



Colorado seniors set for Folsom finale

15 Buffs will play final home game Saturday vs. OSU

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, November 13, 2008

Five years gone. For some, just four. It has been a marathon and a sprint all at the same time.

Colorado fullback Maurice Cantrell recalls a summer day in 2004 when he and other members of the 2004 recruiting class checked in to the College Inn in Boulder preparing to report for their first training camp in black and gold. Only five of those players remain on the team today, though others exhausted their eligibility last year.

Cantrell, Patrick Williams, Daniel Sanders, Ryan Walters and Brad Jones. They are as close as brothers.

Cantrell was a linebacker then with hopes of crushing running backs and quarterbacks and leading the team in tackles for coach Gary Barnett. When he plays his final home game at Folsom Field on Saturday against No. 13 Oklahoma State, he will be blocking for running backs and quarterbacks and hoping coach Dan Hawkins, a former fullback himself, will give him a chance to get his hands on the ball a time or two.

The journey has been arduous but special for a senior class defined by a collective steadiness in handling its work and a family feel on and off the field. Not every senior class is close, and most certainly aren't as a tight as these 15 Buffs.

"Camaraderie," Cantrell said when asked what defines the group. "All the seniors, especially the class of 2004, we definitely went through a lot. Coaching changes, redshirting. We lean on each other a lot. I don't know the next time I'll be around this many guys who are my close friends."

The majority of the group came to CU from California, but there are a few sprinkled in from others parts of the country. Linebacker Brad Jones came to Boulder from outside Detroit in East Lansing, Mich. He remains the same fun-loving young man he was when he arrived, but he is changed, too, by the influences of friendships built on and off the football field.

"I can literally say that every single guy who is a senior this year is one of my closest friends," Jones said.

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins piled praise on the first two groups of seniors he has coached in Boulder the past two years. He hasn't been the same in public with this group, perhaps, because he knows they don't need it. Hawkins appreciates their maturity and describes them as quiet leaders who play hurt and do whatever is asked of them.

"I think in any organization, consistency is a big, big deal and so many of those guys, to me, are like

that. ... You know what you're getting every day," Hawkins said.

While Cantrell takes a business-as-usual approach to his final home game, other CU seniors admit they are likely to be emotional about their final 60 minutes on Folsom Field.

"I've thought a lot about it," Lucas said. "Basically, I just want to go out in style, making big plays and being remembered for the good things I've done.

"I have no regrets. I've gone through my whole college career doing everything I always wanted to do and doing everything right. I'm happy about this."

The senior class has made its biggest impact on defense, where seven of its members start or play on a regular basis. Free safety Ryan Walters leads the team in tackles. Linebacker Brad Jones leads the team in sacks. Linemen George Hypolite, Brandon Nicolas and Maurice Lucas have played a majority of the snaps over the past three seasons together and safety D.J. Dykes made the game-saving tackle in a win just last week.

"Everybody in this senior class brings something different. Everybody has their own little quirk that they bring to the table," Jones said. "We've played together so long, it's like we work very, very well together. It's like the United States. It's like we're a melting pot."

Cantrell, center Dan Sanders and wide receivers Cody Crawford and Patrick Williams are the only regular contributors on offense, where the season has been a long with a lot of building moments for younger players.

The 2008 senior class hopes to play its final game together in December in a bowl game in Texas, Louisiana or maybe even Arizona. The Buffs have to find a way to win one of their final two games to make it happen.

"We've got two games promised and we're working on that third one," Williams said.

One of those seniors will be summoned to the area just behind the home bench after Saturday's game where fans in section 119 will present him the Buffalo Heart Award. The honor has been given to one player every year since 1998. Fans vote for the player who exemplifies heart, grit, determination and desire on and off the field.

The award is not confined to seniors, but always seems to be given to one after the final home game of his career. Players such as Jordon Dizon, Joel Klatt and Cortlen Johnson have been honored in the past, and this group of seniors has plenty of worthy candidates.

Longtime CU fan Pat Grimes and several friends founded the award in 1998 and pay for the cost (usually about \$17) each year.

"I hope it makes that final walk back into the locker room a good one," Grimes once said.



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Sumler plays thankless role for Hawkins' Buffs

Tailback fills void as third-down back, pass protector

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, November 13, 2008

Glory hounds need not apply for Demetrius Sumler's job.

When this college football season started, Colorado coaches were unsure who might fill the big shoes left by former running back Byron Ellis, who served with distinction in the role of third-down back/pass protector.

Sumler figured to be the guy as the most experienced running back on the roster, but it's a demanding job and some find out the hard way they aren't suited for it.

"When you have someone who is very multiple and can do a lot of things and can handle it mentally and physically, that's really awesome," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "He is kind of subordinating his ego to some freshmen, and figuring out, 'Hey, how can I help the team?'"

The job requires an intelligent player who is dedicated to film study. Slackers in the film room in the middle of the week get exposed on Saturdays.

Pass blocking as a running back looks easy enough from the cheap seats and on television, but what many don't appreciate is how dramatically the job changes from week to week.

What coaches teach one week for one opponent can be completely thrown out the window the next, depending on the offensive schemes and tendencies of different opponents.

Sumler is the Buffs fourth leading rusher and fifth leading receiver this year and has earned 11 first downs, six on the ground and five through the air. He also plays a big part in several special teams units.

But what he does in pass protection might be most valuable to the team, particularly in a season in which the offensive line has struggled mightily to get defenders blocked.

Sumler played well last week during a second-half rally to beat Iowa State.

"That was one of the first things they told me when I came here as a freshman is you've got to work on pass blocking," Sumler said. "It's just something I was always striving to get better in.

"Coming in to this year I knew we were going to have a lot of young guys playing, and I was the most experienced guy coming back and knew the most. So I knew I was going to have to be the guy to step up."

Notable

CU is the only school in the nation to have three freshmen leading a particular statistical category. Freshman running backs Rodney Stewart and Darrell Scott are the Buffs' top two rushers followed by quarterback Tyler Hansen. ...

Colorado received the eighth known commitment for the 2009 recruiting class from Ayodeji Olatoye, a 6-foot, 180-pound wide receiver and defensive back from Scioto High School in Dublin, Ohio. Olatoye was one of seven recruits who made official visits to CU last weekend. ...

CU is expecting between 46,000 and 48,000 fans for Saturday's game.



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Colorado DL Nicolas quietly gets job done

Few know senior who may play in NFL

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, November 13, 2008

By the time he takes off his No. 94 jersey for the final time later this year, Colorado defensive tackle Brandon Nicolas will have likely joined a special group of players in the program's history.

Not many guys can say they've been on the field in any college football program for more than 2,000 plays in a career.

Nicolas has been a regular contributor to the Buff defense for three years now since transferring to Boulder from Notre Dame in 2005. Plenty of CU fans know of Nicolas. They see him on game days, often eating double teams and freeing up teammates to make tackles or pressure the passer.

But few outside the program and even some on the inside don't know much about the person beneath the gold helmet.

During coach Dan Hawkins' weekly press conference Tuesday, the possibility was mentioned of Nicolas completing his career without anyone in the media really getting to know him.

"Us too," Hawkins said with a smile. "He is very quiet, very seldom says a thing, says a word, but also very steady."

"He's always there. He's always rolling. He's always going. He's always producing. You can win a lot of games with guys like that just cause he's so steady, so rock solid in the weight room, never has any off days. In the end, you don't want, necessarily, a bunch of guys who are screaming mimis. You want those guys who are a man's man."

For three seasons now, Nicolas has been the ying to George Hypolite's yang on the defensive line. If Hypolite is fire, Nicolas is ice.

They play side by side and are good friends, but in many ways they couldn't be more different.

Hypolite is regularly requested for interviews and will wax about almost any topic put to him. There are times Nicolas is asked questions and he shrugs.

"I never really talked a lot," Nicolas said. "If I have something to say, I'll say it. I'm just kind of quiet I guess."

"I'll talk more if something fires me up on the field or if I feel like I have to say something."

Nicolas will play his final home game Saturday against a heavyweight opponent. Oklahoma State comes to town ranked No. 13 in the latest Bowl Championship Series standings and coaches poll.

The Cowboys present multiple challenges for Nicolas and the CU defense, with the top rushing attack in the conference, as well as top talent sprinkled throughout the passing game.

The CU defense might need its best game of the season to win and earn bowl eligibility.

Nicolas, who has played 556 snaps and made 27 tackles this season, said he's looking forward to the challenge. His parents will be in the stands to see it and next month they will watch him graduate with an economics degree.

They will be on the field before the game taking part in the annual Senior Day ceremony where members of the senior class and their families are introduced to the crowd.

Nicolas wasn't willing to settle on just one when asked this week to name a favorite moment from his time in the program. And maybe it hasn't come yet.

"The wins," he said finally. "The fun we have here. When coach Hawk came here, we had a lot more fun I think in practice. The big wins, the teammates. I wouldn't say there was one moment. You could say each win was a big moment, but I like them all."

Every team needs glue guys, players who are respected throughout the locker room and who are counted on both on and off the field. Nicolas seems to be one of them in the Buffs' locker room.

While Hypolite has played next to him for three years, defensive end Maurice Lucas and linebacker Brad Jones also have been there. Both consider Nicolas a trusted friend. Jones is so sure about that friendship he doesn't mind busting on his buddy in public.

When asked this week what comes to mind when he thinks of Nicolas, Jones said this about the Buffs' 290-pound nose tackle.

"I think about his belly," Jones said. "Honestly, that's the first thing that comes to mind. Since I always talk about it to him, to his face, rub on it, punch him in it. Yeah, definitely his stomach."

Lucas took a more serious approach to the inquiry but he answered just as quickly as Jones. He said Nicolas is the teammate he would call if he really needed help at any time of day.

"He's the person you can count on," Lucas said. "You need something done, he's the person you can look to to get it done. That's the kind of guy he is. He's always a go-to guy."

Nicolas is one the few members of the senior class who could get an opportunity to make a roster in the National Football League. He would like to continue butting heads with opponents and cracking jokes with teammates, but if his football days end in Boulder, he won't leave them behind with regrets.

"It's weird I guess. It's the last home game," he said. "That sounds really weird. You want to play a great game. I think every senior is going to want to go out there and play a great game. We want to win the game for sure, and have a good showing."

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colorado

Bufs finally able to lay kudos on O-line

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — It wasn't just anyone's imagination, Colorado offensive line coach Jeff Grimes said. His group did take a step forward in the second half of CU's 28-24 victory over Iowa State on Saturday.

Consistent line play, both in pass protection and run blocking, had been lacking since Colorado lost two starters early in the season. Freshman offensive guard Max Tuioti-Mariner suffered a torn ACL in practice on Sept. 22. Five days later, in a loss at Florida State, sophomore right tackle Ryan Miller fractured a fibula.

Things clicked against Iowa State, which has the worst defense in the Big 12. The Buffaloes yielded just one sack, and none in the second half when sophomore quarterback Cody Hawkins came off the bench and threw for 226 yards and a career-best four touchdowns to lead the comeback.

Colorado Football

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CU freshman tailback Darrell Scott had his best day, with 87 yards on 19 carries.

"I think (the offensive line) gained some confidence, particularly when we operated in the clutch mode," Grimes said. "We were throwing it almost every down. (Iowa State) knew it, and our guys did a good job of protecting Cody."

Colorado also allowed just one sack a week earlier against Texas A&M. But during a five-game stretch before that, opposing defenses averaged 3.2 sacks per game.

Saturday's opponent, No. 11 Oklahoma State, is more athletic than Iowa State on defense and tends to mix things up more.

"They're good; I don't see any weaknesses," Grimes said of the Cowboys' defense. "They do a lot of different things and bring a lot of different blitzes. It will be a challenge for us, not just physically, but making sure we identify who we need to block."

Kicking derby.

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THE DENVER POST

CU special-teams coach Kent Riddle said the Buffs may try to include a place-kicker in the 2009 recruiting class. Whether it will be a scholarship player or a walk-on depends on overall roster needs, the coach said.

Riddle has tried out several students who offered to kick, including the sports/news director for the campus radio station. The tryouts did not provide a solution, and Riddle said sophomore Aric Goodman will handle field-goal responsibilities Saturday.

Footnotes.

According to Rivals.com, Colorado has received an oral commitment from Deji Olatoye, a 6-foot-2, 180-pound defensive back from Dublin (Ohio) Scioto High School in suburban Columbus. Olatoye visited CU last weekend. . . . If oral commitments hold, CU already has bagged more recruits from Texas (three) than last year's class (two). The latest is Nate Bonsu (6-2, 265 pounds), a defensive lineman from Allen. . . . Colorado has a "four tickets for \$80" offer on CUbuffs.com.

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Rocky Mountain News

CU report: Dykes, Brown each playing with broken hand

By **Paul Willis**, Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

Published November 12, 2008 at 7:48 p.m.

At least they aren't receivers.

CU defensive backs **Cha'pelle Brown** and **D.J. Dykes** each have been playing with a broken hand and will continue to do so Saturday against Oklahoma State.

Brown had to be prodded to talk about his, insisting it's just a finger on his left hand and "it's good."

The starting cornerback said he initially injured the digit in the second quarter of the Texas A&M game Nov. 1.

"It isn't too bad; I can play through it," Brown said. "My adrenaline's been going, so I really don't feel anything until after the game. I don't even think about it."

Brown wore padding on his left hand Saturday in a 28-24 win against Iowa State and had a normal workload. Dykes, who combined with Brown on the game-closing goal-line stop, apparently broke a finger during the game.

Secondary coach **Greg Brown** said an X-ray

indicated the finger looked like a "broken golf tee."

High acclaim

Oklahoma State quarterback **Zac Robinson**, a Chatfield High School graduate, last week was named one of 15 finalists for the Maxwell Award, given to the college player of the year.

Oklahoma State's **Mike Gundy** was named one of 15 finalists for the George Munger Award, given to the nation's top coach.

Etc.

* CU junior defensive end **Jason Brace**'s season is over. He still is experiencing effects from a concussion.

* CU kicker **Jameson Davis** likely will not attempt another field goal this season, though he will continue to kick off. Davis' left knee will require surgery during the offseason and placekicking adds additional strain. He was 1-for-3 on field goals, including two misses against Iowa State.

* The Buffs received a commitment from athlete/defensive back **Deji Olatoye**, a 6-foot-2, 180-pounder from Scioto High School in Dublin, Ohio, according to Rivals.com. Olatoye, who also had scholarship offers from Villanova, Ohio and Eastern Washington, is CU's eighth known 2009 commitment.

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