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Longmont, Colorado
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TIMES-CALL

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Buffaloes preparing for unknown

*By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Colorado Buffaloes open their season Sunday against an opponent sporting a new coaching staff, making preparation more difficult.

The Buffs had better get used to it.

Each of CU's first three opponents have new staffs. Eastern Washington's Beau Baldwin is succeeding Paul Wulff as head coach. Wulff left last December for Washington State.

West Virginia's new head coach is Bill Stewart, who succeeded Rich Rodriguez on an interim basis last year. The Mountaineers beat Oklahoma, 48-28, in the Fiesta Bowl, and Stewart landed the job permanently.

And of course, long-time Colorado State coach Sonny Lubick has been succeeded by former assistant Steve Fairchild, who spent the previous five seasons working as an offensive coordinator for two NFL franchises, the past two with Buffalo.

When the Buffs get into Big 12 play, they'll face new head coaches at Texas A&M and Nebraska, making it five new regimes on their 12-game schedule in 2008. But the Rams are first on Sunday (Invesco Field, 5:30 p.m., FSN), and the challenge of preparing for a season-opening opponent grows in difficulty when the staff is new, and no one is quite sure what to expect.

"It's way harder," CU coach Dan Hawkins said.

"We're just going to have to adapt."

As to what film CU coaches and players are studying, Hawkins called it "a little bit of everything," including the previous stops of CSU's coordinators. That means the Buffs this week are probably watching some Buffalo Bills. CSU defensive coordinator Larry Kerr worked in the same position at CU from 1993-2002. He was at UCLA from 2003-05 and Duke in 2006 and 2007.

One Buff, freshman safety Patrick Mahnke, said he couldn't divulge what he's studying. Another, senior defensive tackle George Hypolite, said the Buffs should have an idea of what to expect.

"Contrary to popular opinion, our coaches and our video guys do a great job, so we have film on everyone," Hypolite said. "We have film on what we think they might do. We don't know exactly what they're going to do when we get on the field; we could be wrong.

"There's an air of we're going to have to learn stuff on the fly. They're going to do some stuff obviously we haven't seen before."

On the other hand, Hypolite said, CU's new offense isn't well known, either.

A quick glimpse at CU's next opponent:

Who: Colorado State

Where: Denver, Invesco Field

When: Sunday, 5:30 p.m., FSN

TV/Radio: FSN/AM-850

Notes: CU leads the series 58-19-2. ... The teams have split eight games in Denver, including the past two seasons. CU has won four of the past five in the series, but none were decided by more than seven points. ... CSU tight end Kory Sperry caught eight passes for 103 yards and three touchdowns in last season's meeting.

—Patrick Ridgell

“Like with us, no one knows how our spread offense is going to look, but us,” he said. “Different things change from year to year. You can’t rely on knowing what they’re going to do.”

Hawkins said the team may trek to Invesco Field this week, but won’t do much other than walk around. Last season, CU held an abbreviated walk-through on Invesco prior to playing the Rams, but had to stay off the center of the field, he said.

Hawkins doesn’t want his players being wide-eyed when they go to Denver.

“You’d rather not have a bunch of guys walking out of the tunnel going, ‘Whoa, this is kind of cool,’” Hawkins said.

Said Hypolite: “We are a young team, unfortunately, so there are some guys who haven’t played there before. But for the older guys, it’s business as usual.

“I don’t care if we have to play on Mars. We still have to strap it on. We still have to do what we prepare for, attack, execute our game plan the way we prepare during the week. It doesn’t really matter where we play.”

EXTRA POINTS: Hawkins called CU’s final scrimmage, which was closed to the media on Saturday, “short and sweet and nobody got hurt.” ... The team has yet to use Folsom Field for anything other than taking pictures. Hawkins said it won’t use the field before CU plays its home opener, Sept. 6 against Washington State. ... Hawkins said he does not think offensive line coach Jeff Grimes has determined what guards to start Sunday. “He might see who has the longest beard or something,” Hawkins joked. ... Asked about emulating CSU tight end Kory Sperry in practice this week, Hawkins said, “I don’t know that you can. Can you emulate that guy? Holy cow, I don’t think you can. He’s a pretty terrific player; he’s pretty talented. I don’t know we have anyone as big and fast as he is.” ... CU opens classes today, and the team won’t practice. Hawkins said the extra day to prepare for this year’s opener means practices will be shorter. He said the whole game plan will be in by Tuesday.

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



CU report: For Scott, it's the shape of things to come

By B.G. Brooks

Sunday, August 24, 2008

Darrell Scott has lightened his load.

Three weeks of training camp that included some extra post-practice running and several sessions in the steam room have dropped the celebrated freshman running back's weight to 210 pounds.

That's 17 fewer than when he reported to Boulder the week before preseason practice began.

But Scott, who's listed behind sophomore **Demetrius Sumler** and junior **Kevin Moyd** in CU's tailback grouping, says his weight drop isn't finished.

"I want to get to 205, and when that happens, watch out, I'm dangerous," he said Sunday at the conclusion of the Buffaloes' light, 55-minute workout.

Scott said concentrating on meeting CU's academic requirements - he had to pass an Algebra II course before being accepted - cost him summer training time and led to his weight increase.

"I was out of shape then, but I'm in shape now and feeling very good," he said.

Grow it, show it

CU's pair of starting guards might not be known until midweek, and even after they're named, that twosome shouldn't feel comfortable. Offensive line coach **Jeff Grimes** has said the competition could continue well past the Sunday opener against Colorado State (5:30 p.m., FSN, Invesco Field at Mile High).

Asked how Grimes might settle on his starting pair, coach **Dan Hawkins** answered, "See who's got the longest beard, I don't know."

The competitors: redshirt freshman **Blake Behrens** and freshman **Max Tuioti-Mariner** on the right side and junior **Devin Head** and redshirt freshman **Shawn Daniels** on the left side.

Using the bubble

Former CU director of football operations **David Hansburg** is overseeing the **Joel Klatt** Football School, set for Dec. 27-30 in CU's practice bubble.

The event, which tentatively will feature instruction from former Buffs players Klatt, **Justin Bates**, **Bobby Pesavento** and **Jeremy Bloom**, and possibly former Broncos receiver **Ed McCaffery**, will mark use of the bubble by an outside vendor for the first time.

CU's practice bubble was taken down in May and is scheduled to go up again in mid-October.

Etc.

* Freshman quarterback **Tyler Hansen** has been directing the scout team in CU's preparation for CSU, but Hawkins said he has no one to reasonably emulate Rams tight end **Kory Sperry**. "How can you?" Hawkins asked. "He's a pretty terrific player - big and talented. I don't know that we have anybody as big, as fast and as athletic as he is. I don't know if that's possible."

* With fall classes beginning today, the Buffs have a regularly scheduled day off. Game-week preparation begins Tuesday. The week's extra day of practice will be used "to polish up in there; we won't have to go quite as long because obviously we've got part of the game plan in already," Hawkins said.

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Rocky Mountain Showdown: Play it again, please

By Staff Reports

Sunday, August 24, 2008

As for the players, it's a go.

The guys who put on the pads - not the ones in the suits with the neatly knotted ties - believe the Colorado-Colorado State football series means too much to be discarded.

Is anyone listening?

No one can say definitively that Sunday's Rocky Mountain Showdown at Invesco Field at Mile High (5:30 p.m., FSN Rocky Mountain) will be the last played in Denver. But with two games remaining under the current contract (the 2009 and 2010 sites haven't been determined), the schools haven't come to an agreement on the series' future.

CU players Scotty McKnight, a sophomore receiver, and George Hypolite, a senior defensive tackle, have a suggestion for both athletic directors and the myriad other parties involved: Work it out.

"It's a great game in Colorado, getting two great schools like that together," McKnight said. "There's so much tradition behind it. . . . Before I came out here (from Coto de Casa, Calif.), I really didn't know that much about the rivalry. Now, I can see it, and it's a great thing for both teams, both programs and the fans."

Added Hypolite: "These are two great programs that, historically, have had some great players come through. Both schools put a great product on the field . . . "I think it's a great thing; it's definitely a must for the state. It's great to be able to strap it on against those guys every year, and I think they would say the same."

McKnight prefers Denver as the game's site for "a fun change," as does CSU senior tight end Kory Sperry. "Our stadium's too small for this big of a game, and it's not fair for us to play them in Boulder all the time," Sperry has said. "At Invesco, you know it's going to be loud and you know it's going to be insane, and that's what a rivalry game like this should be like."

Eight questions for the '08 meeting

1. What can CU expect from Steve Fairchild's first CSU team? Buffs coaches admit they're not quite sure what the Rams will look like offensively. But they do expect to see heavy doses of big running backs Kyle Bell and Gartrell Johnson and bigger tight end Kory Sperry.

2. Can Sperry duplicate the game he enjoyed last season against CU? If he does, the Buffs might not win this one. All Sperry did was catch eight passes for 103 yards and three touchdowns.

3. How will CSU quarterback Billy Farris fare in his first college start? Fairchild and his offensive staff saw enough in Farris to end the quarterback competition mere days into preseason camp. Farris, a senior, appears capable of handling the pressure.

4. Will CU's new no-huddle, up-tempo offense befuddle CSU's defense? This appears to be the biggest question mark for the Rams and Fairchild, who found retooling a porous "D" among his top priorities when he arrived.

5. On the flip side, how effective will CU's new attack be in its debut? If the offense were in the hands of a first-time starter, the worries would multiply. But sophomore Cody Hawkins has a year's experience and, by all accounts, a nice feel for the new offense. Still, Sunday is the first time out of the driveway.

6. Will Darrell Scott make an impact in his college debut? Scott, CU's former *Parade* All-America selection, won't start, but should see short-yardage duty - and probably more. That depends on the effectiveness of starter Demetrius Sumler, who rushed for 85 yards (16 carries) and a touchdown against CSU last season in a reserve role.

7. Can CU's new cornerbacks withstand whatever Fairchild/Farris throw at them? This could be the biggest question mark for the Buffs, and based on the experienced quarterbacks lined up on CU's schedule, it's a question that needs a quick, decisive answer.

8. Is this the final game of the series to be played in Denver - or the final game in the series, period? At last check, the schools still were willing to negotiate - a good sign. CU athletic director Mike Bohn says he remains "optimistic" for a renewal, but his terms might cloud that possibility for CSU athletic director Paul Kowalczyk. Don't touch that dial.

Player smack

With bulletin board material forever inflammatory and now dispersed almost instantly in cyberspace, coaches hope to keep the vitriol confined to their locker rooms. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

In 2005, then-sophomore and now-graduated CU defensive end **Alonzo Barrett**, who had Denver roots but moved to Alabaster, Ala., received a post-practice rebuke from coach Gary Barnett for this game-week quote:

"I grew up here, so I knew about (CSU). But every year, freshmen get in camp, hear coaches talking about it, saying they're our little brothers and we have to keep them in line and everything . . ."

Oops.

And then there was free-spirited Rams quarterback **Bradlee Van Pelt**, who crowed before, during and after games. But this might have been his most memorable postgame line, uttered after the Rams defeated the seventh-ranked Buffs 19-14 in 2002: "Colorado was the worst No. 7 team ever."

Van Pelt also earned YouTube distinction for spiking the ball in the face of a CU defender as he scored

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sports

Denver out of CU-CSU rivalry?

Bufs citing desire to play at least six true home games

By **Natalie Meisler**
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 08/25/2008 12:05:12 AM MDT



Last year's CU-CSU football game drew 68,133 to Invesco Field at Mile High, short of capacity. CU won 31-28 on Kevin Eberhart's 35-yard field goal in overtime after trailing 28-17 in the third quarter. (Doug Pensinger, Getty Images)

Sunday's season-opening Rocky Mountain Showdown could be the last at Invesco Field at Mile High for at least two years.

At a time when Big 12 schools — and others across the country — are grabbing lucrative neutral-site deals for their football teams, Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn is looking at one number.

Six. As in playing at least six games in Boulder every season.

"No Big 12 conference team has less than six home games," Bohn said last week.

CU has five games at Folsom Field in 2009, which adds to the expectation that the Colorado-Colorado State opener, listed as a Buffaloes home game, will be played in Boulder.

"CU has a decision to make," CSU athletic director Paul Kowalczyk said.

In 2010, when CSU is the host team, Kowalczyk is quick to note the Rams have only five games scheduled at Hughes Stadium.

There is no contract beyond 2010, although both parties are interested in extending the rivalry. Both athletic directors declined to get into negotiation specifics.

Officials met two weeks ago. They hoped to meet again before this weekend's festivities, but time creeps up fast when the school year starts. The Democratic National Convention all but precludes a meeting in Denver this week.

"We're in the process of negotiating with both schools to try to finalize a more long-term deal," Metro Denver Sports Commission president KieAnn Brownell said. "Our goal is having it in Denver with the idea of creating a big event the entire state can celebrate."

Texas and Oklahoma have met in Dallas since 1929.

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The Florida-Georgia game, often called the "The World's Biggest Outdoor Cocktail Party," is played in Jacksonville, Fla. Oklahoma State-Texas Tech and Texas A&M-Arkansas have agreements for Dallas-area games.

Both Colorado schools make more money by playing their rivalry at Invesco Field and have extensive fans and alumni in the Denver area.

"The game is important to both schools, not only the athletic

Colorado State Football

[Watch](#) video of CSU tight end

- [Kory Sperry](#)

[Watch](#) video of CSU football scrimmage and interview with coach Steve Fairchild

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- [CSU sports](#)
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- [CSU football game](#)

programs but the city of Denver, the state and for the good of college football," Kowalczyk said.

Bohn lists many of the same reasons, in addition to corporate partners in Denver.

"It's been a great stage to play on," he said.

"Whether we play the Rams or another marquee game is a viable option to look at after a fundamental number of games are in place in Boulder. And the fundamental number is six."

Denver attendance in the CU-CSU series has varied from the record 76,219 in 2003 to 65,701 in 2006. At the end of business Friday, CU had sold a little more than 36,000 of its 37,500 seats. Bohn is confident of selling out the allotment. CSU, with 3,000 tickets sold last week, has sold 24,000 of its nearly 30,000 tickets. Seats have been apportioned according to respective home stadium sizes. All sales will go through Ticketmaster this week.

Bohn is keeping an eye on attendance, saying, "We have a stadium that seats 54,000."

Each school receives more than \$1 million when the game is played at Invesco Field, depending on tickets and club level sales. Kowalczyk said the contract has each school paying the other a \$650,000 guarantee if the game is played at either school's stadium.

CU's next unfilled date is Sept. 17, 2011, and CSU is not listed on that year's schedule. The Buffs have 11 games listed and can play 13 because they will play at Hawaii. Bohn said a bye may better serve the program than a 13th game.

After the Rams play at California on Sept. 27, they have no games scheduled against Bowl Championship Series schools other than CU through 2012. Most Mountain West Conference members are scheduling two BCS opponents a year.

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"We're in a rebuilding mode," Kowalczyk said. "(CSU coach) Steve Fairchild and I are on the same page when it comes to scheduling. We want to get the program up to speed, and the scheduling is the integral part of it."

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colorado football

Running back Polk will redshirt

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 08/24/2008 11:40:29 PM MDT

BOULDER — One of Colorado's freshman tailbacks apparently will redshirt after all.

CU running backs coach Darian Hagan said Ray Polk will be held out of Sunday night's opener against Colorado State and likely will redshirt this season, unless injuries deplete the depth at that position. Two other freshman tailbacks, former national top-five recruit Darrell Scott and Rodney "Speedy" Stewart, will play against CSU, Hagan said.

Two weeks earlier, Hagan told reporters he doubted any of the three newcomers would become redshirt candidates.

"Ray came to me; it was his idea," Hagan said Sunday evening after a one-hour practice. "He feels that with a year of redshirting, he will get better as an athlete and better as a runner. If that's what he wants to do, then, hey, that's fine."

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Polk, 6-feet-1 and 200 pounds, was ranked as the nation's 11th-best tailback prospect during the winter after combining for 2,521 yards and 34 touchdowns for his final two seasons at Brophy Prep in Phoenix. Hagan has often said that had CU not signed Scott — rated the nation's top tailback prospect by most Internet recruiting sites — everybody would be talking about Polk.

The dramatic improvement of junior tailback Kevin Moyd convinced the offensive coaches they could do without Polk this season, Hagan said. Colorado is expected to start sophomore Demetrius Sumler against the Rams, with Moyd, Scott and Stewart also getting carries, Hagan said. Moyd, 5-7 and 185 pounds, has had only four carries in his college career but has been one of the pleasant surprises of August camp.

Footnotes.

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins, on trying to imitate

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CSU senior tight end Kory Sperry (6-6, 254) in practice: "I don't know that we have anybody as big and athletic and as fast as he is." . . . Regarding the closed scrimmage Saturday night, Hawkins said: "Nobody got hurt. And it was fairly crisp."

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Bufs play guessing game

New faces, new system at CSU leaves CU unsure what to expect

By Kyle Ringo
Monday, August 25, 2008

There is always an element of mystery when preparing for the first game of any football season because it's impossible to predict exactly what you might see from the opponent.

That task is even more difficult for Colorado coaches and players this week because the 2008 season begins Sunday against a Colorado State team featuring a new head coach, new offensive coordinator and new starting quarterback.

Word of mouth, newspaper stories, film review of previous coaching stops and evaluation of personnel have all played a part in CU coaches attempting to figure out exactly what they're going to see.

To some extent, they believe they have a good grasp on the style of play and the personnel they will see. They know the must play tough against the run with big, bruising CSU tailbacks Kyle Bell and Gartrell Johnson carrying the ball. And they will need to find a way to cover tight end Kory Sperry, who has had his way with the Bufs the past two years.

But there is plenty the Bufs won't know until they see it on the field. "It's a guessing game right now," CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins said. "We have kind of an idea of what they're doing. Part of it is you've got to do your deal. We've got to be ready to run our package and adapt to whatever they're doing."

Collins said he has been in this situation on several occasions previously in his career and is not overly concerned about the uncertainty. It won't get much easier for games two and three for the Bufs -- Eastern Washington and West Virginia are also breaking in new coaches and don't figure to reveal all their secrets before seeing the Bufs.

"It's not a lot of fun, but we have done it before," Collins said.

Collins said he is not very familiar with the capabilities of new CSU quarterback Billy Ferris, who has played in a total of nine games and thrown 39 passes in his career, which began at CSU in 2005.

Collins said he knows Farris wouldn't be the starting quarterback for the Rams if he wasn't a quality football player.

Colorado coaches and players are reviewing NFL games films from the past four years when new Rams' head coach Steve Fairchild served as offensive coordinator for the Buffalo Bills and St. Louis Rams.

Compounding the preparation problem is the fact that first-year CSU offensive coordinator Greg

Peterson has only minimal experience as an offensive coordinator, and it was four years ago at Kansas State. Since then he has served as wide receivers coach at KSU and tight ends coach at Washington State.

"By the second half, you're going to know what they're going to do and you're either going to stop it or you're not," CU safety D.J. Dykes said.

Notable

The Buffs worked out for about an hour Sunday night on the practice fields. Hawkins said his team's only activity on Folsom Field this month was taking team pictures in the stadium on Saturday. He said the Buffs will not be able to practice in Folsom Field, as he had hoped, prior to the season because the new turf is still taking root. ...

Hawkins also said the Buffs won't conduct a walk-through at Invesco Field prior to Sunday's game, but they will probably visit the stadium so players are not awestruck by the facility on game day. ...

When asked if a decision had been made about who would start at guards against the Rams, Hawkins said, "I don't know what (offensive line) coach (Jeff) Grimes has done. Maybe see who has the longest beard or something. I don't know."



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