



Williams out to make most of last CU season

By Ryan Thorburn

Friday, August 8, 2008

Four years ago, Patrick Williams' potential at Colorado was boundless.

When asked about the 2004 incoming freshmen, then CU head coach Gary Barnett singled the 6-foot-2 Williams out as a name to remember.

Four years later, Williams is still trying to make a name for himself in the Big 12 and working hard to make sure he is not forgotten on the depth chart entering his senior season.

He is currently listed as the starter at the 'X' position with gifted sophomore Josh Smith — also known as Darrell Scott's uncle — breathing down his shoulder pads.

"I told Josh the day he got here, 'I'm going to teach you everything I know,'¥" Williams said. "Because if I'm not making a play I want him to be out there making a play. I just want us to win. It's not about me. Let's do it."

After suffering an injury and redshirting as a true freshman, Williams has played in all of the Buffs' games each of the last three seasons with a total of 74 receptions for 748 yards (10.1) and just one touchdown.

Those are the kind of numbers Barnett probably expected to see from No. 4 in one season.

The good news is there is one more season left for Williams, who was honored by the coaches with the John Wooten Award in the spring for his work ethic in practice and with the Most Improved Student-Athlete Award at CU's 2008 academic recognition luncheon.

"Eight touchdowns, 800 yards plus, All-Big 12," Williams says when asked what would constitute a successful season individually for him. "But we're building our program off of competition. Competition is what's going to fuel us to get better. You can't sit still in your seat, not even one day. If I sit still in my seat, Josh is going to come up and get it."

Two factors have contributed to the slow on-field development for Williams at CU:

1. He was an option quarterback at DeSoto (Texas) High School and had never played wide receiver before arriving in Boulder.
2. Due to the coaching change and other issues in the program, Williams has worked with three different position coaches and played with three different starting quarterbacks (Joel Klatt in 2006, Bernard Jackson in 2007, Cody Hawkins in 2008).

"Once he kind of got into a normal mode of just kind of hearing the things that I was talking about over a long period of time, he could finally get into more of a comfort zone," said CU passing game coordinator/wide receivers coach Eric Kiesau. "I think that's why he's gotten better. Everybody asks me, 'What did you do?' I didn't do anything except be

more consistent in his coaching life.”

The fact that Hawkins returns under center will only increase the opportunity for Williams to start realizing the potential that has been there since he first stepped foot on campus.

“Coming from being an option quarterback, it was completely different when I got here,” Williams reflected. “I had never run routes before. I was just raw. I had never really trained myself to catch the ball like that, and it has been a work in progress since my freshman year.”

History suggests Williams will at least get off to a strong start in the opener against Colorado State. On CU’s first offensive play of the 2007 season at Invesco Field he gained 24 yards on a reverse and finished with five receptions for 59 yards. Two years ago he also had a season-high five receptions against CSU.

Although Williams probably won’t be able to sneak up on the Rams, the coaching staff believes he is finally poised to make a big splash in the Big 12.

“He has been a quiet leader and is very quietly getting better and better since when we first got here,” Kiesau said. “Because we’re very young all over the field and at receiver, that was one of the first things we talked about in our meeting. We told the young players to look at a guy like Patrick Williams who has been here for a long time.”



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CU's kicking game up in air

Wyoming transfer Goodman likely front-runner

By Kyle Ringo
Friday, August 8, 2008

For the first time in his brief tenure as coach of the Colorado football team, Dan Hawkins began training camp this week not knowing whom his place-kicker would be this season.

There was no question in 2006 about the merits of Mason Crosby's right leg, and last season clearly belonged to senior Kevin Eberhart who had patiently waited behind Crosby for four years.

Sophomore Aric Goodman and freshman Jameson Davis will compete this month to determine not only who kicks field goals and extra points in 2008 but who is best suited for kickoffs.

Hawkins used two kickers in those roles last year, with Eberhart handling field goals and extra points and Tyler Cope kicking off. Cope, a walk-on, left the program after the season.

Goodman probably has an early advantage for both jobs this fall for several reasons.

He has the advantage of having some college experience under his belt. He kicked for one season at Wyoming in 2006 before transferring to CU last year. Goodman, a product of Cherry Creek High School, also is completely healthy. Davis is not.

Davis, who will be a 23-year-old true freshman this season, has undergone four knee surgeries in the past (two on each knee). All four surgeries addressed cartilage damage but no ligament repairs.

He hadn't kicked consistently for two years while completing a church mission in Latin America and since his return to the U.S. and to kicking last winter, he has dealt with some pain in his left knee, his plant leg.

"My knee has been giving out on me a little bit every time I kick," he said this week.

Davis said he has had three injections in the past three weeks to help strengthen his knee and he believes it's getting better.

Only time and more kicking will tell if it calms down or if he needs further medical treatment. But as long as Davis is dealing with pain and not fully comfortable, it probably aids Goodman in the competition.

"Sometimes when I'm kicking I kind of worry about my knee giving out on me or it buckling up or just tearing on me again," Davis said. "I try to get that out of my mind when I'm kicking so I can kick it normal."

Davis and Goodman began their competition during spring drills and neither proved to be clearly better than the other.

Davis seemed to get more length on kickoffs, but he missed six of his eight field goal attempts. Goodman made four of seven field goals with each of his converted kicks coming from 40 yards or more.

Hawkins said he and special teams coach Kent Riddle have a plan in place for finding the best man for the job.

"Once we get everybody together we'll start charting them more accurately," Hawkins said. "We're not putting a whole bunch of steam on them right now.

"The nice thing about field goal kicking is it's pretty objective. There is not a lot of subjectivity other than, can they handle the pressure, which you never really totally know. We'll try to put those guys in as much pressure-packed situations and let them kick some live field goals and start charting them and see who emerges. It will be largely a numbers game."

Goodman was thrown right into action as a true freshman at Wyoming two years ago. He experienced some highs and lows that he believes will help as he continues his career with the Buffs. Goodman has a 52-yard field-goal to his credit at the college level and he has already made a game-winner, beating San Diego State.

He also knows what it's like to travel across the country for a big game and spend the return flight home feeling like he had let his team down.

The Cowboys traveled to Virginia in early September two years ago and played the Cavaliers to a draw through four quarters. Wyoming got the ball first in overtime and scored a touchdown, but Goodman missed the extra point. Virginia scored a touchdown on its possession and made the point after try, beating the Cowboys 13-12.

"I learned a lot from it, and, really, it's made me a much better kicker," Goodman said. "That's about as low as I could ever be. I go out there and every day I remember it. I go out there and lace up my cleats and it's in the back of my mind."

Goodman said the miss didn't factor in to his decision to leave Wyoming after only one season. He said he never felt completely comfortable living in a small secluded place like Laramie, Wyo. He also believed he could use a redshirt season to work on his kicking and academics.

The missed extra point didn't shake his confidence either. He was presented with a hypothetical situation in which the team needs a field goal to win. How close would he need to be to feel confident in making it?

"Really there is no spot on the field that we could legitimately kick from that I don't feel comfortable at," he said. "At this position, it's almost you need to be comfortable and confident because the biggest mistake is going up and questioning yourself.

"In golf, Tiger Woods doesn't go up and question whether he will hit the fairway on 18 to win the U.S. Open. He just does it, and he knows he's going to do it."



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Pericak goes from offense to defense

By Kyle Ringo
Friday, August 8, 2008

Tight end depth is no longer an issue for the Colorado football team with the reinstatement from suspension of junior Riar Geer and the arrival of three freshman recruited to play the position.

In fact, coaches are so confident they have what they need at tight end, they have moved one of those freshman to defensive tackle.

Will Pericak, formerly a standout linebacker at Boulder High School and a three-star recruit from the 2008 class, spent his first practice on the defensive side of the ball in the rain Thursday afternoon.

The depth chart is thin at defensive tackle beyond seniors Brandon Nicolas and George Hypolite, and the situation will get worse when both complete their eligibility following this season. Moving Pericak to the middle of the defense could be a big help.

Pericak said he spent some practice time on the defensive line at times in high school but has no real experience there. He said he embraced the proposal when coaches asked him about the switch.

"Coaches thought I would work best there and help the team and that's what I'm doing," he said. "It's fun."

Pericak has gained about 25 pounds in the past five months said his final season of high school basketball ended.

He said he is up to 265 pounds and is benefiting from the strength program at CU.

Pericak, defensive end Drew Hudgins and defensive line coach Romeo Bandison were last to leave the practice fields Thursday night and when they did so, they were in a lively mood.

"I'm just going to say, fast learner, Day One, looks promising," Bandison said. "George Hypolite watch out."



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Woelk: Hawk's identity stamped on Buffs

By Neill Woelk

Friday, August 8, 2008

First impressions of my 28th Colorado football media day ...

The Buffs are big.

The returning vets are noticeably bigger than a year ago, and it's not from extended stays at the dinner table. Rather, it's clear that Jeff Pitman's strength and conditioning sessions are paying dividends.

As for the freshmen, not since the heyday of the Bill McCartney era has a group of newcomers looked so ready to play -- as in right now. Noted one Buff vet Thursday morning, "My freshman class sure didn't look like that." ...

Of course, it's been a long, long time since any freshman running back walked on campus looking like blue chipper Darrell Scott. Not Flannigan, not Bieniemy, not even Salaam looked like Scott when they first reported as Buffs. ...

Meanwhile, there's a palpable air of confidence -- you might even call it swagger -- that hasn't been felt around the Dal Ward Center for a few years.

What's clear is that Dan Hawkins has stamped his identity on this program. After a two-year transition period, the vast majority of players have bought into his system and his philosophies, and it's apparent they believe in what they're doing.

"The greatest measure of that is to look around you," said Buff defensive lineman George Hypolite, one of the 17 players on the roster who was recruited by former coach Gary Barnett. "Have we become what he's been preaching and teaching? I think we have.

"It's in the way we practice, our conditioning, the way we conduct ourselves on a day-to-day basis, all those things." ...

It wasn't an easy transition. A coaching change almost never is. When it's followed by a 2-10 first year, the process only becomes more difficult.

"It's like fishing in the dark," Hypolite said. "You don't know what you're going to catch because you really don't know what's out there. That's a difficult thing.

"Now, we know what they expect of us. We know what they want. We're familiar with how they do things. It's a world of difference." ...

Did we say bigger and stronger?

Quarterback Cody Hawkins has added about five pounds of muscle, reduced his body fat, added some arm strength -- and even grown a half-inch taller.

"I'm 5-11½ and 193," Hawkins said with a grin. "Just a little more and they can legitimately list me at 6 feet."

Even more importantly, Hawkins has greatly reduced the "he's playing because he's the coach's kid" chatter that followed his every step last season.

"I don't think it was ever a big deal with my teammates because we see what each of us is doing every day in practice," Hawkins said. "We prove to each other every day what we're capable of."

"But I think as far as the public is concerned, there aren't near as many questions now." ...

Group that could have a breakout year? Try the wide receivers. Patrick Williams, Josh Smith and Kendrick Celestine have the wheels to stretch a defense in a hurry.

And, don't forget last year's leading receiver, Scotty McKnight. The sophomore caught 20 passes in CU's first three games before, in his words, "The other teams decided maybe they should cover me once in a while."

Still, McKnight is one of those WRs who runs precision routes and doesn't drop balls, an invaluable asset in the course of a season. Throw in the fact that CU's running game should keep defenses honest, and the wide receivers could put up some nice numbers. ...

The group already getting lots of attention -- and deservedly so -- is the linebackers, a position blessed with plenty of depth and experience. It means Hawkins and his staff won't shy away from tweaking their defense to take advantage of the depth there, especially given the lack of that same commodity on the D-line.

Fact is, while the Buffs technically run a 4-3 alignment, they bounced into a 3-4 variation on a fairly regular basis last season. Hawkins said this season will be no different. "You always want to have a little adaptability," he said. ...

And, speaking of linebackers, don't expect Boulder High product Jeff Smart to turn over his starting position to Mike Sipili without a battle. Hawkins said when reviewing tape of CU's bowl loss to Alabama, he saw several outstanding plays made by former Buff Jordon Dizon -- then realized it was actually Smart who had made the plays. ...

Back to the bigger and stronger front. This from Camera sports writer Ryan Thorburn after watching Buff tackle Ryan Miller stride through the room: "He's Paul Bunyan." ...

Make-or-break position for the Buffs? Try cornerback, where the absence of Terrence Wheatley (now with the Patriots) and Ben Burney (out for the season) leaves the Buffs as green as grass on the outside islands. There is some talent there, but if it doesn't develop, it could mean some long, long days in the pass-happy Big 12, where the spread formation has become the rule, not the exception. ...

And finally, these words from Dan Hawkins when asked about the season opener vs. Colorado State: "When you have a new coach coming in, you can always expect a little extra juice and a little extra spark."

Well, not always. Anyone else remember Montana State?



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Rookie QB learning the ropes

By Adrian Dater, The Denver Post

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BOULDER — It's all still so brand new to Kyle Hansen. The uniform of the Colorado Buffaloes, Boulder, college life.

But the one thing that is so familiar to him — throwing a football — has made his first practices with the Buffs seem like old times.

Hansen, a true freshman quarterback, admits that everything besides football has been an eye-opener so far since he arrived in Boulder from Temecula, Calif.

"I'm learning so much every day, not just about football," said Hansen, listed at 6-feet, 1/2-inch and 180 pounds. "There's a lot of great people around Boulder, and it's great to be around them."

Classes haven't started yet on campus, so Hansen said football is "pretty much 24/7" for him right now. There is a lot for Hansen to learn, with CU's new, no-huddle offense and other differences from recent high-school days. Hansen is one of six quarterbacks on the roster, and lately he has been taking snaps with upperclassmen Nick Nelson and Kyle Black.

"Right now, it's not too bad. I'm having trouble on a couple things, trying to get all the signals and formations, and what knowing what everybody's

(tendencies) are. But I'm getting the hang of it," Hansen said.

CU coach Dan Hawkins, whose son, Cody, is the presumed starter, says it's too soon to pass much judgment on Hansen.

"He's working hard. Again, it's just a steep learning curve for him," Hawkins said. "So, it's hard. But I think he's a competitor and he can run around, and he's a smart guy. I think it's just a question of getting the timing together and everything right now."

Hansen knows he is not likely to play much, it at all, this season. But "you never know", he said.

"For me, it's just about doing what the coaches tell me and controlling what I can control," Hansen said.

Let the hitting begin The Buffs will practice in fulls pads Saturday for the first time.

Hawkins does not believe it will be very disorienting for his players, based on what they've done already.

"They pretty much go full-speed anyway," Hawkins said. "They still practice very much the same way. And I've sort of learned over the years that you need to be careful, that first day of pads. Guys get all amped up and smack each other around and people can get hurt.

"You're kind of reaching that point right now where your body starts singing to you a little bit. So, the veteran guys know they've really got to do a good job of taking care of their bodies — getting in the cold tub and doing a nice job with therapy. And that's something that the young kids have to learn a little bit."

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colorado football

Hawkins looking a little more buff

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — In addition to a highly touted freshman class, something else was new Thursday at the annual Colorado football media day. Quarterback Cody Hawkins has some "pipes" or "guns" or whatever else his teammates want to call those sizable biceps.

Up to 193 pounds, the 5-foot-11, third-year sophomore worked extra hard in the weight room during the offseason and appears noticeably bigger and stronger this year. Although just five or so pounds heavier than last season, Hawkins said "a lot of baby fat" fell off.

"Nutrition was a big part of it," he said. "I ate more pasta and protein, as opposed to pizza."

Hawkins said he can bench press 275 pounds, up at least 50 pounds from when he arrived on campus in 2006.

"My mom is the only one who talks about how muscular I am," he said. "And my grandma hates the fact that I ever put on weight."

Colorado Football

- [Watch](#) video of CU coach Dan Hawkins on first day of practice
- [Watch](#) video of CU freshman running back Darrell Scott
- [Watch](#) video of CU beginning fall practice
- [Visit](#) Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports

It's surely good for football.

"He's got a little more steam on the ball," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "And (being stronger) will help him physically because you're going to take some shots back there. I also think it always helps your self-esteem a little bit."

Dan Hawkins said he had some pretty big pipes himself during his playing days in the early 1980s as a fullback at Cal-Davis. But Dan, son of a logger in rural northern California, said he never beat his father in arm-wrestling.

Asked if he has challenged Cody to arm-wrestling, Dan said that won't happen.

"I'd be afraid that, A) he'd beat me and I'd get humiliated, or B) I'd hurt him, and then I'd be an idiot," the coach said.

Scott in the spotlight.

Other than Dan Hawkins, nobody was requested more for television and radio interviews than freshman tailback Darrell Scott. Hawkins said he is careful about putting an undue pressure on the

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blue-chipper.

"We're not 'hanging the moon' on him," Hawkins said. "I'm not pressuring him to get us to the next level."

Scott, who rushed for 2,433 yards and 33 touchdowns as a high school senior last fall at Ventura (Calif.) St. Bonaventure, has an outgoing personality and said he enjoyed getting in front of the cameras.

"It's cool. I had fun," Scott said.

In the middle of everything.

Touted freshman linebacker Jon Major of Ponderosa High School, considered the state's top recruiting prize last winter, said he is working mostly at middle linebacker. "One of the toughest things is the mental aspect," Major said.

Footnotes.

When asked if he was serious about giving Scott a shot at the punting job, Hawkins gave opponents something to think about. "What would you think about a punting formation that had two punters? I kind of like it," Hawkins said. . . . On annually playing against Colorado State in the season opener (Aug. 31, 5:30 p.m., FSN, at Invesco Field at Mile High), Hawkins said: "There's no tune-up games, no warm-up games. You've got to go. The first game is really important. It's important to everybody in the state."

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TIMES-CALL

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Cody Hawkins made significant strides last season as a freshman starting quarterback for the Buffs. He's now ready to take the ... Next steps

*By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Cody Hawkins is different in 2008.

Not so much from the experiences he's had in recent months, which included a summer hike up Wayna Picchu to watch the sunrise over Macchu Picchu and the Andes, a climb made with "your arms in front of you," Hawkins said. At the top, the view steals your breath, providing the sort of surreal experience that'll make anyone stop, ponder and reassess things.

Hawkins' revelations seem to come more from football than world travel. And what he is, entering 2008, is a veteran quarterback, one who made 13 starts a year ago and learned about poise and leadership.

Questions he receives now don't probe whether he'll win the starting job or what it'll be like to be the quarterback AND the coach's son. The question these days is what steps will he take in 2008. Just how good can Hawkins be?

"I think Cody, first and foremost, needs to take care of the ball a lot better this fall than we did last fall," offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said Thursday. "I take a big chunk of that, too, and we had a big emphasis on that this spring, and he did a great job of taking care of the ball.

"He just has to not play tentative, by any means, but when something is there to be had, take it, and when it's not, move on to your next option, or whatever the case may be."

Such an assessment might reveal, more than anything, what Helfrich believes the faster offense coupled with CU's crop of playmakers can do, as long as mistakes are avoided. This could be the case. Hawkins could post big numbers in 2008 simply by not screwing up.

The offense will need someone to run things, though. Hawkins, a sophomore, appears "very much" in command, Helfrich said.

"Cody in the summer did a good job of kind of spearheading everything and getting the young guys involved and getting them to learn things, and that makes their learning curve a little less steep as we get going," Helfrich said. "Those guys are playing faster than we ever have here, and that has to come from hopefully your quarterback leading that charge in the offseason, and he's done a nice job. ... We're way ahead of where we've been.

"As a quarterback, if you know your job, lock, stock and barrel ... and then just bring everybody else along and show he knows their jobs, too, that gets everyone rolling along in the same direction."

Swarmed by television cameras Thursday at CU's media day, Hawkins said those questions about playing for his dad have "died down a lot." He is noticeably stockier — weighing 193 pounds, more than last year — and leaner, too. His passes in camp appear crisper, like they have more velocity. Helfrich said he doesn't know if that's the case, but he added that Hawkins' release is quicker.

The quarterback said that in this, his third training camp, "things are evolving a little bit different."



Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins clarifies a pass route for a receiver during practice in Boulder on Wednesday. Hawkins is entering his second year as the Buffs' starting QB. **Joshua**

Buck/Times-Call

He said that in his first one, he was simply trying to figure things out. Last year, there was the painful memories of 2-10 combined with the battle to win the quarterback job.

“This year, being able to come in with this new stable of talent and being the starting quarterback, I think I’m very comfortable with the offense and I’m understanding things a lot more,” Hawkins said. “I’m really learning to play within myself and let the game come to me rather than trying to force so many plays.

“When you’re in high school and you’re playing, you’re used to having your way with stuff. But in a conference like the Big 12 and when you play against so much tough competition in teams and athletes, you definitely have to be on top of your game. I think I’ve learned that.”

Hawkins entered the Independence Bowl with a streak of 70 passes without an interception. An Alabama defender picked his first throw that day. He set every major freshman passing and total offense record CU has, and beat Oklahoma and Nebraska, too. He finished with a 56.4 completion percentage, 2,693 yards, 19 touchdowns and 15 interceptions.

More importantly, no one seems to care anymore that he’s the coach’s son. They just want to know how many games he can win.

“It’s good to talk about football,” Hawkins said.

EXTRA POINTS: Helfrich said “we’ll find out” when asked who’ll back up Hawkins. Nick Nelson emerged in spring as second string, while Matt Ballenger was a little behind, Helfrich said. Freshman Tyler Hansen has shown a nice arm in camp. “He’s going to give those guys everything they want as far as competing for that job,” Helfrich said. ... Helfrich said it’s a “definite possibility” all three freshman running backs — Darrell Scott, Ray Polk and Rodney Stewart — will play in 2008. ... CU has yet to name a starting kicker. Aric Goodman and Jameson Davis are the candidates. Head coach Dan Hawkins said they’ll each be placed in as many pressure situations as possible in camp, but the choice is an “objective” one to make. ... Defensive tackle Curtis Cunningham (sprained ankle) and defensive back Steven Hicks (hamstring) were not practicing Thursday. ... Today’s practices are scheduled for 9:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

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Smart choice for CU at linebacker

Junior appears likely to help fill big shoes of Dizon

By B.G. Brooks

Thursday, August 7, 2008

It's still early in preseason camp, but veteran linebackers coach Brian Cabral hasn't yet come up with a replacement for the prolific Jordon Dizon and the 160 total tackles (120 unassisted) he registered in 2007 at the University of Colorado.

Check with Cabral again on the eve of CU's 2008 opener, and he still won't have a specific replacement in mind. But that's the plan.

Hard-pressed to identify anyone who could be as productive as Dizon, a once-in-a-career linebacker for most position coaches, Cabral hopes Dizon's 13.3 tackles a game can become a small-group activity - perhaps performed by a gang of two, three, or four.

"Jordon, obviously, was an outstanding player and, obviously, those tackles are going to have to be made by someone else now," said junior Jeff Smart, a "mike," or middle, linebacker who lines up on the strong side. "But I don't think that necessarily has to be one person. . . . I think those tackles will get distributed among the defense. I think we'll all be able to step up and make those tackles.

"It's not like (coaches) are saying we want you to get a certain number of tackles. It's going to happen how it's going to happen. We all just need to do our jobs. If we all do our jobs, whoever has the ball is going to determine who makes the tackle."

Primarily, Cabral believes Smart and whoever winds up at the other inside ("will," or weak-side) linebacker position "are the guys who have to recover (Dizon's) tackles. I'd expect Jeff to be more productive, too. But, in all reality, our two front (inside) guys . . . you should see a lot more plays from them."

Working in Cabral's favor this season - as opposed to last season, even with Dizon on hand - is a numerical increase. Junior Marcus Burton returns after being academically ineligible and Michael Sipili returns after a campus suspension.

Also, Cabral and CU shone in the recruitment of linebackers last winter, luring Jon Major (Ponderosa), Doug Rippy (Trotwood, Ohio) and Lynn Katoa (Salt Lake City) as high school signees and Shaun Mohler (Orange Coast College in California) from junior college.

While Katoa will redshirt this season, the others are expected to provide depth, allowing Smart to finally settle in at the "mike" position after bouncing between the two spots for most of his career.

Cabral said Smart, a former walk-on who began last season as a third-teamer, then earned a scholarship and wound up a starter with 80 tackles (43 unassisted), "is fine, really solid, where he is."

In fact, he entered camp as the linebacker with the most job security and is "probably the one guy we're counting on most," Cabral said.

Smart, though, recoils at the thought of his position being secure.

"I don't think anyone in camp feels like, 'I've got a spot locked up, I don't have to do anything,' " he said. "I don't feel comfortable, but that's not my goal. I think we all just need to get better, and that's what camp will do."

For Smart, the chief difference in this camp and its predecessors is confidence and experience. He was playing so well at the end of 2007 that coaches watching tape were mistaking some of Smart's tackles for those of Dizon, coach Dan Hawkins said.

Buoyed by starts in the final 10 games last season, Smart entered August drills "with a different mentality. Instead of trying to prove to people you can play, I feel that's already been done."

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