



# Behrens ready for return home

## Buff grew up in Nebraska, but chose CU over NU

By Ryan Thorburn

Thursday, November 20, 2008

From the neck down, Jake Behrens is a prototypical fullback.

He's a 6-foot-0, 235-pound, tackling dummy who has a special place in Dan Hawkins' heart because Colorado's head coach used to play the position back in the day.

"He coaches us up sometimes and gives us advice," Behrens said. "But a lot of it just comes down to wanting to hit that guy harder than he wants to hit you."

One week from today Behrens -- who grew up in Omaha -- will get a chance to hit some familiar faces when CU plays Nebraska at Memorial Stadium.

Gary Barnett and assistant coach Shawn Simms followed the recruiting trail into enemy territory to court Behrens after his junior season at Millard North High School. Bill Callahan didn't show up until his senior year when he was named the Gatorade Player of the Year in Nebraska after rushing for 1,203 yards and nine touchdowns with 60 tackles.

Behrens decided to take the road less traveled and came to Boulder. He is the first Nebraska high school recruit to sign with the Buffs and actually enroll at CU since Dean Davis (Scottsbluff) in 1984.

"I wanted to explore all of my options and kind of get out of Nebraska in a way, too. I had been there my whole life," Behrens said. "CU is a great school and there is great tradition here and I loved it out here."

Buffs fans would say: Smart guy. And in this case they would be right.

Behrens -- who boasted a perfect 4.0 grade point average in high school (scoring 1280 on the SAT) and piled up 24 college credits before his first practice in 2005 -- plans to leave CU with a bachelor's degree in business finance and a master's in accounting.

The redshirt junior attended a finance seminar in London, which gave him a chance to talk to some of the world's prominent economists and hedge fund managers.

So, future Wall Street wizard, when is the stock market going to stop hemorrhaging?

"It's not too bad for me. I want it to be rock bottom once I get out of college," Behrens said. "But it's got to go up sooner or later. We've got some problems obviously that have to be fixed."

CU's offensive numbers aren't much better. The team is last in the Big 12 in scoring (19.2 ppg.), 10th in

rushing (132.0 ypg.) and 11th in passing (189.0 ypg.).

Behrens, like the coaching staff, believes the program is destined for great things next season with a healthier offensive line and more experienced versions of Darrell Scott, Rodney Stewart and Demetrius Sumler following him into the line of scrimmage.

"We've been able to move the ball on almost everybody and we have just been killing ourselves on a lot of drives with a penalty here or a dropped pass there," Behrens said. "I think maybe a little bit more experience will help us so we can finish drives and do it every time without having that one play killing a drive."

Buff quarterback Cody Hawkins is a believer in Behrens' abilities.

"He's an interesting type of fullback," Hawkins said. "He's very athletic. He can make a lot of plays and he's strong enough and physical enough that you can do the smashmouth stuff and you can get creative with him. I think he's a guy who has an awesome attitude about it. He's in there always learning and always doing what the coaches ask of him."

Behrens has 12 receptions for 75 yards and two touchdowns this season. But despite Hawkins' affinity for the position, not a single carry during his CU career.

How sweet would it be for this Omaha kid to break off a big one at Memorial Stadium?

"I just do what I'm told and if I'm lucky maybe they'll throw something in for me some time," Behrens said. "I'll just try and make the most of the opportunities when I do touch the ball."



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## Hansen OK with playing in 2008

Denver Post Wire Services

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QB Tyler Hansen believes playing this season will help him in the long run.  
( David Zalubowski, The Associated Press )

BOULDER — No regrets.

That's what Colorado freshman quarterback Tyler Hansen said this week about agreeing to discard his redshirt midway through the season.

Hansen started in two games and played in two others. But sophomore Cody Hawkins took every snap Saturday against Oklahoma State and already has been named the starter for Colorado's final regular-season game against Nebraska on Nov. 28.

"I have absolutely no regrets about playing this year," Hansen said. "I did it because I wanted to help the team out. I'm getting a lot of experience. Being in the fire, you learn more. That's going to help me in the long run."

Offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich agreed.

"There are certainly no regrets from our standpoint,"

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Helfrich said. "Tyler has gained so much experience — what the game looks like in real speed, and having that in your memory bank, and to be able to do it again. That's different than what you'll face in practice, even in a live scrimmage."

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Helfrich said the battle in spring drills for the 2009 starting quarterback job likely will be wide open. Helfrich said redshirt freshman Matt Ballenger also will be in the competition.

"There's no reason that it will be 1-2-3, in any order, going into the spring," Helfrich said.

## Pelini's imprint impressive.

Having reviewed Nebraska game films, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins said new Cornhuskers coach Bo Pelini and his staff "have done a nice job" this fall.

"He's got them playing hard . . . and they've continually gotten better," Hawkins said.

One difference Hawkins noticed is a streamlining of the offense, which was said to be highly complicated under former Nebraska coach Bill Callahan and may have caused some confusion at times.

## Preventative measures.

The arrest of reserve linebacker Nate Vaiomounga for allegedly stealing a purse near an on-campus dormitory and his dismissal from the team this week have convinced CU athletic director Mike Bohn that further measures "at the grassroots level" are needed to help student-athletes cope with everyday challenges.

"We have a lengthy list of investments that we're making, and hope to have a lot of those implemented by next semester," Bohn said.

One of those investments is expected to be the addition of a trained professional such as a psychologist.

## No more scalpels, please

Redshirting cornerback Benjamin Burney is close to throwing away the wrap on his left wrist, which was surgically repaired Sept. 30.

That's the last of five offseason surgeries for Burney, a junior starter in 2007. In order, Burney had surgery on his right knee, left shoulder, right shoulder, right wrist and left wrist.

All were the result of football injuries, including some possibly dating to his precollege days, he said.

"I wanted to get them all done so I could get back as soon as possible," Burney said this week. "I think I'll be ready for spring (drills), but we'll see how the recovery goes."

*Tom Kensler, The Denver Post*

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Longmont, Colorado  
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## **Buffs' CB waiting for spring**

*By Patrick Ridgell  
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Ben Burney's surgeries are finally complete.

The cornerback would have been a senior for Colorado in 2008 had he been healthy enough to play. From January to September, Burney had five surgeries to fix assorted injuries he suffered over the previous years. They rendered him unable to play in 2008, but they were performed with the intention of making him strong and healthy for 2009. He's focused on preparing for spring drills, for which he thinks he'll be ready.

"I'm working on getting my weight back and getting my strength back," Burney said.



Burney

That'll be a challenge. Burney's season away from the football field included surgeries to both shoulders, both wrists and one knee. Regaining strength, especially in his upper body, will be a priority in the coming months.

"There's always a concern, but he's also got time," defensive backs coach Greg Brown said. "He's working with an excellent strength staff."

Burney started all 13 games last year and tied for the defense's lead with 796 snaps. Despite being so beat up, he was in on all but 34 of the defense's plays in 2007. He was one of eight Buffs to start every game.

His absence has been noticeable at times. Starting free safety Ryan Walters said CU has missed Burney's experience and versatility.

Burney has had to seek ways off the field to improve as a player.

"All of Ben's improvement right now has to take place mentally and in the film room," Brown said. "He's been watching a great deal of film and working with us and making sure he's up to date on the newer schemes that have been installed since last year when he played.

"Right now it's all about him getting healthy, getting healed. As soon as he gets the total green light from the medical staff, he'll get back into the weights and running."

Burney will be a fifth-year senior in 2009. He'll add experience to a secondary that will replace its starting safeties but will have several cornerbacks who played extensively in 2008.

"I plan on playing corner, because that's what I played last year," Burney said. "I'll do whatever the team needs."

Other returning cornerbacks in 2009 include Cha'pelle Brown, Jimmy Smith and Jalil Brown. CU will replace starting senior safeties D.J. Dykes and Walters next season. Patrick Mahnke and Anthony Perkins filled in for them when both couldn't play last week against Oklahoma State.

Burney has played some safety, including two starts at free safety in 2006, but Greg Brown wants him as a corner next year. For the coach, the more corners, the better.

"That's a nice problem to have," he said.

**NELSON LOOKS AHEAD:** Nick Nelson came to CU two summers ago as a junior college transfer with his sights set on the starting quarterback job. He didn't win it, and the senior has played sparingly during his time in Boulder.

In fact, he hasn't taken a snap in 2008. Still, coaches have lauded Nelson for doing what's best for the team.

Nelson said jogging onto the field last Saturday when the program honored its seniors, and greeting his family, was not easy. He said he's fine with how things turned out.

"You don't always get what you want or what you think you deserve," Nelson said. "I learned a lot on how to deal with adversity, and I've grown up a lot as a person. I've made a lot of great friends, and life's about more than football.

"When I first learned I wasn't going to be the guy, that's going to be tough for anyone. I worked through it, and the coaching staff was really great, and all the guys were helpful and backed me up. It wasn't too hard for too long."

Nelson said he'll graduate next summer in sociology before returning home to California, where he has "a couple of opportunities" for work waiting. He might coach football and baseball at the high school he attended, Tesoro, or he might pursue a banking job.

**EXTRA POINTS:** Head coach Dan Hawkins did not talk with reporters following Thursday's practice. The Buffs are taking today off before holding a "mock game" Saturday at Folsom Field that's closed to the public. They play at Nebraska next Friday (1:30 p.m., ABC). ... Offensive tackle Sione Tau, out for 2008 after being declared academically ineligible last summer, said he's doing "way better" with his grades. He said he expects to compete for a spot on the line in spring drills and to be eligible in 2009.

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# Rocky Mountain News

## CU report: Not the same Huskers

By **B.G. Brooks**, Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

Published November 20, 2008 at 8:24 p.m.

When the Buffaloes offensive coaches compare tape of the 2007 and 2008 Nebraska defenses, they quickly reach a consensus: Someone turned on the Cornhuskers' motor this season.

That someone is first-year coach **Bo Pelini**, a fiery former defensive coordinator (Oklahoma, Louisiana State) who apparently has delivered on a Day 1 pledge to Nebraska fans.

CU running game coordinator/ offensive line coach **Jeff Grimes** only knows Pelini by what he has seen on tape, but Grimes is able to say with certainty, "I'm sure he went in there and said, 'Hey, we've got to get back to the fundamentals of defense - playing hard and playing physical.' "

Grimes said Nebraska's 2007 defense, which ended a calamitous season by allowing 65 points to CU in the final game, showed multiple looks (blitzes, coverages) but ended up being vulnerable.

"This year, it looks like they're putting a lot more pressure on their defensive linemen to get to the quarterback," Grimes said, noting the Cornhuskers' front is the defense's strength.

"They definitely still blitz, but they're more in a

four-man rush and really try hard to rely on that front to stop the run . . . they're very stout. Those defensive tackles are physical and playing a lot harder this year - especially (tackle **Ndamukong) Suh**. He's way more physical this year, and we see a lot more consistency in their (overall) effort.

"It looks different than it did last year."

### Say bye, say hello rest

Some coaches are lukewarm toward bye weeks, particularly if their offenses are clicking and might be in danger of losing any rhythm.

That isn't the case with the Buffs. In fact, the time off between games can't do anything but help CU on several fronts.

More practice for an offense still struggling to find itself can't hurt. And additional time for healing purposes is welcome.

"It gives both teams a chance to heal up a little bit, which is probably a good thing," coach **Dan Hawkins** said.

The Buffs practiced Thursday. They take today off, have game-condition work Saturday at Folsom Field, then take Sunday off.

Thanksgiving break begins today at the end of classes.

### Numbers game

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340**rushing yards** against Kansas State were Nebraska's most in a Big 12 game since 2002 (352 against Kansas).

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