

Rocky Mountain News

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Familiarity helps defense blossom

Other factors also at play in Buffaloes' resurgence

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News
October 10, 2007

BOULDER - Those coaching, watching and occasionally even playing for the University of Colorado defense in 2006 believed the Buffaloes were plodding through a foundational season. At least, they hoped so.

Safety Ryan Walters, as new to the system as any of his teammates, recalls one game in which he glanced around the Buffs' "back end" and did a horrified double take.

"We were playing two different coverages, really two different defenses," he said, shaking his head. "People are smarter this year, and smarter play is better play. You can't teach experience."

The Buffs have been there, learned that. Halfway through their second season in coordinator Ron Collins' scheme, their familiarity with what they're doing and what's expected of them has grown exponentially. And it's showing.

CU ranks No. 21 in NCAA Division I-A in total defense, third in the Big 12 Conference behind Kansas and Oklahoma. But the Buffs have beaten the Sooners, limiting them to their fewest totals of the season in points (24) and total yards (230), and the Jayhawks visit Boulder on Oct. 20.

But the overall improvement can't be pinned solely on increased familiarity with the scheme. So many other factors have coalesced at the right times, bringing the defense's play to a level that should keep the Buffs in most games as they enter the final half of the season.

Consider:

- **CU leads the Big 12 (eighth in Division I-A) in time of possession, keeping the ball for 32:37 a game.** On the flip side, the Buffs are last in the conference in red-zone efficiency (73.1 percent) and 10th in scoring offense (27.2 points a game), which underscores coach Dan Hawkins' contention that time of possession is overrated unless all those minutes on offense translate into points.

Still, CU's defensive coaches view their unit's time off the field as time well spent.

"It's huge for us," secondary coach Greg Brown said.

- **Schematically, Brown has molded his secondary to fit his NFL experience.** The system Collins imported from Boise State is "really different" from what Brown has coached, but Collins has been very flexible in allowing Brown to utilize NFL knowledge gleaned from Jim Haslett (New Orleans), Jeff Fisher (Tennessee) and Dave Adolph (San Diego), along with some elements Brown employed in his first CU tenure.

Basically, CU has been using a four-man front on first and second downs, then going to a three-man front with an "overloaded three-deep" look in the secondary on third down.

What has made it work is CU's top cornerbacks - Terrence Wheatley and Ben Burney - have held up in man-to-man coverage when the four-man rush is used, which was more in 2006 than this season. And Walters, the secondary's



Jack Dempsey © AP

Colorado defensive tackle George Hypolite, right, says he and his teammates are "hitting the field juiced because we know it's our time to shine. And that's the difference." The 6-foot-1, 285-pound junior from Los Angeles adds, "When our backs are to the wall, we're coming out fighting."

"hammer," and fellow safety D.J. Dykes have grown into their roles.

But, Brown notes, coverages are mixed frequently enough to keep quarterbacks guessing. Ask Oklahoma redshirt freshman Sam Bradford.

• **Linebacker play has been consistently good, no small feat considering the circumstances.** Veteran position coach Brian Cabral seems to have used bailing wire and walk- on sophomores to hold his unit together.

Since preseason camp, Cabral has lost a projected starter (Michael Sipili, suspended) and his backup (R.J. Brown, concussions) at "mike" linebacker and the top backup (Marcus Burton, academics) at the "will" spot.

Former walk-on Jeff Smart, a heady sophomore who went on scholarship three weeks ago, shifted from backing up Butkus Award candidate Jordon Dizon at the "will" position to the starting "mike" spot. And transfer walk-on Jake Duren, also a sophomore, spells Smart.

Dizon has alternated between steady and spectacular (he is the nation's leading tackler at 13 a game), and junior Brad Jones is realizing his potential on the outside.

"What (Cabral) has done there, well, it's just unbelievable," Brown said.

• **Through six games in 2006, former end Abe Wright had a team- best eight sacks.** This season, as a team, the Buffs have 10 at the halfway point, with starting end Maurice Lucas accounting for two.

Collins and his coaches hoped someone might emerge in Wright's absence, but if it came to "pressure by committee," they were OK with it. CU has gotten adequate pressure rushing four or five defenders against teams such as Oklahoma that have kept six or seven players in protection.

Plus, the pressure has originated from enough different sources to keep offensive coordinators guessing. Through the Baylor game, 11 players manning seven different positions had accounted for CU's 21 quarterback pressures, with four of those players accounting for the team's 10 sacks.

• **The X factor in the Buffs' defensive improvement might be the one most overlooked.** Collins cites improved offensive and special- teams play, but notes the scout team is "exceptionally better than last year, and that's made a huge difference for us. We have to play competitive every day in practice. They make us work hard."

Why the improvement?

"Offensive linemen - the young guys we brought in are really good," Collins said. "And there's a very good quarterback (freshman Matt Ballenger). Collectively, they do well together."

Blend it, fold it, add an intangible or two, and the "D" is demanding attention.

"We're resilient . . . more so than in past years," tackle George Hypolite said. "We're not giving up a lot of big plays, and on top of that, when our offense occasionally puts us in bad positions, we're not letting people through the door."

"We're hitting the field juiced because we know it's our time to shine. And that's the difference. . . . When our backs are to the wall, we're coming out fighting, swinging. Not to say we haven't done that in years past, but this year, we're coming out swinging with our eyes up, we're seeing what's coming in front of us. That means we're just doing our jobs, understanding what we have to do to get this thing done - and that's been impressive."

Defense in the Big 12

• TOTAL DEFENSE

Rank School Yards per game

1. Kansas 247.6

2. Oklahoma 283.8
3. Colorado 308.0
4. Kansas State 308.4
5. Texas 321.3
6. Texas Tech 337.8
7. Iowa State 346.3
8. Texas A&M 377.5
9. Missouri 407.0
10. Baylor 419.7
11. Oklahoma State 430.3
12. Nebraska 441.5

- PASS DEFENSE

Rank School Yards per game

1. Kansas 161.2
2. Texas Tech 186.2
3. Colorado 206.8
4. Kansas State 211.0
5. Oklahoma 217.3
6. Texas 219.0
7. Iowa State 226.2
8. Texas A&M 237.5
9. Nebraska 251.0
10. Baylor 257.8
11. Missouri 265.2
12. Oklahoma State 321.8

- RUSH DEFENSE

Rank School Yards per game

1. Oklahoma 66.5

2. Kansas 86.4
3. Kansas State 97.4
4. Colorado 101.2
5. Texas 102.3
6. Oklahoma State 108.5
7. Iowa State 120.2
8. Texas A&M 140.0
9. Missouri 141.8
10. Texas Tech 151.7
11. Baylor 161.8
12. Nebraska 190.5

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Jekyll, Hyde on interior of defensive line

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News
October 10, 2007

BOULDER - The yin and yang of the University of Colorado's defensive front is a pair of run-stuffing, quarterback-hounding junior tackles.

George Hypolite and Brandon Nicolas are brothers in arms, but they are polar opposites in personality. Hypolite is the gregarious one; Nicolas is seemingly as taciturn as one of the mugs on Mount Rushmore.

Once on the field, though, Hypolite claims his trench bud undergoes a transformation, morphing into "the guy who jaws with the other team . . . he's the one who's in tune, jawing, saying, 'Hey, I just got you.' Nothing ever disrespectful, stuff that's just kind of funny, kind of playful.

"Now off the field, we're exactly the opposite - I'm talking, he's stoic. But on the field, he's very energetic, always talking, always telling me things. It's kind of funny. I never would have guessed it.

"Last year, when Texas Tech was in here in the thin air, I said, 'Look at those guys, they're tired.' (Nicolas) says to me, 'Look at you, you're bent over double.' "

A 2005 transfer from Notre Dame, Nicolas concedes he goes gabby once his chin strap is fastened: "I really get into the games and have a lot fun out there. It can get intense, but you have fun with other players. . . . But George (talks), too. I don't think he's ever going to be quiet."

Their position coach, Romeo Bandison, can be nearly impossible to please. During his career as a defensive line coach, he says his grading system shows the very best of his players averaging three mistakes a game - botched technique, not swiftly shedding a block, missing a tackle, etc.

Hypolite and Nicolas "have been right there every week, even a little higher," Bandison said. "They're always very consistent. . . . They're playing really well."

As defensive tackles go, neither is a monster. Hypolite is 6-foot-1, 285 pounds, Nicolas 6-3, 290. But each is strong enough and quick enough to contend with the 300-plus pounders staring at them from across the line of scrimmage.

Though a primary role for each is occupying blockers, Hypolite averages 3.7 tackles (22 total), Nicolas three (18 total). And they have combined for half (Hypolite has three, Nicolas two) of the Buffaloes' 10 sacks.

Said Hypolite: "We feed off of each other."

Verbiage is a large part of the meal.

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Joshua Lawton ©
Daily Camera ©
2006

Defensive tackle
Brandon Nicholas, a
6-foot-3, 290-pound
transfer from Notre
Dame, is quiet off the
field, vocal on it.

Rocky Mountain News

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Local college football, October 10

By **B.G. Brooks (CU)**, **Randy Holtz (CSU)**, **Jim Benton (Air Force)** and wire services (Northern Colorado and Wyoming).
October 10, 2007

CU

Midseason review

Quarterback **Cody Hawkins**' résumé shows six games as a Division I-A starter, with at least six more upcoming.

By most accounts, he has handled quite well the first half of his redshirt freshman season and his position's demands.

Asked Tuesday how he might grade his performance, he responded, "4-2" - the Buffaloes' record.

But he said a comfort level he discovered in the Florida State game has grown steadily in the three wins since.

"It's back to playing football now," he said. "It's not so much what the other team is doing, it's about our offense and execution."

Hawkins' "to-do" list for the season's last half includes decreasing his interceptions (nine, vs. 10 touchdown passes), improving third-down conversions and clock management "and being a little more of a vocal leader.

"I've always been a pretty vocal kid, but I kind of had my feelers out the first half of the season and not really trying to call people out, just trying to stay quiet and not talk too much. . . .

"I think as I continue to get more comfortable with the guys on the team and the guys on the offense, that will happen."

Shouldering the load

After a late interception by **Josh Freeman** snuffed any hope of a possible winning score Saturday in Kansas State's 30-24 loss against rival Kansas, Wildcats coach **Ron Prince** defended his sophomore quarterback.

"We should have been able to perform in that situation, and we did not," Prince said. "That's my deal."

Freeman, though, said the interception was "on my shoulders. I wasn't able to come through."

The interception was his third of the game and ninth turnover in consecutive losses to the Jayhawks. He completed 31-of-48 passes for 305 yards and one touchdown, but his first interception ended a streak of 106 passes without one.

Last season in Boulder, Freeman was interception-free in completing 22-of-26 passes for 251 yards and two touchdowns. He was chosen the Big 12 Conference offensive player of the week for that effort.

Etc.

- Coach **Dan Hawkins** sees linebacker **Jordon Dizon** playing that same spot in the NFL instead of switching to safety, as



Donna McWilliam ©
AP

Colorado State coach Sonny Lubick says the winless Rams still believe in their ability to win.

some analysts project. Hawkins believes with "eating right, training right," Dizon, who weighs 220 pounds, could gain enough weight to be an NFL linebacker.

- Tight end **Tyson DeVree** (concussion) is expected back after missing the Baylor game. DeVree has the most catches (10 for 105 yards, four touchdowns) among the tight ends.
- Safety **D.J. Dykes** could be used as a punt returner if **Chase McBride** (shoulder) or **Stephone Robinson** (ankle) are unavailable. Also in the return mix could be receivers **Scotty McKnight** and **Josh Smith** and defensive back **Cha'pelle Brown**.
- CU has seven known 2008 commitments, but that number doesn't perturb Dan Hawkins. "It's a long way to Tipperary. . . . It's going good," he said, noting CU will have "18-ish" scholarships to give.

Numbers game

36-10is **CU's fourth-quarter scoring advantage** through six games. The Buffaloes also have a 3-0 scoring advantage in overtime.

He said it

"You push through it. . . . You go."

Dan Hawkins, on battling the cold/flu symptoms plaguing some of the players and coaches.

CSU

Blame coaches

Colorado State's 12-game losing streak began with a fade-from-ahead loss at Falcon Stadium last October. The Rams led Air Force 21-3 at halftime but lost 24-21. It was the first of five losses during the streak in which CSU led in the second half before squandering leads down the stretch.

"I don't think the players get caught up in what happened a year ago," coach **Sonny Lubick** said Tuesday. "That game wasn't the players' fault. It was our fault as coaches. Air Force played well in the second half, and we didn't. That was our doing, not the kids."

Nading practices; safeties sit

Senior defensive lineman **Jesse Nading**, who suffered a hand injury against San Diego State, practiced and is expected to play against Air Force.

But neither CSU starting safety practiced. **Mike Pagnotta** (ankle sprain) and **Klint Kubiak** (recovering from a bleeding ulcer) missed Saturday's game and are regarded as questionable for the game.

Pagnotta said he could return to practice as early as today.

Etc.

- CSU is expecting a crowd of 25,000 to 28,000 at 34,400-seat Hughes Stadium for the game. Tickets will be available at the three stadium ticket booths on game day. Information: 1-800-491-7267.

- A Web site celebrating CSU's football history - Colorado Aggies.com - has come out with a fans' vote of the top 25 Colorado A&M Aggies football players of all time. The top five are **Harry Hughes**, **Fum McGraw**, **Eddie Hanna**, **Jack Christiansen** and **Bob Davis**. The school recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of its name change from Colorado A&M to Colorado State and nickname change from Aggies to Rams.

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Longmont, Colorado
Wednesday, October 10,
2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

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On the right track

Recent updates in facilities nice, but CU coaches hope it's only the start

By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — The bubble's up, the Coors Events Center is undergoing a makeover, the football team's locker room is coming together.

Now what?

That was the question posed to Colorado coach Dan Hawkins on Tuesday. And he answered by revealing there have been talks about expanding the Dal Ward Center, which houses the football program, some administrative offices and other parts of the CU athletic department at the north end of Folsom Field.

Hawkins said some "engineer-architect-type guys" have looked at the structure and started exploring some ideas. Their plans could include the addition of seats in the open corners that border the Dal Ward Center now. There have been rumblings about these and other renovations at CU for years. Maybe even decades in some instances. But Tuesday, there was an urgency in Hawkins' voice.

"We need to expand Dal Ward," Hawkins said. "We're too cramped for space. We need to have bigger meeting rooms, better meeting rooms, an increased academic area. We need a bigger weight room. We just need to add on to Dal Ward."

Hawkins first voiced the need for better facilities at CU in December 2005, when CU was courting him and he still coached Boise State. The way things are now, running backs coach Darian Hagan must use the video coordinator's office to meet with his players. That's a small room, he said. Tight ends coach Kent Riddle uses his office for player meetings.

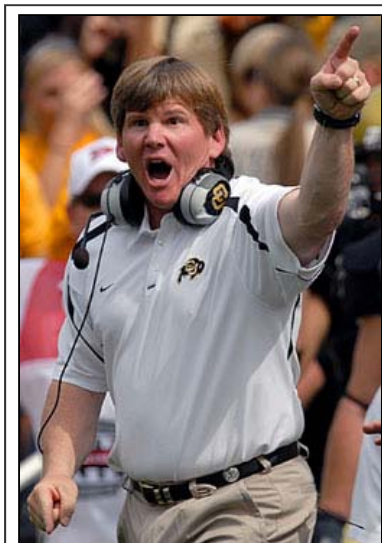
The athletic department is trying to address several priorities, including a basketball practice facility that it wants to build adjacent to the Coors Events Center. New coach Jeff Bzdelik has a clause in his contract that states if CU hasn't broken ground on one within the first three years of his employment, his buyouts cancel. Bzdelik and an athletic department contingent toured practice facilities at Texas and Oklahoma over the summer to learn what they want in one at CU.

Athletic director Mike Bohn said CU remains in the fundraising mode on the project, which would also benefit the volleyball program. He said it'll cost around the "\$8 to \$10 million mark."

"We have work to do to inspire donors and supporters to help us make that happen," Bohn said.

CU is also scheduled to host the Big 12 track championships this year and its venue needs work. Hawkins also said the program still needs a permanent indoor facility. The bubble will go up each October and come down in April.

Bohn said CU can't use the practice bubble until it passes inspections, which he said is an ongoing process. It's presence alongside the football fields brought several smiles this week.



Coach Dan Hawkins **Times-Call** / Joshua Buck

“They told me when they were recruiting me there was going to be an indoor facility,” said Hagan, who arrived in Boulder as a freshman in 1988. “To finally have it says a lot about Mike Bohn.”

“It’s a lot nicer than what I imagined, and it’s a lot bigger,” linebacker coach Brian Cabral said. “It’s long overdue. It’s something that’s going to allow us to be better and do more.” Hawkins joked that the pace of improvement is never to a coach’s liking, and that he hoped he would be around Boulder long enough to see such renovations as an expansion to the Dal Ward Center reach fruition.

“Hopefully as we continue to do things right and garner support, that the same types of individuals and people that were able to build this facility will garner some momentum and get that project up and going,” Hawkins said. “And it won’t be something that’s a 10-year project. It’s a 3-year project instead of a 10-year project.”

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Longmont, Colorado
Wednesday, October 10,
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DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 10/10/2007

Hawkins: Recruiting going well

Colorado has several players committed to play for Buffs in 2008

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Recruiting, said Colorado coach Dan Hawkins, is going just fine.

According to Internet sites, Hawkins' program has received six or seven known commitments to date, with the most recent one coming last week from Boulder High linebacker Will Pericak. Those Web sites also quote junior college receiver Corey Surrency, CU's highest-rated commitment, saying he'll likely end up elsewhere.



Colorado punt returner Chase McBride is still recovering from a shoulder injury and will not play Saturday against Kansas State.

Times-Call / Joshua Buck

And the current size of CU's class is small compared to some of its Big 12 rivals. Nebraska, according to Rivals.com, has 24 commitments.

Anyone worrying about the class shouldn't, Hawkins said.

"There's so much wishy-washyness with all of that stuff," Hawkins said. "It's a long road to Tipperary."

Signing day for high school players isn't until the first Wednesday in February. And as CU's recruiting showed last year, sometimes the best players are the last ones to commit.

Guard Kai Maiava wasn't offered a scholarship until another commit backed out two days before signing day. Maiava is now starting on CU's offensive line, and coaches use his as an example for the rest of the team to see.

Hawkins said CU will sign around 18 players in this class, and that most of the official visits will take place during the regular season.

"It's like last year when people are going, 'I don't know how you can get that kind of a class when you only win two games,'" Hawkins said. "It's because people have known us for a long time and they know what we're about and what we do."

Injury report: CU lists punt returner Chase McBride (shoulder) as out for Saturday's game at Kansas State (7:20 p.m., ESPN2), even though McBride said Sunday he'll try to play. Hawkins said McBride's return is possible. Stephone Robinson (leg contusion) is listed as day to day.

Tailback Kevin Moyd (hamstring) is questionable, defensive back Jalil Brown (concussion) is day to day. Tight end Tyson DeVree (concussion) and offensive tackle Edwin Harrison (knee) are probable. R.J. Brown (concussion) is still out.

Under investigation: According to the Associated Press, Kansas State is cooperating with an NCAA investigation after it uncovered a possible rules violation within its football program that involved allegations of extra benefits and academic misconduct.

The NCAA's probe focuses on a former university employee, three former football players and two current ones,

including one who's playing.

"It's certainly a distraction," Kansas State athletic director Tim Weiser told the AP.

Hawkins said he didn't know anything about the investigation, and added it would have no affect on CU's preparation for Saturday.

Extra points: Several Buffs continue to fight colds. Quarterback Cody Hawkins said he's taking plenty of medicine and sleeping a lot. Dan Hawkins said colds like these hitting his football team, "happens every year," and, "you just push through it." ... Freshman quarterback Matt Ballenger, who's scheduled to redshirt this year, is making an impression. Hawkins said he noticed how Ballenger hadn't won a scout team award yet in 2007, but was told Ballenger could "get that every week." ... Finishing was a big theme in the offseason, and the numbers in 2007 suggest the players understood. Through six games, CU has outscored its opponents, 39-10, in the fourth quarter and overtime. Last year, opponents outscored CU, 106-40, in the fourth. ... Freshman receiver Josh Smith, who was suspended for the first half of Saturday's game at Baylor for being late to a meeting, said he has learned his lesson. "I'm a freshman still trying to figure it out, I guess," Smith said.

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college football

Hawkins: Buffs a work in progress

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 10/09/2007 03:46:14 PM MDT

BOULDER — Saying his football team will always remain a work in progress, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins was reluctant to give them a letter grade for the first half of the regular season. Hawkins was asked for a midseason evaluation earlier today during his weekly news luncheon.

"I'm one of those guys where, you are never there and you are never not there," Hawkins said. "I always tell our guys that the 'average' ought to be good, your average performance ought to be good. I think we are getting there and getting used to that. But there are a lot of games to be played."

Colorado (4-2, 2-0 Big 12) plays Saturday night at Kansas State (3-2, 1-1). At the midway point, CU already has doubled its total number of victories in 2006,

Colorado Football

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Hawkins' first season in Boulder.

CU needs two more victories to become bowl eligible.

Hawkins said the Buffaloes must improve on their turnover ratio. With 10 takeaways against 14 giveaways, Colorado (minus-.67) is tied for ninth with Texas among Big 12 teams in turnover ratio. That ranks 91st nationally among 119 major-college teams.

"We've had a few glitches there, but our offense has made tremendous strides," Hawkins said. "If you look at our body of work on offense that last three weeks, it has been pretty good. But we're working on turnovers and trying to get to that next level."

CU quarterback Cody Hawkins said he would rather give the team a number grade, rather than a letter grade, for the first half of the season.

"My grade right now is 4-2 because that's what our record is," Cody said. "Obviously, our job is to win football games and to put enough points on the board to win."

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cu football notes

Hawkins' priority: expand Dal Ward

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER - Grateful for the new, \$2.5 million practice bubble and recent renovations to the locker room, dining room and coaches' offices but always looking toward the future, Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins already has a new wish list.

The top priority, Hawkins said, is an expansion of the Dal Ward Athletic Center, a multipurpose facility of 92,000 square feet located at the north end of Folsom Field. It includes offices for athletic administrators and coaches, academic and computer centers, an auditorium, locker rooms and sports medicine and weight training centers.

Named for Colorado's football coach from 1948-58, the Dal Ward Center was considered state-of-the-art when it opened in 1991. That's no longer the

Colorado Football

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case, Hawkins said.

"We're too cramped for space," Hawkins said Tuesday after his weekly media luncheon. "We need to have bigger meeting rooms, better meeting rooms, an increased academic area. We need a bigger weight room."

The timing could be good to pitch the idea to donors. Riding a three-game winning streak, Colorado (4-2, 2-0) leads the Big 12 North Division entering its Saturday night game at Kansas State (3-2, 1-1). The Buffaloes already have doubled last year's victory total.

Hawkins said players are excited about the bubble, which covers a regulation, 100-yard practice field. It was fully installed during the weekend but won't be available for use until code inspections are completed.

"You'd love to continue the momentum (of the bubble)," Hawkins said. "If we continue to do things right and garner support ... maybe (Dal Ward expansion) could be a three-year project instead of a 10-year project."

"Everything moves at a lot slower pace than every coach wants it to. But clearly, you want to just keep showing improvement."

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CU has begun raising funds for a basketball/volleyball practice facility attached to the Coors Events Center. Bohn estimated the cost of that facility to be \$8 million to \$10 million.

"We obviously have plenty of opportunities to grow, and that's what we'd like to do," Bohn said Tuesday.

Footnote. With punt returner Chase McBride (shoulder) listed as unavailable for the Kansas State game and his replacement, Stephone Robinson (leg contusion), considered day to day, safety Daniel Dykes could get the call Saturday. Dykes returned punts for Idaho before transferring to CU.

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Recruiting numbers don't worry Hawkins

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

The Colorado football program continues to bring up the rear in the Big 12 Conference in total recruits landed, but coach Dan Hawkins says things are rolling along just fine.

Hawkins said he expects to sign around 18 recruits for the 2008 class when national signing day arrives on the first Wednesday in February.

The Buffs have seven commitments and one of them, Corey Surrency, a California junior college wide receiver, is said to be close to committing to LSU and leaving the Buffs in the rearview mirror.

CU is one of only three teams with fewer than 10 commitments in the Big 12, according to commitment lists on rivals.com.

"I don't worry about that," Hawkins said. "There is so much wishy-washiness with that stuff."

Colorado's seven recruits rank 50th in rivals.com class rankings ahead of larger groups at Kansas, Iowa State and Baylor.

The Buffs are also likely to bring in another large group of walk-ons next season. Hawkins always enjoyed plenty of success identifying walk-on candidates and building them into strong contributors.

Hawkins said the program has received positive feedback after its big win two weeks ago against then-No. 3 Oklahoma, but CU coaches generally receive a warm welcome on the recruiting trail because they work with a lot of high school and junior college coaches they have known for years.

"It's like last year. People were going, 'I don't know how you can get that kind of class when you win two games.' It's because people know us," Hawkins said.

Throwing it all away

Kansas State quarterback Josh Freeman, a 6-foot-6, 250-pound sophomore, has thrown an alarming number of interceptions compared with his touchdown pass totals through his first 14 games as the starter.

He has thrown 22 interceptions and only 10 touchdown passes and ranks 91st in the nation in passing efficiency going into this week's game with the Buffs. Hawkins said Freeman will learn from his mistakes as he continues to grow in the position.

"He's done a nice job, I'm sure he threw some interceptions last week that I'm sure he was not happy about, but he's played pretty good football, particularly for being a young guy," Hawkins said. "He's a

big part of what they do on offense. Both from the standpoint of throwing the football, but also, it is hard to get to him. He's mobile and even if you're lucky enough to get to him you better have somebody big tackle him or you are not going to get him down."

Freeman took responsibility for his team's loss last week at home against rival Kansas. He threw three of those interceptions against the Jayhawks but also produced the first 300-yard passing day of his young career.

"I'll take this on my shoulders," Freeman told reporters after the game. "I wasn't able to come through. As a leader on this team, I've got to be able to come through and do that. I didn't."

Bufs receive reprieve

Hawkins watched his team commit 11 penalties last week at Baylor for more than 100 yards, including two personal-foul calls.

A year ago after similar games, Hawkins made his players pay for those mistakes on Sunday in practice and conditioning work. However, he gave the Bufs the day off after the Baylor game.

Hawkins said he hasn't soften up at all. He said he told his players such a performance won't be tolerated in the future and he trusts them to be mature enough not to repeat it.

Notable

Hawkins said he didn't know that the Kansas State football program was being investigated for NCAA rules violations until Tuesday and he didn't think it would be much of a distraction to the Wildcats. ... With a new practice bubble, new locker room and new varsity room in place, and remodeled coaches' offices complete, Hawkins said the next item on the agenda for the program is expanding the Dal Ward Center. "We're too cramped for space," he said. ... Hawkins said he expects the atmosphere at Kansas State to be the most difficult his team has faced on the road this season. Crowds at Arizona State and Baylor were fairly tame. ... The Bufs are going for their 400th conference win in history.



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Sharing just fine with Harrison

Senior OK with splitting duty with freshman, especially if CU is winning

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

Good teams have glue guys. Players who don't mind being unheralded, under-appreciated and flying under the radar. They are usually some of the most popular guys in the locker room.

The Colorado football team has more than a few this season and one of the most important is fifth-year senior Edwin Harrison.

Plenty of young men in what is supposed to be the swan song of their career might lose their temper if a coach told them they were going to share playing time with a talented true freshman.

Harrison can understand how players let themselves fall into that trap, especially those who are hopeful of playing at the next level.

But when he learned three weeks ago from offensive line coach Jeff Grimes that he would begin sharing some of his playing time with highly recruited freshman Ryan Miller, his instinct was to see how he could help his protégé prepare and improve each week.

In the past three games, Harrison has been taking about 65 percent of the snaps at right tackle with Miller taking the rest of the playing time. The line has improved over that span, in part because Harrison is able to conserve some of his energy and because of the addition of Miller and freshman guard Kai Maiava.

Harrison said he is mindful of the future of the program and realizes coaches need to get younger players such as Miller some experience with himself and fellow senior tackle Tyler Polumbus moving on after the season.

"What's funny is, honestly, my parents have probably been more frustrated and thinking about it and asking me how do I feel, than I have," Harrison said. "I've told coach Grimes every day that whatever it takes for us to win is what I've been about.

"More so now than ever before I realize that this is it for me, and whatever it takes for us to win, I'm all for it."

That's a glue guy.

Harrison and his offensive linemates face another stiff challenge Saturday when they travel to Manhattan, Kan. for a 7:21 p.m. meeting with the Kansas State Wildcats (ESPN2).

The Kansas State-Colorado game is a special one for Harrison each year because it was the game in which he made his official recruiting visit to Boulder in 2002. He saw former CU cornerback Donald Strickland make a game-saving tackle that day on the CU sideline inside the 5-yard line to prevent a KSU touchdown.

He also saw a dominating CU running game with a fierce tailback named Chris Brown. Harrison is hoping to lead the Buffs back to that kind of production on the ground before he takes the pads off for the final time later this season.

The Buffs will see the 3-4 defense for the first time this season on Saturday. The Wildcats use three down linemen and four linebackers with one, two or three linebackers blitzing most of the time.

"Their D-linemen get a lot of push up field and just try to flatten all the O-linemen," CU center Daniel Sanders said. "They've been doing a pretty good job of it."

Kansas State has produced 17 sacks already this season and ranks 20th in the nation in rushing defense, allowing fewer than 100 yards a game on the ground. It will be Harrison's job — and Miller's when he's on the field — to handle the Wildcats' defensive standout, defensive end Ian Campbell.

"I've heard he's not only a leader on the field but an emotional leader who keeps that defense going," Harrison said. "He's somebody we're going to obviously have our eye on."

Campbell finished second in sacks in the Big 12 Conference last year to former CU defensive end Abraham Wright. He has 2.5 sacks this year and leads the Wildcats in tackles for loss.

The Kansas State defense has proved difficult for top-tier programs such as Auburn, which came back to beat the Wildcats, and Texas, which lost badly to the Wildcats on its home field.

"It is hard to block them," coach Dan Hawkins said. "They are always playing downhill on you and coming hard."

Read more about Edwin Harrison and the rest of the Buffs on Kyle Ringo's blog at Buffzone.com



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Who's next?

By ELIOT DEMPSEY Colorado Daily Sports Writer
Tuesday, October 9, 2007 6:00 PM MDT

The Colorado Buffaloes won their first road game under the tutelage of Coach Dan Hawkins on Saturday, when they beat Baylor 43-23 in Waco, Texas.

It was an important win for the team, as it served notice that the Buffs may just be able to keep their high level of play intact after their upset of Oklahoma. The win was also a sort of retribution for last year's triple overtime loss to the Bears in Boulder.

But, as has become the standard for Hawkins and the Buffs, once the game is over it is on to the next opponent.

This week: the Kansas State Wildcats.

At the midpoint of the season, the Buffs are 4-2, including 2-0 in the Big 12 Conference and they currently sit atop the Big 12 North standings. The Buffs are even getting national praise, as they received votes in both the AP and USA Today college football polls and junior defensive tackle George Hypolite was listed as the No. 4 junior defensive tackle in the nation according to ESPN draft guru Mel Kiper, Jr.

Even with all of the positive hoopla surrounding his team, coach Hawkins played his even keel role to a 't'. He gave his team a positive midseason grade, while still pointing out that there are things that need to be improved.

"Well our turnover ratio is still not good. I think offensively the last three games we have been playing pretty good. We had a few glitches there early on and our offense has made tremendous strides, as has our defense, but I think our offense had been a little bit behind," said Hawkins. "I think if you look at the body of work our offense has done the last three weeks or so has been pretty good, pretty consistent."

His son and quarterback, Cody Hawkins, echoed the thoughts of the season going well, but also mirrored his coach /father's 'There is still work to be done,' attitude.

"My grade right now is 4-2 because that is what our record is. Obviously our job is to win football games and put enough points on the scoreboard to win. We are either getting that done or we are not," said Cody. "There are obviously some things that we could have done better and should have done better, and there are some things that our guys have responded to and done well. Obviously I think our biggest grade is our record right now."

Although just a redshirt freshman, Cody Hawkins has played well and been a consistent performer throwing the ball. He said that he has always felt comfortable with the schemes and with the players around him, but that what he needs to work on is more plain old football stuff.

"Wow, taking care of the football, score more points, converting on third-down is always huge, so bringing up the third-down efficiency a little bit, managing the clock a little better and being a little more of a vocal leader," he said. "I have always been a pretty vocal kid but I kind of had my feelers out the first half of the season. I wasn't really trying to call people out and trying to stay quiet and not talk too much, but I think that is part of my deal. I like to talk and get people fired up and communicate with people. As I continue to get more comfortable with the guys on the team and my role on the team that will have to step up as well."

Coach Hawkins said he fully expects the Wildcats to 'come with their horns out,' after a tough loss to in-state rival Kansas last weekend and that he expects the Manhattan, Kansas crowd to be louder than the Baylor

and Arizona State crowds the Buffs faced earlier this season.

The game is on Saturday and will shown live on ESPN2 at 7:21 p.m. MDT.