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CU running game can't wait to improve

Buffaloes must eliminate breakdowns with Florida State coming to Boulder

By Tom Kensler

Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder - Arizona State's defensive front four was good, but not *that* good, Colorado running backs coach Darian Hagan said Sunday after reviewing film of the Buffaloes' 33-14 loss Saturday night in Tempe, Ariz.

The disappearance of Colorado's running game, Hagan said, can be attributed more to mistakes and breakdowns made by the Buffs than to exceptional playmaking by the Sun Devils. Colorado averaged just 1.2 yards on 26 rushing attempts.

The Buffs (1-1) had better figure it out in a hurry. Although legendary coach Bobby Bowden doesn't appear to be bringing a vintage Florida State powerhouse to Boulder this weekend, the Seminoles (1-1) continue to recruit superior athletes.

"I felt when there

was space to run, our running backs didn't stick it in there," Hagan said, voicing his disappointment. "I don't think we ran with a lot of confidence or a lot of desire. I put that on me. And I also put it on our guys."

Of Colorado's 26 runs from scrimmage against Arizona State, only seven gained more than 2 yards. Ten carries went for negative yardage and another was for no gain.

Only four carries netted more than 4 yards, and two of the four were "gadget" running plays by wide receivers. That included a

team-best 11-yarder by freshman wide receiver Kendrick Celestine.

The only gains of more than 4 yards by a conventional ball carrier were runs of 9 yards and 10 yards by redshirt freshman tailback Demetrius Sumler in the third quarter.

Sumler, however, did not find much success otherwise. He averaged just 2.1 yards on a team-high 16 carries. Five times he was stopped for no gain or negative yardage.

Without a reliable running game to keep the pass rushers honest, quarterback Cody Hawkins was under assault throughout the game. Although sacked only once, Hawkins was hurried on numerous occasions and completed just 16-of-43 passes for 162 yards, including a 7-yard play to tight end Joe Sanders that was changed statistically on Sunday from a run (lateral) to a pass.

"We need to get the running game going to take the pressure off Cody, and off ourselves," junior center Daniel Sanders said. "If the defensive ends know they also have to worry about the run, it makes it easier for everybody."

CU jumped to a 14-0 lead, but senior cornerback Terrence Wheatley accounted for the first touchdown on an interception return. With the running game failing to do its part, CU's offense wasted excellent field

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position early in the game and contributed just seven points despite moving into ASU territory on six possessions before halftime.

"We all took turns messing up," Sanders said of the offensive line. "We have to look back at that game as a building block along the way. We'll get it rolling again."

CU coach Dan Hawkins said he expects tailback Hugh Charles (strained hamstring) and wideout Josh Smith (bruised kidney) to play against Florida State. Smith, injured during a mid-August scrimmage, is trying to get back in shape and said he was winded after running on Sunday.

CU: THE GRADES | By Tom Kensler

Offense

F It was a tough night. Colorado wideouts rarely gained separation on ASU cornerbacks and the Buffs dropped several passes when they did get open. The running game was almost nonexistent.

Defense

C The Buffs looked stout until late in the second quarter and played valiantly throughout. But there isn't enough depth to rotate in fresh players.

Special teams

C Matt DiLallo placed several punts inside the 20-yard line. And Terrence Wheatley found decent running room on kick returns. But unlike the win over Colorado State, there weren't many chances for the special-teams units to become a factor.

Overall

D This game showed how far Colorado has to go to become a national story. The Buffs had an opportunity to build a big lead in the first half and quiet the crowd, but didn't take advantage after gaining excellent field position.

EYE ON ... THE SEMINOLES

FLORIDA STATE AT COLORADO
8 p.m., Saturday, ESPN

For the record: Florida State is 1-1.

Streaking: FSU coach Bobby Bowden, 77, earned his 367th victory, 34-24 over Alabama-Birmingham, to stay two games ahead of Penn State's Joe Paterno atop the major college list.

Who's hot: FSU junior quarterback Drew Weatherford, who passed for 332 yards and three TDs against UAB, has been intercepted only once in two games after throwing 11 picks in 2006.

Who's not: The Seminoles' running game. The long gain against UAB was 12 yards.

Key stat: A 30-point favorite over a UAB team that now has lost eight straight, FSU needed 21 points in the third quarter to overcome an early 14-point deficit.

FYI: FSU will be making its first trip across the Mississippi River to play a regular-season game in an opponent's stadium since a 14-7 win over Southern Cal in Los Angeles on Sept. 6, 1997.

Injury report: Starting tailback Antone Smith (third-quarter concussion), status for CU game to be determined later in the week. Longtime defensive coordinator Mickey Andrews missed the game because of pneumonia.

Coachspeak: "The boys stayed in there and fought and won the game. ... We've still got a lot of work to do." - Bowden, following the Seminoles' second-half rally against UAB

Staff writer Tom Kensler can be reached at 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com.

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Bufs could get Smith, Charles back

Speedy players' return would be boost for FSU game

By Kyle Ringo
Monday, September 10, 2007

If you think you have a confidence problem, you've got a confidence problem.

The Colorado football team might have spent a little too much time in that mode last week leading up to its game at Arizona State. The Bufs were living by a motto "attack with confidence."

They tried to play that way Saturday in a 33-14 loss to the Sun Devils and it worked through the first quarter. If not for a couple of dropped potential touchdown passes by wide receivers, it might have been a successful approach.

But when momentum began to shift after they snatched a 14-0 lead, the young Bufs became passive and failed to move the ball because of it.

"That's the hump we need to get over with our guys," offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said. "If a play is there to be made, it's not a matter of if it's going to happen, but how it's going to happen."

The Bufs will get an infusion of confidence this week if all goes according to plan. Coach Dan Hawkins said Sunday he expects true freshman wide receiver Josh Smith to make his debut when Florida State comes to town. Hawkins said he also expects starting tailback Hugh Charles to return after missing the ASU game with a strained hamstring.

Both players are among the five fastest on the roster. Smith was the surprise of training camp before suffering a kidney injury during an Aug. 18 scrimmage. He spent four days in the hospital.

There was no word Sunday on whether Bernard Jackson, the starting quarterback last season might also be available. Jackson was moved to running back and wide receiver in the offseason. "I just think we need to have a lot more confidence in ourselves," quarterback Cody Hawkins said. "I think a lot of the things that happened (Saturday) were confidence with guys, I think, not necessarily trusting the running lanes and guys not making plays when they were there.

"If we had a little more confidence in ourselves, that game would have been totally different."

So that is the conundrum the Bufs find themselves in today. They must find a way to play with confidence even though doing so usually requires confidence in the first place.

It's not a great position in which to be with the Seminoles coming to town. They are coached by Bobby Bowden, the winningest coach in major college history and they haven't produced a losing record in 31 seasons.

Coach Dan Hawkins watched his offensive line struggle to create running lanes against the Sun Devils. When it did, he saw his running backs — primarily redshirt freshman Demetrius Sumler — fail to see the holes on multiple occasions.

Hawkins has played the same five offensive linemen for every play this season and at times, the line played without much assertiveness or aggression on Saturday.

He said it's possible changes could be made on the line, such as adding true freshmen Ryan Miller and Kai Maiava to

the mix at guard, where sophomore Devin Head and redshirt freshman Wes Palazzi have struggled at times.

"Those other guys are getting close," Hawkins said. "They have to be ready to play. It's not a question of just saying, 'Hey, let's throw somebody in.' They have to be ready to play."

Coaches believed Sumler was ready to play after he ran for 85 yards against Colorado State in the season opener after Charles left the game with his injury. Sumler averaged only 2.1 yards per carry against the Sun Devils.

"I think at times he had a lot of room to run, but when he did, he wasn't Demetrius," running backs coach Darian Hagan said. "I don't think he ran with a lot of vision. The desire is there. He wants to be good, but somehow, some way the lights went on and he became Demetrius Sumler the redshirt freshman."

Coach Hawkins said his team has to learn to play through mistakes and build on momentum when it comes. The Bufs started four different drives in the first half Saturday with the worst field position being their own 40-yard line. They also benefited from two ASU turnovers and five personal foul penalties in the half and scored a total of seven points.

Cornerback Terrence Wheatley's interception for a touchdown produced the team's only other points.

"When we had the opportunity staring us right in the faces to cut their head off, we didn't take advantage of it," Cody Hawkins said. "Part of it is we've got some young guys, but we've got to take advantage of it next time."

Notable

The official box score for Saturday's game was corrected Sunday. Originally ASU officials had credited tight end Joe Sanders with a seven-yard run, but it was actually a seven-yard reception. The correction gave Cody Hawkins one more completed pass and one more attempt. He was 16-for-43 for 162 yards. It also took seven rushing yards away from the Bufs who are now credited with rushing 27 times for 32 yards. ... Linebacker Jordon Dizon has made 37 total tackles and three sacks in two games. ... Defensive end Jason Brace and safety Lionel Harris each suffered sprained ankles and are day-to-day. ... Quarterback Nick Nelson and punter Tom Suazo made their CU debuts against ASU.



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First look: Florida State

By Kyle Ringo

Monday, September 10, 2007

Game 3

Matchup: Florida State (1-1) at Colorado (1-1).

Game time: Saturday, 8:10 p.m. at Folsom Field (53,750).

On the air: ESPN; KOA (850 AM). Web site: seminoles.cstv.com

Last time

Florida State passed for 458 yards on Sept. 20, 2003, and the Seminoles ran away with a 47-7 victory over the Buffs. Former CU quarterback Erik Greenberg started for the first time in his career and hooked up with former wide receiver Jeremy Bloom on an 81-yard touchdown pass for the Buffs' only points in the game.

The series

Florida State leads 1-0 with the 47-7 victory in 2003 at Tallahassee.

The coach

Bobby Bowden is the winningest football coach in college football history with a 368-113-4 career record, including a 295-81-4 in 32 years at Florida State. The Seminoles have produced a winning record in 30 consecutive seasons and Bowden has won two national championships. Bowden will coach his 486th game against CU.

The lowdown

Tailback Antone Smith suffered a concussion in the Seminoles' victory over Alabama-Birmingham on Saturday and is questionable. ... The Seminoles are 23-5-1 in nonconference games since 1992. The five losses and one tie have come against three opponents Florida, Miami and Notre Dame. ... FSU features six offensive linemen with extensive playing experience. They have started 82 games combined. ... Thirteen of the Seminoles' 15 top tacklers in 2006 returned for this season. ... The FSU roster features 70 players from the state of Florida.

Who to know

QB Drew Weatherford: A junior who has started 25 of the past 28 games for the Seminoles. He has thrown for 5,836 yards in his career. The only quarterback in Atlantic Coast Conference history to throw for more yards at the same point in his career is former North Carolina State quarterback Phillip Rivers.

WR De'Cody Fagg: The offensive team captain. He has caught at least one pass in 16 consecutive games. Has 83 career receptions but only two touchdowns.

S Roger Williams: The Seminoles leading returning tackler coming in to this season. He has played in 40 games in his career. Williams made seven total tackles, forced a fumble and recovered a fumble in Saturday's win over UAB.

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Longmont, Colorado
Monday, September 10,
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DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 9/10/2007

CU's Smith close to return

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Josh Smith was huffing and puffing a lot Sunday night, but the freshman receiver said he's getting close to playing for the Colorado Buffaloes. The main obstacle now, he said, has little to do with the kidney he injured in a scrimmage last month.

"We're definitely going to see how it goes," Smith said. "Coach wants to see how I'm practicing and see how my head is doing and then see if I'm mentally ready to go.

"It's slightly a physical thing at this point. It's more mind control at this point."

CU coach Dan Hawkins said he expects Smith, as well as running back Hugh Charles (hamstring) to play Saturday night when the Buffs host Florida State in their home opener (8 p.m., ESPN).

Smith excelled in camp, establishing himself as a playmaker. Charles, the leading rusher each of the past two seasons, injured his hamstring against Colorado State the first time he touched the ball. In Saturday's 33-14 loss at Arizona State, CU's offense looked slower than ASU's defense, and the absence of playmakers glared.

Smith said the sprints he ran Sunday represented the most intense workout he has endured since injuring his kidney in an August scrimmage. He said he did not lose much weight during his four-day stay in the hospital and the time immediately after his release. He said he's drinking a lot of water to retrieve his water mass, and returning to the training table for regular meals was "good to my soul."

Smith has conditioning to reclaim. He acknowledged it's a grind to get back in shape after the injury, and frustrating when he considers how well-conditioned he was previously.

"I don't have a problem with it," Smith said. "It's what I know I need to do, so that motivates me to go out and do it."

Extra points: Hawkins gave no update on Bernard Jackson, who has said he wanted to return by the Florida State game. ... Defensive tackle Jason Brace sprained his ankle Saturday and is listed as day-to-day. Safety Lionel Harris sprained his shoulder but is expected to practice Tuesday. ... Linebacker Jordon Dizon's unofficial tackle total of 15 Saturday moved him into 12th all time at CU with 319.

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



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Monday, September 10,
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DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 9/10/2007

Hawkins' win streak ends

Bufs QB looks to bounce back

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

TEMPE, Ariz. — As Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins trudged off the field Saturday night, Arizona State fans showered him with chants of “60 and 1!”

It was clear they were heckling the redshirt freshman, but they were also showing some unintended respect for a young man who hadn't previously tasted defeat as a starting quarterback. And that record has become the stuff of legend.

Hawkins and CU lost, 33-14, to ASU. Hawkins' streak of winning every game in which he's been the starting quarterback since sixth grade Pop Warner ended. That makes him 60-1. And Hawkins had some interesting perspective on the matter.

“It's 60-1, but I've lost before,” he said. “In basketball (in high school), we were OK. In baseball we weren't that good, and my brother always beats me in pool.

“But it is a bummer every time you lose, and we're definitely crushed because our defense put us in some great situations, and we didn't really return the favor.”

CU's defense gave the Buffs outstanding field position several times in the first half, and Terrence Wheatley's interception return for a touchdown sparked the Buffs to a 14-0 lead.

But offensively, CU struggled, mustering only 15 first downs and 207 yards. Four times in the first half the Buffs took over near midfield and came away with scoreless drives.

Hawkins finished 15-for-42 for 155 yards, with one touchdown and an interception ASU returned for a score.

CU's receivers dropped several passes, including four by Patrick Williams.

“Dropped passes frustrated me, but I threw a lot of bad balls, too,” Hawkins said. “I'm sure that frustrates the receivers and the offensive line, but it's everybody's game and we all had an equal part in every play. There were a lot of times when we might have had a dropped ball, but I wasn't doing my assignment either.

“I have to take lot of blame for that. I have to do a better job of leadership and showing confidence in my guys. We're going to come out next week and play our butts off.”

Head coach Dan Hawkins didn't have to much to say when asked to critique his son's work.

“He made a couple of good throws and they got dropped,” the coach said.

Afterward, all the Buffs could do was look ahead.

“I expect Cody to bounce back, our offense to bounce back, our coaches to bounce back,” Williams said. “One thing about this team is we're tough and resilient and we're not going to stay down for long.” Said Cody: “It's quite upsetting, but we have a lot of great guys on this team and I wouldn't want to play for anybody else in the country. So we're going to get back to work (Sunday) morning and correct our mistakes we made and keep improving.”

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

Rocky Mountain News

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Local college football, September 10

By Brad Byler & Jim Benton, Special to the Rocky
September 10, 2007

CU

Next: Florida at State (1-1) at Buffaloes (1-1), 8 p.m. Saturday, Folsom Field.

TV/radio: ESPN; KKZN-AM (760).

Who's favored: Florida State by 3 1/2.

Unpleasant memories

Buffaloes kicker **Kevin Eberhart** and cornerback **Terrence Wheatley** are the only players on CU's roster who saw action the last time CU played Florida State in 2003, when the Seminoles won 47-7. Eberhart was a true freshman, and he missed field-goal attempts from 22 and 42 yards against FSU, his only two attempts of his freshman year.

"That was a tough game for me personally," said Eberhart, who kicked the winning field goal in overtime to help CU beat Colorado State this year. "It wasn't the first game I had played in, but it was the first time I had been away from Colorado in a big game. It was definitely disappointing to miss those field goals. In some respects I think that set the tone for me that year. It's been a long time since then and hopefully I've had a chance to mature a lot as I kicked with (former CU kicker) **Mason Crosby** and become a lot better. That shouldn't happen again."

Liking the competition

Cody Hawkins looks at CU's rugged schedule and loves what he sees. Despite losing to Arizona State on Saturday night and having Florida State coming up this Saturday, the freshman quarterback said the schedule is something that should draw people to Colorado.

"I think that's one of the main reasons a lot of kids come to play at Colorado," he said. "You have a lot of teams playing schools that sound like Southeast Central Louisiana State, and we're going to play Florida State, and we just played Arizona State. We want to play the best in the country because we want to be the best. In order to climb up those rankings and win a national championship, you have to beat the best all around the country. Getting to play great competition like Arizona State and Florida State and a great nonconference game against Colorado State allows us to test ourselves and get ready to play in one of the best conferences in college football."

No love for Seminoles

Kevin Moyd is one of four players on CU's roster who grew up in Florida, but Moyd, a sophomore tailback from Miami Northwestern High School, never was a fan of Florida State.

"I always grew up hating Florida State because I was a Hurricanes fan when I was younger," he said. "Never had any love for Florida State. This is kind of a dream come true. I'm looking forward to playing against them and doing the best I can to help the Buffaloes get the win."

Sophomore punter **Matt DiLallo** (Wellington), freshman linebacker **Josh Hartigan** (Fort Lauderdale) and freshman offensive lineman **Mike Itis** (Sarasota) are also from the Sunshine State.

Injury update

Colorado's only significant injury from the Arizona State game is sophomore defensive tackle **Jason Brace**, whose status is day to day after he injured an ankle against the Sun Devils.

CSU



Doug Pensinger ©
Getty Images

Kevin Eberhart, Colorado's placekicker, missed two field goals in 2003 against Florida State when CU lost 47-7. Eberhart, who says he has matured a lot since then, is ready for the rematch.