



Dizon a Butkus finalist

Camera staff report

Friday, November 9, 2007

It's no secret in these parts that Jordon Dizon has been carrying on the Colorado football team's tradition of excellence at linebacker.

Thursday he got a little national recognition as he was named one of three finalists for the Butkus Award. The accolade is awarded each year by the Downtown Athletic Club of Orlando to the nation's best linebacker.

"It's funny," Dizon said. "A couple of my roommates saw it on ESPN this morning and they text (messed) me, and I couldn't find it. So I wasn't sure if they saw the right name or what. So it was pretty stressful there for a couple seconds. After (CU sports information assistant) Erich (Schubert) called me and said I was (a finalist), it was definitely an honor and definitely a pleasure."

Penn State's Dan Connor and Ohio State's James Laurinaitis are the other finalists.

Dizon, a 6-0, 225-pound senior from the island of Kauai, Hawaii, has led the nation in tackles for much of the season and currently sits fifth with 119 (the press box total; coaches have him at 133). He also has four sacks, a forced fumble and two interceptions.

Connor, meanwhile, leads Penn State with 105 tackles, and Laurinaitis has paced the Buckeyes with 85 stops.

"In front of every good linebacker is a great D-line," Dizon said.

He also credited his position coach, Brian Cabral.

"Ninety-nine percent of my success is from coach Cabral," Dizon said. "I came here as a running back and had never played defense before. So for him to take me from where I was to where I am now is pretty impressive as a coach."

Dizon is the fourth CU player to be named a Butkus finalist. Alfred Williams (1990) and Matt Russell (1996) won the award, and Ted Johnson was a finalist in 1994.

"He is simply the standard for what you want on the field, off the field, and in the classroom," CU head coach Dan Hawkins said of Dizon.

CU introducing

Ralphie V

CU fans will have their first opportunity to meet Ralphie V on November 17 during a celebration at the school called "Ralphie's Salute to a New Era."

The 11 a.m. event is open to the public and will include several events, including the public's first look at the Buffs' new indoor practice bubble.

There will be a tribute to Ralphie IV, CU's live Buffalo mascot since 1998, as well as the introduction of Ralphie V. Although no plans have been set, Ralphie V could make its running debut in the Buffs' regular season finale against

Nebraska on Nov. 23.

Doors will open at 10:30 a.m. for the Nov. 17 event, with free T-shirts, hot dogs and Pepsi for the first 1,000 fans. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will also be on hand presenting an exhibit on the buffalo habitat in Colorado.



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COLORADO at Iowa State, Saturday, 10:30 a.m.; no TV

Eberhart never stops hitting books

Kicker juggles playing football and rugged academic schedule

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 11/09/2007 12:55:52 AM MST

BOULDER — When his Colorado teammates sit around and talk about last weekend's NFL highlights, place-kicker Kevin Eberhart doesn't have much to contribute.

You'll have to excuse him from the regular crowd. His time is taken up elsewhere.

"Sundays are my catch-up day," Eberhart said. "Other guys watch football on TV. I've got to study."

These aren't your everyday classes. Aerospace Mathematics. Gas Turbine Propulsion. Lunar Module Design. Environmental Impact Assessment.

All are graduate-level courses.

"It gets kind of rugged, along with football. Busy

semester," he said.

While Eberhart is considered a senior in athletic



Kevin Eberhart (Special to The Post)

eligibility, he already has earned a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering, receiving his diploma last May. He is on target to earn a master's degree in the same field next spring.

"I'm telling you, the guy is always studying," said senior tailback Byron Ellis, no slouch himself as a pre-med major in the field of integrative physiology. "We're roommates for road games, and that's when I like to kick back a little bit. But Kevin never stops studying."

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When your goal is to someday work for NASA, there's little choice, Eberhart says. Kick the football, hit the books. Yes, he has heard a few

Colorado Football

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"rocket scientist" jokes.

"To look at guys like Kevin and Byron, that's inspiring to me," said tailback Demetrius Sumler, a redshirt freshman. "I know what they're doing isn't easy."

The seniors among CU's football team are a particularly strong group academically. Like Ellis, fullback Samson Jagoras is a pre-med major. Linebacker Jordon Dizon and cornerback Terrence Wheatley, arguably the best players on the team, are majoring in economics. Three players are studying business management. Other majors include education, ethnic studies, geography and sociology.

It's no coincidence, offensive line coach Jeff Grimes said, the seniors have become such good leaders this season. They will be counted upon Saturday when CU plays at Iowa State.

"We just heard last week that the two NFL teams that have the highest number of college graduates are the Colts and Patriots," Grimes said, referring to pro football's top squads. "Smart guys understand what it's about. They see the big picture so they make the right decisions at the right time."

Eberhart has always looked ahead - and beyond. The son of a Broomfield taxidermist, Eberhart would gaze into the star-speckled sky while sitting around an evening campfire with his dad after a deer hunt in the high country.

"Kevin liked to watch out for satellites," Paul Eberhart recalled. "Even when he was just 5 or 6, if anything would distract him it would be a jet plane or something in the sky. He was one of those rare kids who always knew what he wanted to be."

An All-Colorado kicker at Broomfield High School who also played defensive back, Eberhart investigated the aerospace program at CU and chose to become a Buffalo after strongly considering the Air Force Academy. Eberhart arrived on campus in 2003 along with another freshman kicker, Mason Crosby from Texas. With an eye on becoming the starter in 2007 after Crosby departed for the pros, Eberhart redshirted in '04. Although he rode the bench for four years, Eberhart never considered transferring.

"The way I looked at it was, with Mason playing in front of me, I had a great opportunity to focus on the schoolwork," he said.

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On the playing field, Eberhart hasn't been quite as consistent this season as he would have liked, going 14-of-21 on field goals, with a long of 54 yards. But twice he has been named Big 12 Conference special-teams player of the week.

His studies? He carries a 3.8 grade-point average in grad school.

"It's all about time management," Eberhart said. "For me, I think in some ways it's easier. I've got a really regimented schedule. ... It's really a matter of staying awake after practice and doing as much studying as you can."

Dizon finalist. Dizon was named one of three finalists for the Dick Butkus Award, which honors the top linebacker in the nation. Dizon is on the shortlist with Penn State's Dan Connor and Ohio State's James Laurinaitis. The winner will be announced in December.

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com

CU seniors

Name, Position, Major - comment

ALVIN BARNETT, WR, ethnic studies - has some interest in video production; could return for fifth year.

ALONZO BARRETT, DE, sociology - scheduled to graduate next month.

HUGH CHARLES, RB, sociology - after trying pro football, may pursue career in aviation.

TYSON DEVREE, TE, education - first-team Academic All-Big 12 as a junior.

JORDON DIZON, LB, education - second-team Academic All-Big 12 as a junior.

KEVIN EBERHART, K, aerospace engineering - working on his masters; has talked with NASA representatives.

BYRON ELLIS, RB, integrative physiology (pre-med) - plans to apply to medical schools next spring.

LIONEL HARRIS, S, sociology - undecided on career path; was age-group champion bull rider in Texas.

EDWIN HARRISON, OL, communication/ethnic studies -- has worked in various youth service groups.

BERNARD JACKSON, QB, ethnic studies - if he wants to coach, he had a head start tutoring his younger brothers.

SAMSON JAGORAS, FB, integrative physiology (pre-med) - wants to pursue a career as chiropractor or orthopedic surgeon.

CHASE MCBRIDE, WR, geography - has minors in education and history.

TYLER POLUMBUS, OT, business management -

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first-team Academic All-Big 12 as sophomore and junior.

STEPHONE ROBINSON, WR, business management/sociology - member of the French Honor Society at Mullen High School.

JOE SANDERS, TE, ethnic studies - son of a pastor, he volunteered at a South African orphanage as a teen.

DUSTY SPRAGUE, WR, business management - three-time, first-team Academic All-Big 12 selection.

TERRENCE WHEATLEY, CB, economics - along with pro ball, he has an interest in weather forecasting.

Compiled by Tom Kensler from CU sports information department info

TheLowdown»

By Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

COLORADO (5-5, 3-3 Big 12)



Player to watch: SS Daniel Dykes

With the status of star cornerback Terrence Wheatley (foot sprain) and hard-hitting free safety Ryan Walters (concussion) listed as day to day, Dykes may have to direct traffic to help limit the number of coverage breakdowns.

Key for the Buffaloes: Hot passing day by Cody Hawkins.

The redshirt freshman threw for an even 100 yards against Missouri. That won't win many games, certainly not on the road in the Big 12. Hawkins needs to connect for good yardage to regain his rhythm.

IOWA STATE (2-8, 1-5)



Player to watch: QB Bret Meyer

A four-year starter, Meyer will be making his final appearance in Jack Trice Stadium — except, perhaps, at a commencement ceremony. Meyer holds most ISU passing records but has struggled this season and will share time Saturday with redshirt freshman Austen Arnaud. Leading his team to a win would give Meyer one more fond memory.

Key for the Cyclones: Staying in the right gear.

The Cyclones still rank 98th nationally in total offense (333.8 yards per game) but finally discovered some mojo the past two weeks. ISU averaged 29.5 points against the solid defenses of Missouri and Kansas State.

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CU kicker Kevin Eberhart celebrates his game-winning field goal over Oklahoma earlier this season. (Post / Kathryn Scott Osler)

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Longmont, Colorado
Friday, November 09, 2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 11/9/2007

Buffs recovering from air assault

*By Justin Williams
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Colorado Buffaloes' secondary may never forget what happened to them last Saturday.

They gave up 429 yards and five touchdowns through the air in a 55-10 loss to Missouri, something that's still not sitting well with anyone involved.

"It did hurt. You take it personal," CU safety Daniel Dykes said. "If it didn't hurt your pride, then there's something wrong with you."

The trick now is to not let it happen again.

CU plays at Iowa State on Saturday.

Fortunately for the Buffs, they won't be facing an offensive attack like Missouri's in their final two regular season games, including the home finale Nov. 23 against Nebraska.

But the secondary may be without two starters Saturday. Cornerback Terrence Wheatley (foot) and safety Ryan Walters (concussion) are listed as day to day. Their playing status remains unclear.

"We take the approach of whoever goes out there, you're here for a reason," CU secondary coach Greg Brown said. "You're on scholarship for a reason, and if it's your turn to step up when somebody's injured, then by God, step up and make plays."

CU lists Gardner McKay as Wheatley's backup, but Cha'pelle Brown has been its nickel back all season and might draw the starting assignment if Wheatley is out. Head coach Dan Hawkins said senior Lionel Harris is most likely to replace Walters, if necessary.

For Harris, starting would be a familiar role. The 6-foot, 195-pound safety started six of the Buffs' final seven games in 2006, but was relegated to backup role this season.

"He's had a tremendous attitude, and it hasn't been easy for him this year," Greg Brown said. "Lionel has always been a tough competitor. He's a face-up tackler and he's a tough guy. He's prepared himself."

No matter what personnel it may take, the Buffs' secondary has taken it upon themselves to make sure CU isn't embarrassed again, particularly with big plays down field that seemed to come so easy for the Tigers.

"As a DB, you don't let deep balls happen like that. When that happens, we have to look at it like, 'We're embarrassing our coach; we're embarrassing our defense,'" cornerback Benjamin Burney said. "We have to put it on us as a secondary. If they're going to throw deep balls on us, we have to go out there and make plays. We can't just let them keep throwing like that, because it really does hurt your pride and makes you want come out and do something better."

Missouri used a strong run game and its mobile quarterback, Chase Daniels, to set up many of the long plays.

"We are better than that," Dykes said. "They did a good job of exploiting some things and got some big plays on us. But we can play better than that, and we will."

The Cyclones should help the CU secondary look better. They use a two-headed attack at QB in Bret Meyer and Austen Arnaud, but the most the two combined for this season was 270 yards in a single game.

Still, Dykes said the secondary feels it has something to prove this week.

"We're challenging ourselves to break down more film, to work harder and to understand Iowa State more than we have other teams,"

Dykes said.

They may never live down the beating that occurred last Saturday at Folsom Field, but the Buffs are ready to put it behind them.

“Having getting embarrassed like that on TV really makes you want to light a fire,” Burney said. “We just have to catch fire now.

“We have to practice harder and play harder, because we’ve got to win these next two games.”

Rocky Mountain News

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Bufs look to roll lucky 7

Coaches, players see two wins as key to ensuring bowl bid

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News
November 8, 2007

BOULDER - The recipe for flushing a blowout loss in a week or less is relatively simple: Start with the games remaining, add a dash of bruised pride, stir in the possibility of postseason play and let simmer.

Whether it yields anything palatable for the Colorado Buffaloes will be determined Saturday in Ames, Iowa, against Iowa State, one of two remaining opponents standing between CU and the bowl berth second-year coach Dan Hawkins so desperately wants. And needs.

Hawkins, not one for lingering on past mishaps or peering too far ahead, nonetheless used postseason possibilities earlier this week to help his team put away any lingering effects of its 55-10 smackdown by now-No. 7 Missouri last week.

Hawkins laid out what he believes becoming bowl eligible will require - and it's not merely reaching the six wins mandated by the NCAA. Six wins is a tenuous number, so, "He told us he thinks we have to win seven (games) to make sure," senior cornerback Terrence Wheatley said. "We don't want to leave any doubt."

A seven-win regular-season will require beating the improving Cyclones on Saturday and free-falling Nebraska on Nov. 23. Losing on Saturday, of course, would send CU to the season's final game needing one win to be eligible for the postseason - a "play-in" scenario rife with uncertainty.

So the Buffs' best course is to take care of business - twice. But redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins doesn't want to stop there.

"I want to think 8-5; I want to go on a three-game tear," he said.

Cody Hawkins and his young teammates have no point of reference for a November run to Division I-A postseason play, so he turned to the only similar experience they share.

"The guys on this team are used to coming from winning (high school) programs, and we have such a young team, you can kind of relate to that," he said. "We know we have to play like our backs are against the wall, with a chip on our shoulder - just like playoff football."

"We definitely know it's not high school; you have to be more prepared and play harder and play a much better game if we want to beat teams like Iowa State and Nebraska. . . . The statements we make over the next two games are going to set the tone for what this season was really like and what we want to do next year."

Dan Hawkins emphasizes successful starts and finishes, and the Buffs need to accomplish the latter to ease out of 2007 with little more than an unsatisfying transitional feel.

They have lost three of their past four games, although two of the losses have been administered by teams in the top six of the Bowl Championship Series rankings (No. 4 Kansas, No. 6 Missouri).

Given what's at stake, this is the most critical stretch of Dan Hawkins' tenure thus far. Granted, his team is young, but by now it is seasoned enough to compete against two opponents whose combined records are 6- 14 and successfully cap what is now a two-game season.

Defensively, the Buffs might need reserves to step up big against a Cyclones offense likely to use two quarterbacks (senior Bret Meyer, redshirt freshman Austen Arnaud) throwing to senior receiver Todd Blythe, who has 2,952 career receiving yards and 29 touchdown receptions.

Although their status is undetermined, CU's secondary could be minus top corner Wheatley (sprained left foot) and heavy-hitting safety Ryan Walters (concussion).

That means Cody Hawkins, who threw an interception and fumbled twice against the Tigers, and his offense must be more efficient than during the debacle last week, which he claims was easier to dismiss than a three-point loss.



Ronald Martinez ©
Getty Images

Bret Meyer is part of a two-quarterback system Iowa State employs and is expected to test Colorado's defense Saturday. The Buffaloes might be without top cornerback Terrence Wheatley because of a sprained foot.

"It's different for different people," he said. "For me, it's definitely easier to forget about . . . you're saying to yourself, 'Man, that's awful. I didn't play my best game. Let's flush it.'"

"You just want to get rid of it as fast as you can and start focusing on the Cyclones."

If the Buffs have done that, their season can stretch into December. If not, there are no guarantees.

Wyoming at Utah

- **The game:** 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Rice-Eccles Stadium (45,017 capacity), Salt Lake City.
- **The records:** Wyoming is 5-4, 2-3 in the Mountain West Conference; Utah is 6-3, 3-2.
- **The series:** Utah leads 47-31-1.
- **TV/radio:** CSTV; KEPN-AM (1600) in Denver.
- **Scouting report:** After losing three of its past four games, Wyoming needs wins in two of its final three games to secure a winning record and cement its bowl credentials, a task that features a difficult first step, on the road against the Utes. Finishing strong hasn't been a benchmark for Wyoming under coach Joe Glenn, whose teams have gone 4-10 in regular-season games during November since 2003. Utah had won six consecutive games against the Cowboys before losing 31-15 last year in Laramie and has won its past three home games against Wyoming. Utah has won five consecutive games, which mostly coincides with when quarterback Brian Johnson returned from a separated shoulder. Johnson ranks second in the MWC in pass efficiency rating, with 138.40.

Sacramento State at Northern Colorado

- **The game:** Noon Saturday, Nottingham Field (8,500 capacity), Greeley.
- **The records:** Sacramento State is 1-8, 1-5 in the Big Sky Conference; UNC is 1-9, 1-5.
- **The series:** Sacramento State leads 1-0.
- **TV/radio:** No television; KFKA-AM (1310) in Greeley and KRKS-AM (990) in Denver.
- **Scouting report:** UNC looks for its second win, against reeling Sacramento State, which beat UNC 14-9 at home last year but has lost five consecutive games. UNC snapped a school-record 16-game losing streak two weeks ago and nearly pulled off an upset at No. 24 Eastern Washington last week. The return of running back David Woods from a hamstring injury helped rekindle the Bears' running game, with the 167 rushing yards gained against Eastern Washington marking the team's second-best total this season.

Mesa State at New Mexico Highlands

- **The game:** Noon Saturday, Perkins Stadium (5,000 capacity), Las Vegas, N.M.
- **The records:** Mesa State is 9-1, 6-1 in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference; New Mexico Highlands is 4-5, 3-4.
- **Scouting report:** Mesa is in line for an at-large berth for the NCAA Division II playoffs but must record a road victory against a New Mexico Highlands team that has lost four of its past five games. The Mavericks defense has developed into a punishing force, having held Colorado Mines to 158 total yards and forcing six turnovers in a key 18-0 win last week.

Western State at Colorado Mines

- **The game:** Noon Saturday, Brooks Field (4,000 capacity), Golden.
- **The records:** Western State is 1-9, 0-7 in the RMAC; Colorado Mines is 6-4, 5-2.
- **Scouting report:** The Orediggers averaged 32 points during a five-game winning streak that came to a halt with a shutout loss at Mesa State last week. Still, Mines has secured a winning record for the sixth time in the past seven seasons and against Western State, which is allowing more than 400 yards a game, it will be favored to post its first seven-win season since it went 12-1 in 2004 .

Fort Lewis at Weber State

- **The game:** 1 p.m. MST Saturday, Stewart Stadium (17,000 capacity), Ogden, Utah.
- **The records:** Fort Lewis is 1-8; Weber State is 4-5.
- **Scouting report:** The Skyhawks have lost five consecutive games and likely will be overmatched against Division I-AA Weber State, a member of the Big Sky. Weber State's Bryant Eteuati leads Division I-AA in all-purpose yards a game, with an average of 216.

Colorado College at Centre College

- **The game:** Noon MST Saturday, Farris Stadium (3,000 capacity) Danville, Ky.
- **The records:** Colorado College is 4-5, 1-5 in the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference; Centre is 5-4, 3-3.
- **Scouting report:** CC, which has lost three of its past four games, needs a win to post consecutive seasons with at least a .500 record for the first time since 1993-94. The Tigers surrendered 669 yards in a 68-6 loss at home last week to Millsaps.

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Thursday's local college football notes

By B.G. Brooks (CU), Randy Holtz (CSU), Jim Benton (Air Force) and Pat Rooney (UNC)
November 9, 2007

CU

Dizon a Butkus finalist

It's doubtful **Jordon Dizon** needed grounding, but if he did, he made the right call. After learning Thursday he was one of three finalists for the Butkus Award, he telephoned his parents in Hawaii.

After offering congratulations, his father offered this: "Hey, you know it's something that you've got to put behind you . . . you have to be ready for Iowa State," Dizon recalled, adding, "It's definitely an honor, but I've got to put it past me and better this team by bettering myself."

Those closest to Dizon know that response isn't hollow. Dizon, a senior ranking among the national tackle leaders all season, remains one of CU's humblest players. True to form, he credited defensive linemen **George Hypolite** and **Brandon Nicolas** and position coach **Brian Cabral** for allowing him to join Penn State's **Dan Connor** and Ohio State's **James Laurinaitis** as Butkus finalists.

Coach **Dan Hawkins** called Dizon "a rock you build championship teams on. He's everything you want in a player, everything you want in a young man . . . he is simply the standard you want."

CU and Cabral produced two previous Butkus winners - **Alfred Williams** (1990) and **Matt Russell** (1996) - and another Butkus finalist - **Ted Johnson** (1994). But none among that trio came to CU as short on a linebacking pedigree as Dizon.

"I came here as a running back and had never played defense before," Dizon said. "I have to give it up for (coach Cabral); he's done a great job with me these last four years."

Cabral, in his 19th season on the CU staff, called Dizon "one of the most complete players I've coached, and also one of the toughest mentally and physically. . . . He knows only one speed, and he practices as hard as he plays and has always led by example."

The 2007 Butkus winner will be announced in December by the Downtown Athletic Club of Orlando.

Model of success

Hawkins is a believer in CU cross country coach **Mark Wetmore** and the success Wetmore has had in keeping his teams among the national elite. In addition to sweeping the NCAA men's and women's championships in 2004 and 2006, his men's teams have won 12 consecutive Big 12 titles, his women's teams 11 consecutive league titles.

Said Hawkins: "You can say what you want about getting good runners (to Boulder), the altitude and all of that. But to be able to get your organization to achieve at that high of a level year after year is hard.

"That's why I never root for the underdog. I don't, because it's harder when you're on top; it's harder to maintain that level of excellence. It's easier to jump up once in a while and get something done."

Etc.

- CU will conduct a tribute to its retiring buffalo mascot, Ralphie IV, and introduce eventual successor Ralphie V on Nov. 17. Also scheduled at the free public event is a chance to see CU's new indoor practice bubble. The program begins at 11 a.m.

- CU has scored fewer than 21 points against Iowa State only four times since 1983 but won three of those.

Numbers game

19 **Iowa State seniors** will play their final home game Saturday, against CU. Among them is quarterback **Bret Meyer**, who will make his 47th consecutive start - a mark that leads the nation.

He said it

"Yes . . . (but) I'll let the powers that be make that decision. We're going to prepare for Kansas State (Saturday in Lincoln) and do the best we can. That's all any coach can do."

Nebraska coach Bill Callahan, who will bring the Cornhuskers to Boulder on Nov. 23, on whether he has reason to believe he'll return next season.

CSU

Sonny remains sunny

After directing teams as a head coach for more than 200 college football games, Colorado State coach **Sonny Lubick** is a man blessed with perspective.

Lubick's frustration showed after the Rams' latest setback Saturday, the veteran coach saying the players angered him during the loss to Brigham Young with their inability to convert scoring opportunities on offense and prevent game-pivoting plays on defense. But he was quick to point out this week he never questioned their effort and resolve.

He again said the effort has been consistently strong and added that the 1-8 season hasn't been as painful as outsiders surmise.

"If you look around, we're in a lot better shape than a lot of the teams in the country," he said. "We have fun, we're playing, the kids are enjoying it and I am (enjoying it). And that's what's important."

Injuries mounting again

After a stretch of a few weeks when CSU's injury problems seemed to abate, bumps and bruises are haunting the Rams again. Questionable for the game Saturday at New Mexico are nickel back **Jake Galusha** (foot), starting free safety **Zac Bryson** (knee) and backup running back **John Mosure** (gum surgery).

Sophomore **Grant Stucker** will fill the No. 2 quarterback slot of junior **Billy Farris**, who will miss CSU's last three games because of a sore throwing elbow. But the good news is, Farris won't require surgery and should be ready to battle for the starting job in spring practice.

Also out for at least Saturday is receiver/return man **Dion Morton**, who sprained his ankle last week at Brigham Young.

Numbers game

7/8 **are the respective** rankings in career receptions in Mountain West Conference history for New Mexico's **Travis Brown** and CSU's **Johnny Walker**, both seniors from California. Brown has 161 career receptions, Walker 159.

Air Force

Spencer come lately

Before the game Saturday against Army, receiver **Spencer Armstrong** had been on the field for only 16 offensive snaps.

He missed the first five games because of injuries but is ready to provide a deep threat to the passing game after catching a touchdown pass against Army.

"I'm excited about finally contributing to this team and being a part of something special this year," Armstrong said. "I've been battling injuries and bad practice performances, and so I'm finally getting into the rhythm and doing what I'm capable of doing. I feel real fresh, my legs feel great and I feel like I can run by people right now."

Firming up the bowl

Air Force could use at least one victory in its next two games, against Notre Dame and San Diego State, to solidify its bowl aspirations.

That said, coach **Troy Calhoun** claims the Falcons are focused only on the game Saturday with the Irish.

"We're completely zeroed in on Notre Dame," he said. "It would be different if we were playing the Cairo Archeologist Teachers College. We aren't. We are playing an incredibly talented football team."

Etc.

- The game at South Bend, Ind., will be the teams' last meeting for the foreseeable future. The Irish aren't on any of AFA's schedules through 2014.

- Junior tight end **Travis Dekker**, who has a 3.7 grade-point average, is among 11 finalists for the Wuerffel Trophy, presented annually to the college football player who stands out in academics, athletics and community service.

Dekker, who suffered a concussion Saturday, and guard Caleb Morris (back spasms) haven't practiced this week and are listed as doubtful for the Notre Dame game.

- **Chad Hall**, the conference's all-purpose yardage leader, is tied for the MWC rushing lead with Utah's **Darnell Mack**, both averaging 112.2 yards per game. Hall was named the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame Colorado Chapter player of the week for his school-record performances Saturday.

Numbers game

36-2 is **Notre Dame's record** against service academy teams since 1986.

UNC

Youth is served

Sacramento State, Northern Colorado's foe this week, has made gains on offense behind redshirt freshman quarterback **Jason Smith**. Smith has thrown for 1,573 yards and seven touchdowns in nine games, including 662 yards in the past two games. But the Bears will look to take advantage of Smith's youthful mistakes, which have led to 16 interceptions.

Of late, Smith has found a dependable target in receiver **Tony Washington**. Washington posted only six catches for 90 yards in the Hornets' first six games but has registered 19 receptions for 259 yards in the past three games.

Numbers game

30 points allowed by the Bears in the past two games, a 16-13 win against then-No. 19 Montana State and a 17-7 loss at nationally ranked Eastern Washington last week. The Bears had surrendered fewer than 30 points in only two of their previous eight games.

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