenter**, one of the more talented quarterbacks CU will face.

"It's like playing against any guy who's talented - give him enough time and he'll pick you apart," junior defensive tackle **George Hypolite** said. "We don't want him to get his feet set, because when that happens, he pretty much makes every throw. We want him to keep moving around, get him out of the pocket and make him feel uneasy."

Hypolite registered one sack last week. Junior end **Maurice Lucas** had the other two.

CSU

Traffic jam solutions

Fort Collins and the university are working to improve game-day traffic flow to Hughes Stadium beginning today.

The first of these measures being tested are signal timing changes to the traffic lights along Drake Road to improve east-west traffic flow.

For CSU's home opener against California, signal timing changes will take place from 10:30 a.m. to noon and 2:45-4:30 p.m. The hope is to noticeably improve pregame westbound travel times along Drake (from Lemay to Overland Trail) and postgame eastbound travel times on Drake (from Overland Trail to Timberline) and southbound on Timberline to Harmony.

Air Force

New radio stations for Falcons