



# Grimes wants O-line consistency

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Jeff Grimes walked on to the Colorado football practice fields eight months ago scratching his head, wondering how he might get through spring practices with six offensive linemen.

The first-year offensive line coach at CU had enjoyed a large stable of big bodies in his previous stop at Brigham Young.

He made the most of it and welcomed a gaggle of freshmen into the fold in the summer. Ten games into his first season in Boulder, Grimes said the entire experience has been the most challenging of his coaching career, but he is proud of the effort and attitude his players have brought with them every day along the way.

Colorado's offense has made dramatic improvement over last season in the passing game. It will likely fall short of the 2006 rushing numbers, but the Buffs didn't have a running quarterback this season. Last year, Bernard Jackson was second on the team in rushing from his spot under center.

Grimes said he believes the Buffs will once again become a strong running team in the future. He is building his group toward that. He said he has seen evidence of improvement in Big 12 Conference games this season.

Grimes has given the Buffs a passing grade on the ground in four of the six conference games and said they have run the ball effectively at times in all six games. Now he is searching for greater consistency.

"I love the challenge of building a line from something that wasn't where it needed to be," Grimes said. "We're certainly not where we need to be now, but the thing that has made it rewarding is that we have come around."

The offensive line had one of its best days of practice this season on Tuesday and after a disappointing outing last week against Missouri, players have rededicated themselves to running strong in the final two regular-season games.

Quarterback Cody Hawkins said he sees positive signs with his offensive line all the time. Not all of them come on the field.

Hawkins said linemen have carved out their corner of the new football locker room where they all hang out together. He said he often sees members of the offensive line walking together on campus.

It's a far cry from those spring practices when the big uglies rightfully called themselves "The Few and The Proud."

"Those guys are such a cohesive group I think both as friends and as athletes," Hawkins said. "There is much more of I think kind of an aura around the offensive line."

## Dizon rewarded

Colorado linebacker Jordon Dizon was named one of 15 semifinalist Wednesday for the Chuck Bednarik Award, which honors the nation's best defensive player each season. Dizon also is a semifinalist for the Dick Butkus Award given to the nation's best linebacker. He will find out Thursday whether he is one of the Butkus finalists.

Dizon has led the nation in tackles for much of the season. He fell to fifth this week but continues to lead the Big 12 Conference with 119 stops. He is one of only four players in CU history to register more than 400 total tackles.

**Freshman record**

CU will set a new school record this week for the number of starts made by freshmen. Through the first 10 games, freshmen have combined to make 41 starts, one shy of the school record established in 1998.

This is the fourth time in school history that freshman have accounted for 40 or more starts. This could be the first season the total reaches 50.

Twenty-five of the 41 starts have been made by redshirt freshman and 16 have been made by true freshmen. With Ryan Miller, Kai Maiave and Cody Hawkins starting on the offensive line and at quarterback, the number figures to increase by at least three this week.

**Notable**

DirecTV will carry Saturday's CU-Iowa State game on Channel 619 for people who subscribe to DirecTV's Sportspack package. Fox College Sports Central will televise the game, with Comcast digital sports tier customers being able to tune in on Channel 414. ... CU officials said Wednesday they are not planning to require students to come to the Folsom Field ticket office to pick up an actual ticket to the Nebraska game. Officials said between 6,000 and 7,000 students have consistently attended the Nebraska game over the years instead of leaving campus for the Thanksgiving weekend. They are planning to set aside that many student tickets and put about 5,000 on sale. There are about 4,000 addition seats already available.



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## Inspired by the opponent

ISU's rookie coach gets hope from Hawkins' progression

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

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Iowa State fans were elated after the Cyclones and coach Gene Chizik broke a six-game losing streak Saturday with a 31-20 win over Kansas State. The Cyclones played tough vs. Oklahoma and Missouri in their previous two games. (AP / Charlie Neibergall)

BOULDER — Parallels between Colorado coach Dan Hawkins and Iowa State's Gene Chizik seem almost eerie.

Hawkins followed a once revered coach (Gary Barnett) who fell on hard times, went 7-6 in his final year and didn't recruit very well during

his last few seasons.

Chizik, a first-year head coach, followed well-regarded Dan McCarney, who had 7-5 seasons in 2004 and 2005 before recruiting slipped and the Cyclones fell to 4-8 last season.

Inheriting little depth and team speed last season, Hawkins struggled to a 2-10 record. Working with a roster lacking star power, Chizik is headed to a 2-10 record unless his team pulls an upset in one of its final two games. The Cyclones (2-8, 1-5 Big 12) host

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Colorado (5-5, 3-3) on Saturday and finish with a road trip to Kansas.

Colorado won two Big 12 games in Hawkins' first season, including a victory over Iowa State. Chizik's first team seeks its second conference win against Colorado.

Those similarities haven't gone unnoticed by Chizik, who hopes his team next season shows the same progress that Hawkins' team has this year.

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"(Colorado) is a good situation for me to look at and understand there is a progression there, just like there will have to be a progression here," Chizik said during this week's Big 12 teleconference. "Dan has done a tremendous job at Colorado. You take your lumps, so to speak, in your first year. ... They are a team that's night and day better."

The Cyclones are showing progress, coming off a 31-20 home win over 15-point favorite Kansas State that snapped a six-game losing streak. But Iowa State has played better for three weeks - making Oklahoma struggle for a 17-7 win and outgaining Missouri (389 yards to 366) in a 42-28 loss.

Iowa State is averaging 29.5 points in its past two games. In eight games before that, the Cyclones averaged 15.1 points, a big reason they lost to teams such as UNI, Kent State and Toledo.

"It's been a steady climb for them," CU defensive backs coach Greg Brown said. "The way they're playing right now, I'm sure they would look at film of their first game and not recognize themselves."

Like Hawkins, Chizik discovered that rebuilding a program requires as much psychology as it does hard work.

"You've got to be positive. And at the same time you have to get mistakes corrected," Chizik explained. "You have to encourage players to know that they are good enough (to win) if they play well."

Footnote. If Ryan Walters (concussion) can't play Saturday, backup strong safety Lionel Harris likely would slide over to take Walters' spot at free safety, Hawkins said earlier this week. Harris, a 6-foot, 195-pound senior, was a starter last season at strong safety but lost the job in August to Daniel Dykes. "We've got guys who can step up and fill in if they have to," Dykes said.

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## **Buffs seeking better communication**

Offensive line breakdowns costly in loss to Missouri

*By Patrick Ridgell  
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — According to the Colorado Buffaloes, the errors committed along their offensive line in Saturday's loss to Missouri came down to one basic reason:

Communication.

Actually, it's more like a lack of communication, which needs to be fixed — and soon.

The Buffs head to Iowa State for a game Saturday against the improving Cyclones, and they might be doing so with a shorthanded defense. A starting linebacker, cornerback and safety are listed as day to day with injuries, and their availability for Saturday remains unclear.

All coach Dan Hawkins would say Wednesday about Brad Jones, Terrence Wheatley and Ryan Walters is they have not been ruled out of the game.

Scoring will be important Saturday in Ames. The 10 points and 196 yards CU mustered on Missouri probably won't cut it.

Meanwhile, explanations for what happened last Saturday have not been flattering. They started coming after the loss, when running back Hugh Charles offered this:

"It seemed like after every series, we'd go back to the drawing board, and there was a mistake by the offensive line — somebody didn't know who to hit or whatever," he said. "It happened throughout the football game."

On Tuesday, Hawkins stressed how important it is the offensive linemen be "on the same page," which, evidently, they were not.

A few Buffs have discussed the confusion Missouri created with defensive looks that were new, and unexpected. Assuming Iowa State's defense has something Saturday it has yet to unveil, CU's challenge will be making quick adjustments and blocking the right guys.

Actually, center Daniel Sanders might have put it better.

"We'll have to stay calm and not get all bent out of shape and stuff like that," he said.

Added senior tackle Tyler Polumbus: "I think Missouri did a great job of moving around a lot, and we should have been prepared for it because we practiced for it all week. For one reason or another, we got out there and we weren't communicating as well as we usually do.

"It's just a matter of everyone talking loud and pointing to the guy you're going to and making sure you're all on the same page. It should be a simple thing that we weren't taking care of."

Offensive line coach Jeff Grimes said communication is not an issue that comes and goes. It demands constant maintenance, especially when the opposing defense is prone to showing different looks and blitzes.

CU starts two true freshmen on its offensive line in Kai Maiava and Ryan Miller. Grimes did not say if that compounds challenges communicating, but it can't make it easier.

However, he did say the blocking and communicating does not all fall solely on the shoulders of the front five.

Grimes said there were plays when the offensive line and the running back weren't in agreement on who blocked whom.

“What you try to do is build in enough base rules, and we actually had it covered in terms of it was more miscommunication than not knowing what to do,” Grimes said.

“On certain plays, certain guys have calls they have to make. On some plays, it’s the center and it might work its way down, and on other plays, it might start with the right side and work its way down to the left side.

“One of the protection issues was a matter of the O-line and the running back not being on the same page. So the O-line was doing one thing, and the running back didn’t see who he was responsible for.”

Regardless of why last Saturday happened as it did, Polumbus said CU won’t make the same mistakes again.

“We just weren’t communicating, and we learned our lesson big time,” he said. “We’re going to take care of it.”

**EXTRA POINTS:** Linebacker Jordon Dizon is one of 15 semifinalist for the Chuck Bednarik Award for the outstanding defensive player of the year. The Butkus Award is expected to announce its three semifinalists today. Dizon made its cut to 10 last month. ... Hawkins called Tuesday’s and Wednesday’s practices “great.” ... Hawkins said he was in the “grills” of his defensive scout-team players on Wednesday. Asked if they did a good job last week, Hawkins said, “I guess I just wanted more.” ... Freshmen have made 41 starts in 2007, one shy of the program mark set in 1998.