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CU vs. CSU

Cody carves out a personal legacy

Work ethic separates coach's son from pack**By Tom Kensler**
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 08/31/2008 02:02:07 AM MDT



Cody Hawkins had 17 interceptions last year and vows to improve. He "took that criticism to heart," said teammate Ryan Walters. (Post file)

BOULDER — Senior captains Ryan Walters and Patrick Williams hear the whispers. So do other members of the Colorado football team, on campus and off.

"You guys have a pretty good program," someone might hiss, "but when will the Buffs get a real

quarterback in there instead of the coach's kid?"

If fire doesn't shoot from Walters' ears, it sure feels that way.

"It really makes me mad. I'll go to battle for Cody Hawkins every day, and I have," the safety said last week as he prepared for tonight's Rocky Mountain Showdown season opener against Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High. "Being the coach's son, there's a lot of flak he gets from fans. Cody has great character. Dealing with that the way he has is tremendous."

Colorado Football

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Naysayers believe Hawkins is not particularly nimble and point out he goes maybe 5-feet-11 and about 190 pounds. That would not be considered

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big for a cornerback, much less a quarterback in the Big 12. But fans don't see what players see, teammates say.

"I just smile at those people because they have no idea how he gets the job done," said Williams, a senior wideout. "Sometimes I can't see Cody back behind the line, but I know the ball is coming. And it's on a dime."

If Hawkins has heard the catcalls, he lets them roll off his shoulder pads. But it's never easy, or necessarily comfortable, being a coach's son, especially when you play quarterback.

"I've met kids who knew I am the quarterback and had no idea my dad is the coach," he said. "And I've had people who wanted to meet me and talk about my dad the whole time.

"I'm always going to be the coach's kid. I'd like to be Cody Hawkins. But I'm not ashamed of being the son of the coach because Dan Hawkins is a pretty good dude. I'm proud of him. I look up to him."

Impressive freshman stats

Hawkins threw for 3,015 yards and 22 touchdowns in 2007 — as a redshirt freshman. Impressive stats, but it's human nature for fans to wonder whether the head coach favors his son, and it's human nature for the son to feel he needs to become the team's best player as a way to dismiss any hint of nepotism.

Cody said his goal from Day One was to show everybody he worked hard, and that would help him earn respect. That was the easy part. Williams tells the story of first spotting Cody in the spring of 2006. Dan Hawkins had taken the CU job the previous December, but the Hawkins family had not yet relocated to Boulder. Cody remained in Boise, Idaho, to finish his senior year at Bishop Kelly High

School. He was visiting during spring break.

"It was cold outside and he was out there throwing the football around," Williams recalled. "I thought, 'Who is this kid?' He could have been inside doing something else. When I found out it was Coach Hawk's son, I thought, 'Wow.' But that's Cody. He loves football. He loves to compete. He loves the games. He loves the practices."

Cody grew up watching Boise State games at field level as his father won 53 games in five years. He spent countless hours sitting in his dad's office, studying college film of quarterbacks "because high school film is usually from someone's father trying to hold a camera still on the sidelines," he said.

After throwing for 2,783 yards and 42 touchdowns as a high school senior and earning the 2005 Gatorade player of the year honor in Idaho, Cody signed with CU. He redshirted the 2006 season to get stronger, then had to transform into a team leader the following spring.

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Post Poll - Site for Showdown



Should the annual game between Colorado and Colorado State be played at home sites or in Denver?

Home sites

A starting quarterback must take command, even if he is a freshman. Cody struggled at it.

"I was a little tentative," he said. "You really don't want to call a guy out and have him say, 'Hey, I've been here for five years.' Everybody was awesome about it. But I was very careful not to go overboard."

With Cody having proven himself, the elder Hawkins wants his son to "grab the reins of the team." Beginning with spring practice and continuing through August drills, Cody has grown into that role.

"(Becoming a vocal leader) allows more of his intangibles to come through," Dan Hawkins said. "That's always been one of Cody's strengths. In high school, he was able to galvanize the whole group

and be even more of a spiritual type of leader. I think he's more comfortable and better able doing that."

CU coaches and players say Cody has sharpened his knowledge of X's and O's, too. Last year, he ranked third from the bottom among Big 12 Conference quarterbacks in interceptions (17), a statistic that continued to stick in his craw throughout the offseason. His goal is to reduce "unforced errors" this season.

Summer drills to improve

He threw hundreds of passes during seven-on-seven drills this summer and never had one picked.

"Cody really took that criticism last year to heart," Walters said.

Colorado's new hurry-up, no-huddle offense appears tailor-made for a quick thinker such as Hawkins, who prefers a fast pace.

"I talk faster than most people. I walk faster than most people," Cody said. "I eat faster than most people. I listen to music louder than most people.

"If you put in all the qualities needed for a no-huddle offense and translate that into a person, you'd probably get me. We're going to play fast, and we have a chance to get the defense on their heels. That's what I like."

As unassuming as he might look, there is no question Cody Hawkins has gained the confidence of the team, offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said.

"When players see Cody, they don't think, 'Oh, yeah, there's some favoritism,' " Helfrich said. "They go, 'Oh, yeah, that guy is our best player.' "

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CU vs. CSU

Rivalry's renewal has Oct. 1 deadline

By **Natalie Meisler**
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 08/31/2008 12:25:23 AM MDT

FORT COLLINS — Now that Colorado and Colorado State have taken their ball and gone to their respective homes for the 2009 and 2010 games in the rivalry, they have a month to decide if the series will survive to see 2011 and beyond.

There is an Oct. 1 deadline in the current contract to agree on future dates. Given the practice of scheduling football games many years ahead, the two schools need to look for other opponents if they cannot agree to keep their series alive.

"There's nothing on the table," CU athletic director Mike Bohn said. "We'd like to try to resolve the future by Oct. 1."

As expected, CU announced it would exercise its option to play CSU at Folsom Field in Boulder next year. The Buffaloes had only five home games scheduled, compared with a six- or seven-game norm in the Big 12 and most programs in Bowl Championship Series conferences.

Although CSU athletic director Paul Kowalczyk and new Rams coach Steve Fairchild have said they favor the CU-CSU game being permanently in Denver, CSU announced the 2010 game will be played at the

Rams' Hughes Stadium.

Kowalczyk said in the few hours following the announcements, "We've had overwhelming fan support to play 2010 in Fort Collins."

Moving the CU-CSU game to Boulder and Fort Collins will hurt both schools financially. Each was guaranteed more than \$1 million to meet in Denver at Invesco Field at Mile High. With CU selling out its entire allotment of 37,600 tickets for today's game at the start of last week, the Buffs were looking to net more than \$1.5 million. As of Friday, CSU was 3,000 short of selling out its allotment of 30,000 tickets.

Each school is guaranteed \$650,000 from the other as the visitor in a Boulder or Fort Collins game. Unless a marquee opponent is scheduled for each school in lieu of the in-state rivalry, the CU-CSU game's revenue will not approach the Denver paydays in the series.

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Longmont, Colorado
Sunday, August 31, 2008



Publish Date: 8/31/2008

There's another score to settle

Bufs, Rams take grudges to Invesco Field tonight

*By Patrick Ridgell
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Had the events of the past week, or at least of Friday, not reminded everyone that Colorado and Colorado State aren't very chummy, today's game ought to suffice.

The Buffs open their 119th season of intercollegiate football today with the Rams. It's the 15th time CU has opened a season against CSU, the 13th time since 1985 and 11th in the past 13 seasons. The teams have split eight meetings in Denver.

Numbers aside, emotions will run higher this year than normal in a series that's rarely dull. Both programs are irked at the other after Friday's announcements saying the series will return to campus sites in 2009 and 2010. The future of the series is in jeopardy.

CU is, as usual, eager to show it's the state's top program, and CSU, as usual, will be sky high because it wants to prove CU isn't all that.

Friday's announcement, which CSU athletic director Paul Kowalczyk called a disappointment, provides more fodder for a team that hardly needs it.

For those who've played in the series, or lived in the state while the programs' rivalry has escalated, it couldn't be more meaningful.

That's why the other night, in the dorm room CU freshmen Bryce Givens and Max Tuioti-Mariner share, when Tuioti-Mariner asked Givens what this game is about, Givens' answer left an impression.

"I said, 'How big is this game?'" Tuioti-Mariner said. "He seriously got up and he was like, 'Max, this game is really big.'"

Said Givens, a Mullen graduate: "They'll understand as soon as they step on the field at Invesco and they see all of these crazy fans going nuts. They'll understand what it's all about."

Tuioti-Mariner, who's from Southern California, continued.

"I guess this game is going to be tight," he said. "I grew up with UCLA and SC, so I guess this is going to be bigger because it shows who's boss in Colorado."

When this game became big to the Buffs who have played in it, is a distinctive memory for some. Senior safety Ryan Walters remembers in the 2005 game when he knocked out a Ram on a peel block during a punt return.

"It was all over ESPN and everything," Walters said.

Defensive tackle George Hypolite was wide-eyed at Folsom Field prior to the 2005 game. CU linebacker Brian Iwuh turned to him and asked, "Are you OK?" Iwuh had to tap Hypolite's shoulder to get his attention.

"I've never seen Folsom rocking like that," Hypolite said.

Hypolite said you can't communicate the intensity.

"It's one of those things you have to go through to understand," he said. "It's hard to tell someone, you're going to be in front of 70,000 people, you won't be able to hear anything. They're going hit you for a few plays; you're going to hit them for a few plays. You have to keep rallying, keep fighting back and stay focused."

Slated as an 11-point favorite, CU is a big favorite. Yet ESPN dubiously placed CU on upset alert. That pick factors in how each of the series' past five games was decided by seven points or less, each one in the final minute.

CU coach Dan Hawkins has declared his team physically and mentally ready, and downplayed the problems that come when your opponent's coach is new and there's no tape to study.

His concern lies with the Buffs, who were picked fourth in the Big 12 North this year. No consensus on this team appears to exist.

Some fancy CU as a surprise contender; others don't.

Ask the Buffs if they're any good, and positive answers abound. They believe they are, but answers aren't always so clear.

"I think that remains to be seen," quarterback Cody Hawkins answered when asked if CU is any good. "I think we're much better than we were last year. We're definitely a good football team. No doubt about that.

"But we have to go out and prove it every Saturday. We know what we're capable of ... and we'll know we'll have a chance to win every game. We just have to go out and week in and week out and see what happens."

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



It's showtime for Showdown

Rivals kick off for 80th time tonight in Denver

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, August 30, 2008

DENVER -- Bulletin board material is the last thing needed in a powder keg football rivalry such as the Colorado-Colorado State series.

Both programs did their best over the past month to avoid giving the other any added motivation before today's 80th edition of the Rocky Mountain Showdown at Invesco Field.

But they didn't quite make it all the way to game time in the 2008 season opener.

It's gotten downright ugly the past two days with athletic directors giving each other the cold shoulder at a Friday kickoff luncheon and then dueling via press releases later in the day announcing where future games will be played.

Both schools opted to host the series on their respective campuses, in Boulder next year and in Fort Collins in 2010, creating the likelihood that today's battle for the Governor's Cup could be the end of the series on neutral ground for the foreseeable future. It might be the beginning of the end, period.

They're not saying so publicly, but there are plenty of hard feelings to go around and today's game hasn't been decided yet.

Drama between men in coats and ties typically doesn't get the average fan's blood boiling. So CSU senior tailback Gartrell Johnson took it upon himself at a Friday pep rally to make sure there is no mystery in how the Rams see the contest.

"We just want to get your guys' support and just come out and get drunk, talk (trash) at CU fans and watch us kick their (butt). Go Rams," Johnson reportedly said in addressing his fellow CSU students.

With a 5:30 p.m. kickoff, it's likely fans on both sides will be sufficiently lubricated once game time finally arrives. Police and school officials are encouraging fans to be on their best behavior.

CU seems to have retaken control of the series of late, winning four of the past five, with each of those games being decided by seven points or fewer.

The Rams' only victory in that span came in 2006 when the Buffs and coach Dan Hawkins were competing with one hand tied behind their backs -- with no experience at quarterback in Hawkins' first year.

The Rams find themselves in an identical situation this year under first-year head coach Steve Fairchild, a former CSU quarterback himself.

Fairchild brings an experienced offensive line, a future pro at tight end in Kory Sperry and two strong run-ning backs in Johnson and Kyle Bell to town. Bell carried the ball 40 times for 135 yards in a 31-28 overtime loss to the Buffs last season.

Yet, senior quarterback Billy Farris will be making the first start of his career and is a virtual unknown in the college football world. Farris has thrown 39 passes in his four previous years on the roster.

"I'm really looking forward to just playing ball," Farris said. "It's as simple as that."

Fairchild has a history of running often and occasionally throwing deep from his days as an offensive coordinator in the National Football League, but Hawkins and his assistants probably won't have a good idea of the Rams' capabilities until the second half.

Colorado is coming off back-to-back losing seasons for the first time since 1983-84 and fans have high expectations with the addition of a top-15 recruiting class and the fact Hawkins is now in his third year.

CU will unveil its version of the no-huddle offense, college football's hottest trend. The Buffs have been practicing the system since spring ball and have put up gaudy numbers in scrimmages against their teammates on defense.

Having won this war once before as a redshirt freshman last season, CU quarterback Cody Hawkins said the Buffs are better prepared at the outset of a season than they have been the past two years since he and his dad came to Boulder.

Hawkins will be making his 14th consecutive start after an up-and-down year last season. The biggest difference for him from a year ago is knowing what to expect ahead of time.

"It's one of the loudest games you will ever play in because you have 40,000 people screaming their guts out on any given play," Hawkins said.

Colorado fans will get their first look at prized freshman running back Darrell Scott, but they will also see many other young Buffs making their debuts. The CU roster is one of the 10 youngest in the nation.

Other true freshmen, such as tailback Rodney Stewart, offensive lineman Max Tuioti-Mariner and safety Patrick Mahnke, are good bets for playing time today.

Older players will step into more prominent roles, such as sophomore Demetrius Sumler becoming the starting tailback and Jason Brace starting at defensive end. Also, junior college transfer linebacker Shawn Mohler will get his first start in Buff uniform.

Perhaps no debut is more significant than how sophomore Nate Solder plays in the first game of his life at tackle. Solder played tight end in high school and his first two years in the CU program.

While it is the first opportunity for many involved to put their stamp on the rivalry, it is the last for members of the senior class on both sides.

When CU wide receiver Patrick Williams first came to Boulder in 2004 as a freshman from the Dallas area, he was much more familiar with storied rivalries such as Texas-Texas A&M than the Rocky Mountain Showdown. But now the only game he appreciates more each season is the regular season finale with Nebraska.

"When I got here Colorado-Colorado State, I ain't going to say it didn't mean nothing to me, but it didn't have the same effect on me it does now," Williams said.



CSU's Sperry ready for rematch vs. Buffs

Rams tight end caught three TDs last year vs. CU

By Ryan Thorburn
Saturday, August 30, 2008

FORT COLLINS -- New head coach. New quarterback. New wide receivers.

So what exactly is Colorado's defense expecting to see from Colorado State's passing game on Sunday night at Invesco Field?

"We're playing ghost busters. We're chasing ghosts," says CU secondary coach Greg Brown. "They could come out and do anything. We've got to be ready and hopefully we'll be sound in our preparation and try to cover the bases the best we can."

Kory Sperry was supposed to be a ghost of Rocky Mountain Showdowns past.

Boo!

The 6-foot-6, 255-pound tight end will be back in the lineup for the Rams a year after torching CU's defense for three touchdowns and 103 yards receiving. Sperry redshirted in 2007 after suffering a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee against Cal in the second game.

"It means a lot to me," Sperry said of getting an extra opportunity to play CU. "It's in-state rivals and any time you have your rivals the first game of the season, there is no other feeling like that."

It's fitting that this year's game is going to be played on a Sunday in the Denver Broncos' stadium. Sperry is one of the few players in the Rams program right now who seems destined for the NFL.

"He's the real deal," Brown said. "The NFL is not going to fool around. The guy has a very high draft grade put on him for a reason."

The Buffs left no piece of video tape unwatched during the summer.

First-year CSU head coach Steve Fairchild spent the past two years as Buffalo's offensive coordinator, and CU's defensive staff spent hours breaking down Bills film.

Every second of first-year starter Billy Ferris' brief appearances under center have been memorized. The Buffs understand what Kyle Bell and Gartrell Johnson are capable of behind a veteran offensive line.

But Sperry is the player CU's defense must contain, whether he's opening up holes in the run game or catching passes in the secondary.

"We're an experienced line with a premiere tight end and two good backs. We're a team that should be able to run the football," Fairchild warns. "We're a team that's talented and young at wide receiver. We're going to grow there, along with our quarterback."

Versatile CU senior linebacker Brad Jones, who struggled to match up with Sperry at times in last year's game, will have another opportunity to silence the impressive Ram.

"I'm looking forward to matching up with everyone on the Colorado State team -- the offensive tackles, the fullbacks, the running backs. But I'm especially looking forward to getting matched up with Sperry," Jones said. "We're going to play defense and it's going to work. We've got some good packages coming. It's going to be interesting."

CU head coach Dan Hawkins was asked last week about having players on his scout team emulating Sperry.

"I don't know that you can. Can you emulate that guy?" Hawkins wondered aloud. "Holy cow, I don't think you can. He's a pretty terrific player. I don't know that we have anybody who is as big and as fast and as athletic as he is."

Brown, a longtime secondary coach in the NFL, has schemed to stop players like Tony Gonzalez and Antonio Gates.

Preparing to chase Sperry around at CU isn't much different. He's a scary-good tight end.

"The guy took it to us last year. We've got to be very aware of No. 80 and where he lines up every play," Brown said. "He's a heck of a player. Anybody with that sort of height, speed, athletic ability and soft hands like he's got ... every accolade that comes his way is well deserved."



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CU vs. CSU matchups

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, August 30, 2008

CU RUN OFFENSE VS. CSU RUN DEFENSE --The Buffs are simply loaded at tailback with the addition of freshmen Darrell Scott and Rodney Stewart to veterans such as starter Demetrius Sumler, who ran for 85 yards against the Rams last season. The question mark for CU comes in how well its revamped offensive line will perform with three new starters (two at guard and Nate Solder at tackle). Coaches will likely rotate four guards throughout the game. If the line plays well, despite the changes, it could be a long day for the Rams, who finished 107th in the nation last year defending the run. Sure, it's a new year, but the Rams have to prove they can stop the run before anyone is likely to give them an edge in this area. **Edge: CU.**

CU PASS OFFENSE VS. CSU PASS DEFENSE -- Once again, a lot depends on the line and how well the Buffs are able to protect quarterback Cody Hawkins. CU will debut its new no-huddle approach and it should work in Hawkins' favor because he will be operating almost exclusively out of the shotgun and the Rams will be limited in the amount of substituting they will be able to do. Hawkins and his receivers are a year older and have played 13 games together. That experience and chemistry should help as long as they don't turn the ball over. The Rams must find a way to get pressure on Hawkins and create turnovers. The Rams ranked 87th in the country in pass efficiency defense last year, and have a lot to prove. They made only seven interceptions in all of 2007. **Edge: CU.**

CSU RUN OFFENSE VS. CU RUN DEFENSE --CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins has coached his defenses to top 31 finishes against the run in six consecutive years. The Buffs have seven seniors on defense, including four in the front seven. CU also is deep and talented at linebacker and isn't likely to be worn down even by the big backs and experienced line of the Rams. CSU has four returning starters on its line and tailbacks Kyle Bell and Gartrell Johnson are punishers. Part of the reason they have enjoyed some success on the ground against CU in the past two years was due to former quarterback Caleb Hanie's efficiency in the passing game. New quarterback Billy Farris probably won't be operating at such a high level. **Edge: EVEN.**

CSU PASS OFFENSE VS. CU PASS DEFENSE -- Yes, there is a new quarterback, new offensive coordinator and new starting wide receivers in Fort Collins. There is a lot of unknown in the Rams passing attack. Senior quarterback Billy Farris will be under a lot of pressure to play at a high level right away, whether he is up to it could be the deciding factor in the game. Plenty of folks doubted former CU QB Joel Klatt before the 2003 game. All he did was throw for more than 400 yards. The Buffs have much to prove with two new starting cornerbacks (though Cha'pelle Brown has logged plenty of playing time). They didn't put much pressure on the quarterback last year. Let's be honest, the Rams have hurt the Buffs badly the past two years in this facet of the game. Until the Buffs put a stop to it, the Rams deserve the edge here. **Edge: CSU.**

SPECIAL TEAMS -- Both teams are breaking in new place-kickers, but the Rams just found out this week they would use freshman Ben DeLine after Jason Smith broke his arm in practice. New CU kicker Aric Goodman has some experience under his belt from his freshman season two years ago at Wyoming. The Buffs have an advantage in continuity in the way they operate on coverage and return teams, while the Rams are doing everything for the first time under new coaches. Josh Smith has the potential to be an explosive return man for the Buffs. Dion Morton could do the same for the Rams. Matt DiLallo returns for this third year as the Buffs punter, and don't be surprised to see star running back recruit Darrell Scott back in punt formation. How the Rams react to that will be interesting. **Edge: CU.**

COACHING -- Dan Hawkins has coached in this game the past two years. He knows what to expect and has his entire coaching staff returning intact from a year ago along with his starting quarterback. Hawkins is a gambler who has gotten himself into trouble at times with some decisions, but he's not dealing with everything his counterpart has on his plate this week. Steve Fairchild has spent a lifetime in football and won't be overwhelmed by any situation, but coaching a team for the very first time in a neutral site against a rival would be difficult for anyone. There are a lot of little problems Rams coaches will be experiencing for the first time today. **Edge: CU.**

PREDICTION -- Colorado 41-12

-- **Kyle Ringo**



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Woelk: Buffs need to deliver message

By Neill Woelk

Saturday, August 30, 2008

DENVER -- A year ago, this corner theorized that the Colorado-Colorado State matchup was a game between two programs going in different directions.

Proof that even a blind pig occasionally finds the acorn.

Colorado used an overtime victory as the first step toward a 6-6 regular season that included wins over Oklahoma and Nebraska, a bowl berth and the promise of better things to come.

CSU, meanwhile, never recovered. The Rams finished 3-9, saw their legendary coach fired at season's end and are now staring at the bleak prospect of a lengthy rebuilding phase.

The second part of last year's hypothesis consisted of a prediction that the 2007 contest would be CSU's last good chance of getting a victory in the series anytime in the near future.

We'll hold to that prediction (granted, a prognostication that loses a little punch when you figure the series could very well stop after 2010 unless CSU officials come to their senses).

Still, the oddsmakers believe that today's game will end the stretch of series squeakers in the rivalry, one that has seen no more than seven points separate the two in their last six meetings.

Today, Dan Hawkins' Buffs are favored by 11 points. Given the fact that the Rams have a new coach, a new quarterback and a new system, it's by no means a generous spread.

The wild card here is the rivalry aspect. The Rams, who have always played this game with a chip on their shoulder, will bring an extra-large helping of animosity into today's contest. The ever-present feeling of being the "little brother" in this in-state rivalry was re-emphasized Friday when Colorado decided to play next year's game in Boulder.

CSU officials want the game in Denver. New Ram head coach Steve Fairchild wants the game in Denver. This could very well be their last chance to prove it belongs there.

If possible, this is more than "just" a head coaching debut for Fairchild. The former CSU quarterback and NFL offensive coordinator has the chance in front of him to put his immediate stamp on the program. The shadow of former coach Sonny Lubick still looms large in Fort Fun, and a win today would thrust Fairchild into the sunlight in a big hurry.

But the game is equally important for Colorado coach Dan Hawkins.

Hawk is entering his third year with a team whose vast majority of players are his recruits. This is the year Hawk needs to open with a strong statement, a statement that says CU football is headed in the right direction.

Hawk needs to show that his imprint is firmly stamped on this team.

Thus far the signs have been good. The Buffs went to a bowl game last year, gaining a little national notoriety with the win over Oklahoma along the way. Hawk then put together a top-20 recruiting class.

But a strong start is mandatory this year. After next week's game against Eastern Washington, a brutal schedule that includes three top-20 teams awaits.

Colorado needs to establish momentum early and keep it rolling.

For Colorado, today's game is about more than the CU-CSU series. It's about the big picture, about sending a message to the state's college football fans that CU is moving forward.

The Buffs don't need just a win today.

They need a decisive victory if they are indeed serious about sending that type of message.



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CU, CSU gear up for showdown

By Arnie Stapleton, Associated Press

Sunday, August 31, 2008

Colorado State coach Steve Fairchild thinks the rivalry with Colorado should be played at Invesco Field "for the rest of all time."

He may have to settle for Sunday night, when the only football game — college or pro — is televised to a national cable audience from the home of the Denver Broncos and the site just three nights earlier of Barack Obama's historic acceptance of the Democratic presidential nomination in front of about 84,000 people.

"It's a fantastic setting," Fairchild said. "The players look forward to it, and I think everybody in the state looks forward to it."

They might not have anything to look forward to after Sunday. Buffs athletic director Mike Bohn announced Friday that Colorado would exercise its option and move the 2009 game to Folsom Field in Boulder to give the Buffaloes a sixth home game.

Colorado State responded by moving the 2010 game to Fort Collins.

"We are disappointed by CU's decision as we believe the series ultimately belongs in Denver," Rams athletic director Paul Kowalczyk said. "However, in light of CU's decision to play the 2009 game in Boulder, we believe we owe it to Colorado State University, our alumni, fans, students and the city of Fort Collins to bring the 2010 game back to Hughes Stadium."

If it is the last time at Invesco, Buffs sophomore offensive lineman Ryan Miller plans to savor it.

"I have a lot of fond memories at Invesco right now, hopefully many, many more," said Miller, who is from the Denver suburb of Littleton. "This is the big show, the dance. Just walking out of the tunnel and looking up and seeing the bronco head in the end zone, it's just a surreal feeling."

Kowalczyk and Bohn are in talks to extend the series beyond that season, and if the rivalry continues, it's possible it will revert to a true home-and-home series, bypassing the state's epicenter and the largest alumni base for both schools.

Fairchild, who replaced Sonny Lubick after serving as the Buffalo Bills' offensive coordinator in 2006-07, is a huge fan of the series and its setting, where workers on Friday disassembled the giant stage and floor that covered the field Thursday night during Obama's speech.

"It is a perfect game to play," Fairchild said. "You can see two ways as far as an opener. You can get one that maybe is a little easier than going out against a BCS school. But this is a perfect game to play. This is as good a setting as there is in college football and it would be a shame if we ruined it."

The schools never faced each other during Fairchild's playing days in the late 1970s and early '80s. The series resumed in 1983 after a quarter-century dormancy.

The Buffaloes have won five of the past six games, with all six decided by less than a touchdown. Colorado won 31-28 in overtime last year.

While Rams senior quarterback Billy Farris will make his first start since his senior season at Woodlawn High School in Baton Rouge, La., he will be surrounded by one of the deepest backfields in the nation. He has a top target in senior tight end Kory Sperry, who caught three touchdown passes against the Buffs last season, one week before suffering a season-ending knee injury and petitioning for a medical redshirt.

Although they have to replace the Mountain West Conference's leading passer in Caleb Hanie, the Rams return four of their five starting offensive linemen and senior running backs Gartrell Johnson and Kyle Bell.

The Buffs started up to eight freshmen on offense late last season, and their deep recruiting class this year is led by highly touted tailback Darrell Scott, rated by many recruiting services as the top running back in the country.

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