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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, October 02,
2008



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Bigger Buffs hope for better results

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — When Colorado coach Dan Hawkins had his staff, several months ago, conduct a study of the size of the offensive and defensive lines of recent Big 12 champions, he did so with a day like Saturday in mind.

That's when No. 5 Texas makes its first visit to Folsom Field (5 p.m., FSN) since 2004, when the Longhorns pushed around a smaller CU team and won, 31-7.

Hawkins said in February 2007 that CU's study, which surveyed the previous five conference champs, concluded the Buffs had to get bigger and stronger.

Hawkins said the number of Buffs who could pull 300 pounds off the ground was 11 in 2006. That number now exceeds 70, he and strength coach Jeff Pitman confirmed.

The offensive linemen Texas lists as its possible starters for Saturday average 309.5 pounds. Its defensive line averages 272.8 pounds per man.

Pitman likes the progress.

"I think the guys have done a really good job," he said. "Even with Florida State, I thought we matched up better with those guys a lot better than we would have three years ago. We're not there yet, but I feel like the guys have done a great job.

"We're way ahead of where we were, and I think we're well on our way to where we need to be. ... They're stronger than we ever were at Boise. So in all areas, I'm pretty happy with that. We had some pretty strong teams at Boise."

CU's starting offensive line averages 301 pounds, and the defensive line is at 280.

Girth is one thing. Strength and speed are others. CU showed the strength in recent years to stand up to Georgia and Oklahoma. It remains to be seen whether the Buffs are strong enough for the Longhorns.

Hawkins said CU's strength and size are close to where he wants them, but he added there needs to be some "room for interpretation," meaning sometimes smaller players work.

Defensive tackle George Hypolite, thinking along Hawkins' lines, said, "It's not necessarily the size of the dog; it's the fight in them.

"I think two years ago, the fight wasn't there for us across the board, offense and defense," Hypolite continued. "Some of us guys, like me, are still here, but the culture has changed. We work things differently. We push through different things.

"We're stronger, running faster, doing a lot of those other things. But I think, more importantly, the attitude has just changed."

ADKINS REINSTATED: Reserve offensive lineman Ethan Adkins has been reinstated.

Suspended since Sept. 1 after he was arrested for suspicion of DUI following CU's win over Colorado State, Adkins participated in practice Tuesday and Wednesday. Hawkins said Adkins will play Saturday only in an emergency.

The redshirt freshman, who has yet to play in a game, said he's splitting his practice time between guard and tackle this week.

"Coaches said if they need me, they might use me, so be prepared," Adkins said.

"I have a whole new appreciation for playing the game. I'm glad to be back. I plan to help the team in any way I can."

EXTRA POINTS: Texas received one first-place vote in this week's USA Today/Coaches' poll. Asked if he knew where it came from, Hawkins said, "Don't know." He said he'll make his entire poll public after the season. ... Freshman running back Rodney Stewart said coaches get on him at each practice about the way he carries the football, adding that he has changed his grip. "Now I have a natural, hard grip on the football, like I hug it more," he said. "I don't swing it as much." ... CU is expecting several recruits on visits this weekend. Hawkins said the number will be "in the teens somewhere." ... Hawkins said he is not planning to use right defensive end Jason Brace, who missed Saturday's game against Florida State with a concussion. Marquez Herrod is listed as the starter in Brace's place. CU reported that its players have lost 38 games so far in 2008 due to injury or illness. That number will exceed 90 before 2008 ends.

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Sizing up the Big 12 as conference play starts

Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

Six ranked teams. Nine top quarterbacks. Twelve twitchy defensive coordinators.

That about sums up the Big 12 as league play dawns. Offenses have been as advertised, with five among the nation's top 10. Nine QBs hold efficiency ratings in the country's top 20.

How'd you like to coordinate a defense in this league?

With four teams ranked in the top seven, expectations are being exceeded. The 38-10 non-league mark, a .792 winning percentage, is the nation's best clip.

Everyone should be feeling good, right? Maybe not.

Here's a quick look at each team and a bit of what to watch over the next two months:

BAYLOR: New coach Art Briles remains bent on changing the program's culture. Signing quarterback Robert Griffin was a big, fast step in the right direction. Opening Big 12 play with Oklahoma does not help. The Bears need all the confidence they can muster.

COLORADO: Can't complain about the 3-1 mark in the non-conference. The attrition, especially on the offensive line, MUST stop, though, or this season could quickly turn sour. In recent years, CU has had a knack of standing up to the elite of the elite. (See Georgia, 2006, and Oklahoma, 2007, as examples.) With Texas looming, can the Buffs do it again?

IOWA STATE: The Cyclones have developed quite a nose for the football, entering Big 12 play with a plus-6 turnover margin. Sophomore Austen Arnaud is probably the QB of the future. Coach Gene Chizik would be wise to get him experience.

KANSAS: Kansas is averaging 473 yards per game but only 119 on the ground, which is 11th in the Big 12. QB Todd Reesing's shoulders aren't capable of carrying the whole team. How will the Jayhawks handle Texas, Oklahoma and Texas Tech, which weren't on their schedule last year? Here's one answer — not well if they can't run the ball.

KANSAS STATE: The Wildcats are a lot of things, but certainly not boring. Those 3 a.m. gassers after a loss won't soon be forgotten. Coach Ron Prince said one reason he signed so many junior college transfers was to have a veteran team around talented quarterback Josh Freeman. He has some older players, but experience is lacking.

MISSOURI: The Tigers' offense is ridiculous. Senior QB Chase Daniel is completing 76 percent of his throws. They open Big 12 play at Nebraska, where they haven't won since 1978. The Oct. 18 game at Texas, when Missouri plays in Daniel's hometown, looms bigger.

NEBRASKA: Temper, temper, Bo. That unsportsmanlike penalty late in the Virginia Tech loss was a big mistake and can't happen again. The Huskers' defense has improved. On the other hand, Missouri could expose it, and the Huskers visit Texas Tech next week. Stay tuned.

OKLAHOMA: As coach Bob Stoops said, the Sooners generally wear a pretty big bull's eye, so being No. 1 isn't that much different. Oklahoma has held the top spot 96 times, more than any other team. The Sooners can win the national title, but in the Big 12, reaching the championship game won't be easy.

OKLAHOMA STATE: The Cowboys are ranked for the first time in coach Mike Gundy's tenure, and deservedly so. The league's two leading rushers are both Cowboys — Kendall Hunter is averaging 154.5 yards a game and 7.7 a carry. QB Zac Robinson hasn't had to do much. Next week's game at Missouri should be good.

TEXAS: The Longhorns entered the year a bit unknown but are showing they're elite again. Quarterback Colt McCoy is hitting 80 percent of his passes. The defense is too fast for most teams. Texas has Oklahoma, Missouri, Oklahoma State and Texas Tech on successive weekends. If it emerges from that unbeaten, it'll be No. 1.

TEXAS A&M: The Aggies lost twice at Kyle Field in September. Times are tough in College Station. They won't go winless in Big 12 play, but they won't reach a bowl.

TEXAS TECH: Mike Leach's dating tips clip is a YouTube phenomenon. Bored? Check it out. The Red Raiders are running the ball better this year, which is good. One thing, though: What took them so long to realize they need to run the ball in the Big 12?

Patrick Ridgell's Big 12 Notes column runs every Thursday during the regular season. He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.



CU report: Texas young in secondary

By B.G. Brooks

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

Few weaknesses are easily traceable when scouring No. 5-ranked Texas, but if there is one, it might be that the Longhorns are painfully young in the secondary.

The Longhorns' best form of pass defense is their pass rush, but if Colorado's offensive line can protect quarterback **Cody Hawkins**, Buffaloes receivers believe there will be plays to be had when the teams meet Saturday at Folsom Field.

"That's what we're going to go at and try to exploit," Buffs receiver **Patrick Williams** said Wednesday. "We know there's a lot of youth back there."

Texas cornerback **Ryan Palmer** is a senior and three-year letterman, but the remaining three starters in the defensive backfield have no more than one year of experience. Both safeties, **Blake Gideon** and **Earl Thomas**, are true freshmen.

"We have our areas of youth, too," Williams said. "But wide receiver is one of the areas we feel we have a lot of experience."

Repairs needed

While the Buffs struggled in all three phases in the lopsided loss at Florida State, none was more glaring than special teams. The Buffs allowed two monster returns (one for a touchdown), shanked a short field goal and had a punt blocked that turned into a safety.

"We went to the film room and tried to figure out the reason why all the different plays busted against Florida State," said **Jalil Brown**, one of CU's top special-teams players. "We're finding ways to combat that. We're concentrating on guys staying in their lanes on kickoff returns instead of going down there and doing their own thing."

Texas return man **Quan Cosby** has blazing speed but has yet to break one, averaging 23.8 yards per kickoff return.

"We know Texas is fast, but we are, too," Brown said. "We're going to combat speed with speed."

Etc.

* Quarterback **Cody Hawkins**, who dyed his hair black for CU's "black out" game against West Virginia, let **Zachary Canaday** shave his head Monday. Canaday, a member of the Brighton Bulldogs peewee football team, is recovering from recent surgery on a brain tumor and also has a shaved head.

* After being suspended for a month, guard **Ethan Adkins** is close to returning, Dan Hawkins said, adding that receiver/return specialist **Jason Espinoza** (broken collarbone) won't be cleared to play this week.

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THE DENVER POST

cu football

Texas defense has tricks up its schemes

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BOULDER — The Texas defense is not just fast and physical. It's tricky, too.

"They do a great job of mixing things up," Colorado sophomore quarterback Cody Hawkins said Wednesday. "They mix up different fronts and different blitzes. They're athletic like Florida State. But schematically, Texas does way more stuff than Florida State."

The fifth-ranked Longhorns are first nationally in sacks (four per game), second in rushing defense, sixth in scoring defense and 26th in total defense. CU's Matt Bahr, who will be making his first career start Saturday against Texas as a replacement for offensive tackle Ryan Miller (out for the rest of the season because of a fractured fibula), said the Longhorns have shown several blitz looks.

Colorado Football

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- [Visit](#) the CU Stats Page for boxscores, Big 12 standings, team leaders and more
- [Visit](#) Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports
- [Play](#) Pick'em for the upcoming CU football game

"That's something we haven't seen yet," said Bahr, a 6-foot-4, 285-pound redshirt freshman. "That means we will have to prepare for a larger package. We have to be ready. But I really think we have a chance against those guys."

Off-target.

Although Hawkins threw three touchdown passes in last weekend's 39-21 loss to Florida State, he failed to complete 50 percent of his passes (17-of-36) for only the fourth time in 17 starts and first time this season.

"One game does not a career make," CU coach Dan Hawkins said of his son. "He's not going to be the last quarterback to have a tough day. That's part of life. When you're the quarterback and you're the head coach, you always take the brunt of the criticism. I think he's got that well in perspective."

"You're not just going to keep climbing the ladder

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every week out. There's going to be bumps in the road."

Big recruiting weekend.

More than a dozen high school seniors targeted by CU are expected to be at the game. They include three players rated four stars by Rivals.com : wide receiver Emory Blake (6-1, 194) of Austin (Texas) Stephen F. Austin, defensive tackle Edward Nuckols (6-2, 290) of San Marcos (Calif.) Mission Hills and receiver- safety Kyle Van Noy (6-3, 200) of Reno (Nev.) McQueen.

Footnotes.

Saturday's game is sold out — the first sellout at Folsom Field since the 2005 game against Nebraska, a 30-3 loss to the Cornhuskers. Seating capacity for Folsom Field is listed as 53,750. . . . CU junior defensive end Jason Brace is doubtful with the effects of a concussion. He missed the FSU game. . . . Texas junior defensive tackle Lamarr Houston, a 2005 Parade All-American for Doherty High School in Colorado Springs as a linebacker, is telling teammates that he needs about 20 tickets for family and friends.

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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college football

CU's Bahr jumps into football fire

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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BOULDER — Colorado's newest first-time starter, offensive right tackle Matt Bahr, isn't the kind to get big-headed. And the realities of college life wouldn't allow it anyway.

"I have two essays and an exam on Friday," said Bahr, a 6-foot-4, 285-pound redshirt freshman from Orange County, Calif.

Bahr replaces sophomore Ryan Miller, who suffered a season-ending fracture of his left fibula against Florida State. Bahr likes to say Saturday's game against No. 5 Texas is "just another week." But he knows this will feel different.

Bahr has not started a game since his senior year at Mission Viejo High School.

"You walk around (campus) and people that saw you on TV say, 'You got in. Good job,'" Bahr said. "My parents called me after the Florida State game, and all that kind of stuff.

"That's all great. But honestly, we just have to practice hard. I know I have some big shoes, with Ryan out. But getting better — that's what it's about."

CU coach Dan Hawkins said Bahr played well after taking over for Miller early in the second half against Florida State. Bahr didn't have much time to warm up.

"He is a smart football player," Hawkins said. "I'm sure that once he gets more reps, he'll get better. He has to get better."

Bahr said the Texas defense presents a special challenge because the Longhorns give different looks.

"That's something we haven't seen yet," Bahr said. "They have two or three different blitzes. That means we will have to prepare for a larger package.

"We have to be prepared. But I really think we have a chance against those guys."

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Bufs' Bahr ready for first start

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Wednesday, October 1, 2008

The cliches didn't work the way they're supposed to for Matt Bahr this week.

When asked about preparing for the first start of his college career against No. 5 Texas on Saturday, the Colorado redshirt freshman offensive lineman said this week would be just like any other.

He smiled a little and let his guard down when his bluff was called. After all, he had done nothing but block for extra points and field goals in two games prior to being called upon last week in the second half of a loss to Florida State after starting tackle Ryan Miller broke his leg.

This week couldn't possibly be run-of-the-mill. It has to be more intense.

"I know I have some big shoes with Ryan being gone, but just getting better, that's all it's about," Bahr said. "Obviously this week, I'm going to watch a little more film and try to do everything a little bit more, a little bit more, because I've got to be out there play one."

Bahr, a 6-foot-4, 285-pound product of a stellar high school program in Mission Viejo, Calif., was in for 30 snaps against the Seminoles and graded out at 71 percent following film review. He was happy with his performance considering he hadn't played in nearly two years.

Bahr was coached in high school by offensive line coach Scott Paffrath, who went to Missouri (2000-04). His offensive coordinator was Rob Johnson, the former Buffalo Bills quarterback.

Getting back on the field brought back some familiar feelings.

"That was an experience because there is always a heightened sense of things when you get out there compared to when you're in practice," Bahr said. "I kind of forgot about that almost because it's been so long since I've played in a game."

Bahr said his biggest mistake in his first game was failing to slide all the way out on a three-man slide call. The cornerback blitzed late and Bahr failed to pick him up, but one of his teammates did.

Bahr would be hard pressed to find a tougher assignment in his first start. He is facing a defensive front that ranks second in the nation in run defense and first in sacks. The Longhorns have sacked the quarterback 12 times in the past two games.

"I think for him the thing is go out and play like you did last week," Grimes said. "He doesn't have to do anything extra. For a young guy, I always try to emphasize to them they don't have to go out and play like Superman. They just have to play hard and play within their technique."

Notable

Redshirt freshman offensive lineman Ethan Adkins returned to practice Wednesday after serving a suspension after being arrested for driving under the influence. Adkins will not play this week. ... Dan Hawkins said the program will host a large recruiting weekend with the number of expected official visitors numbering in the teens. ... Defensive end Jason Brace will miss his second consecutive game with a concussion. ... Hawkins said he could not confirm nor deny whether he was the one voter in the USA Today Coaches' poll who voted Texas No. 1 this week.



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Hawkins, Buffs run 'gauntlet'

No. 5 Texas next foe in midst of brutal stretch

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

One-word answers are not a Dan Hawkins trademark, but they have become more common of late from the introspective Colorado football coach.

Hawkins acknowledged this week he is finally running short on quotable material nearly three years after being hired to lead the Buffs. He also might be running short on patience with reporters, who often have to ask very similar questions from week to week, and fans, who might have unrealistic expectations in Hawkins' view.

The Buffs are in the midst of a stretch of games against ranked teams and traditional powerhouses that no coach would envy. They host No. 5 Texas this week, after splitting games against West Virginia and Florida State. In the coming weeks they have No. 16 Kansas, No. 4 Missouri, No. 21 Oklahoma State, a trip to Texas A&M, and, of course, the annual rivalry with Nebraska.

"I think it's awesome that we're 3-1 and beat one of the best teams in the country with a Heisman Trophy candidate on it and people are, 'What's wrong with your football program?'" Hawkins said. "That's a good thing. But the reality is, and I don't know how many ways I can say it creatively, but it's the gauntlet. We're going through the gauntlet.

"So if you want to spend time handing out game balls 'cause you beat West Virginia or having a funeral 'cause you lost to Florida State, that's wrong. You just keep re-pooling, re-tooling, working it out."

Hawkins hasn't posted a new entry on his blog since summer time. Whether it's the Big 12 Conference media call each Monday or post-practice sessions with regular beat reporters, Hawkins had been intense and abrupt. At least until he was asked about it after his Tuesday press conference.

"At some point some of the rhetoric gets old," he said. "Forgive me here a little bit, but it's like sometimes you guys will ask the question, which I already know you already know the answer to, but it's like, 'Give me some fluff.' And I'm going, 'You've already heard the fluff.' You know what I mean? Let's just cut to the chase kind of a thing."

It's not a change in style or approach and he's not trying to prove a point or be impetuous. He is as passionate about coaching as ever, but he is tiring of what he calls "the dance."

Hawkins doesn't suffer fools. He's also not afraid to publicly correct someone he feels is wrong or simply off target. He came to Colorado from Boise State where he had occasionally challenged reporters during press conferences with questions of his own in the name of getting the facts right.

Just this week when answering a question about his quarterback's play, Hawkins pointed out that a member of the television media had failed to bring a pen to the press conference with which to take notes. His point being that no matter the line of work or the endeavor, no one is perfect.

The change in Hawkins might have been coming slowly over recent months, but an incident during his postgame radio show following a narrow victory over Eastern Washington might have exacerbated it.

After coming from behind to beat the Eagles on an interception return for a touchdown in the final minutes, Hawkins began his postgame remarks to a crowd on the suite level in Folsom Field by saying EWU was a pretty good team.

A voice from the back of the room challenged that statement with something along the lines of "No they're not," according to sources who were there.

During the live interview, Hawkins challenged the voice by asking how long the person had been coaching while looking around trying to identify the person who had spoken. He even has a term for such situations in which his intensity rises. He calls it "Getting your horns out." And it's something he encourages from his players each week.

After a moment he returned to the interview, but finished his remarks that day with another comment to the unidentified voice in the back of the room whom he referred to as "coach."

While reporters have noticed a change in Hawkins demeanor, players and assistants say they have not.

"He's always a guy who has got a lot of energy and he's always pushing us," assistant head coach and offensive line coach Jeff Grimes said. "... I think he's doing things the way he's always done it."

Hawkins has made a name for himself as a great communicator. It works well for him in recruiting, fundraising, coaching and dealing with reporters. He often uses the term "Conflama," a combination of conflict and drama, in honor of the type of story he believes media members are often pursuing.

His off-beat insights into the game and life and sometimes whimsical quotes continue to keep reporters on their toes, but Hawkins says even his unique view of college football will begin to get old at some point. He figures sooner or later we will all lose interest in his references to Gandhi, Nelson Mandela or Viktor Frankl.

Hawkins said at some point in the future he might designate an assistant coach to serve as spokesman while he focuses on coaching. Former Indiana and Texas Tech basketball coaching legend Bob Knight did just that throughout much of the final years of his coaching career.

"He's the same guy. He wears his heart on his sleeve," defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "People really don't know a lot about coach Hawk. He's just that way all the time. If he has something to tell you he will tell you. He's very energetic and you can feel it. I think he got re-energized by last game, and he, like us, we have a lot to prove this game."



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