



# CU defense must be ready for Huskers

## Nebraska offense still rolling after big game against Buffs last year

By Ryan Thorburn

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Last year Jimmy Smith was a part of a defense that allowed 28 first downs, 51 points, 484 passing yards and 610 total yards of offense to Nebraska.

He was also the hero for Colorado after a stunning victory.

Smith returned a Joe Ganz pass for a 31-yard touchdown on the Cornhuskers' first possession of the second half to completely change the momentum of the game and postseason fate of the Buffs.

Before the season-altering play, Nebraska had silenced the Folsom Field crowd (save those wearing red) by turning a 17-7 deficit into a 35-24 halftime lead.

"It was bad on defense," Smith recalled.

And then Smith, a redshirt freshman who was subbing for injured All-American cornerback Terrence Wheatley, took his first career pick to the house and opened the floodgates.

Lionel Harris intercepted Ganz's next pass to set up a touchdown, Alonzo Barrett blocked a punt to set up another touchdown, and the Buffs -- who had been outscored 123-59 in the third quarter last season -- blanked the Huskers 20-0 in the third quarter en route to the 65-51 victory.

Bill Callahan was fired after the game, and Dan Hawkins started preparing for the Independence Bowl.

"You're never totally surprised when things happen," Hawkins said when asked about the 2007 CU-Nebraska shootout during his weekly press conference on Monday. "When you have a few big plays in a row, like we did ... you get some momentum. As you see throughout the rest of college football, those things can happen a little bit that way."

CU finished with 277 yards rushing and 241 yards passing. Unfortunately for the Buffs, only one team picked up this fall where it left off in last year's regular-season finale.

Entering Friday's rematch at Memorial Stadium, CU is ranked 91st nationally in total offense (321.0 ypg) and 105th in scoring offense (19.2 ppg). Nebraska is 9th in total offense (462.9 ypg) and 18th in scoring offense (35.8 ppg).

The Big 12 offenses led by Sam Bradford, Colt McCoy, Chase Daniel and Graham Harrell get most of

the national attention. But the Buffs seem to respect what Ganz and Co. have been able to accomplish under the guidance of offensive coordinator Shawn Watson, who was calling the plays at CU in 2001 during the famous 62-36 game.

"They remind me of the (San Antonio) Spurs," Smith said of Nebraska's offense. "They just know what to do. Everybody is just trained. All of their routes are precise and they run block perfectly. You have to make plays to stop them. ...

"I think both defenses have improved. I think our defense has really improved because it's our third year in the system and everyone knows what to do. I think we're really prepared for this game, both mentally and schematically."

Just like last year, however, CU's defense believes it will have to force some mistakes by the Huskers to pull off the victory. The good news on that front is Nebraska ranks last in the Big 12 and 110th nationally in turnover margin (-1.09).

"I think it's going to come down to turnovers and whoever wants it more," Smith said. "Everybody's heart has to be in it and everyone has to have a chip on their shoulder."

Smith laughed when asked if he thought this was a rivalry game.

"You can't go near Dal Ward with red on," he said. "I have a pair of red shoes and they cuss me out every time I wear them. I have a red car and they cuss me out every time they see me in it. It's a big-time rivalry for us. I'm looking at it as a rivalry, but I'm also looking at it as I want to go to a bowl game. And that's more important to me right now."

The Buffs (5-6) have to win to continue their season. The Huskers (7-4) are looking to put an exclamation point on Bo Pelini's first season as head coach.

Last year Jimmy Smith didn't know how big this game was until he became a part of its history.

"I remember in the locker room the seniors were crying before the game," he said. "And we knew we had to come up with some big plays to win it."



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# Woelk: Don't worry, Buffs know NU game is important

By Neill Woelk

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Certain portions of Colorado football fans are apparently a tad upset with CU coach Dan Hawkins' philosophy of treating the Nebraska game, in the words of D-lineman George Hypolite, in a "business as usual" manner.

One former Buff player (who shall remain unnamed) even went as far as to drop an e-mail to the Camera suggesting, "You may think Nebraska is like any other game, but if you lose to Nebraska and finish at 50/50 or less, then we will have a new coach at Colorado that understands the importance of beating Nebraska."

My how time has fogged this former player's memory. If he and his teammates had been held to the same standard, they would have gotten a couple of coaches fired.

Hawk already has one more win over NU than this player experienced in his four years at Colorado -- and several years before and after.

Remember, Colorado once lost 18 in a row to the Huskers. After Eddie Crowder defeated Nebraska in 1967, CU didn't win a game in the series again until 1986, when Bill McCartney ended the losing streak in his fifth year in Boulder.

That's a span that included the last six years of Eddie Crowder's stay, all five years of the Bill Mallory era, three years of Chuck Fairbanks and the first four years of McCartney's regime.

All of those coaches may have understood the importance of beating Nebraska -- but it certainly didn't translate into too many victories.

Speaking of McCartney, it's also worth remembering that McCartney didn't actually declare NU as Colorado's "rival" when he arrived in Boulder. Rather, McCartney said Nebraska was the program Colorado should aspire to emulate. Mac wanted a standard by which to measure the Buffs, and he chose what was then one of the best programs in the nation.

Subsequently, he set the bar as high as possible and challenged the Buffs to reach it. That's where the "rivalry" began.

But circumstances are different today.

Let's be honest: If you were going to pick a program in the Big 12 to emulate, a program to use as a measuring stick, the Huskers would be pretty far down that list.

You'd start with Texas and Oklahoma. You'd continue with Missouri. Even after that, there are other programs that might be a better model of success than Nebraska over the last five years.

Nebraska has actually been the picture of mediocrity over that span. Since the beginning of 2004, NU has a 34-26 record, including a 19-20 mark in the Big 12.

Heck, even Kansas actually has a better overall record in that span (35-25) -- and not many folks in black and gold are clamoring to make Kansas CU's new rival.

Believe me, nobody in the Dal Ward Center today is underestimating the importance of the Nebraska game. Nobody is suggesting that playing Nebraska is the same as playing Eastern Washington. The players and coaches know who Nebraska is, and very much want to win.

But in all honesty, beating Nebraska these days doesn't carry the same status that it did even six or seven years ago. It is in no way, shape or form a measuring stick of playing against the best.

Rather, the last few years it's become a way for Colorado to salvage a season -- and that's not what CU should be pursuing as an "end all."

The Huskers may indeed be an upper-tier team again someday. This year, though, they have just one victory -- against Kansas -- that would be considered a "quality" win. Otherwise, they're a team also trying to catch the big boys in the Big 12.

Fans may want Dan Hawkins to circle this game in red. But truth is, the Buffs shouldn't be satisfied with this being their biggest game of the year. McCartney set his sights on the best team in the conference -- today's Buffs should do the same.

Simply, lending a manufactured air of "do or die" to a slightly better-than-average Big 12 team is a sense of desperation that isn't necessary.

Save that attitude for the true red-letter affairs.



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college football

## CU: Secondary ailing vs. Huskers

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Updated: 11/24/2008 08:19:04 PM MST



Oklahoma State's Dez Bryant, left, is stopped by Colorado defensive back Anthony Perkins on Nov. 15. (AP | David Zalubowski)

On Friday in Lincoln, Colorado must go without at least one starting safety against a Nebraska passing attack that's clicking late in the season.

CU announced Monday that the college career of senior safety D.J. Dykes has ended. The team's sixth-leading tackler (55), Dykes was ruled out for the remainder of the season with an undisclosed illness. That would include a potential postseason game, but the Buffaloes (5-6, 2-5 Big 12) must

defeat Nebraska (7-4, 4-3) to become bowl eligible.

Anthony Perkins, a redshirt freshman, started at strong safety in place of Dykes in the last game, against Oklahoma State, and is expected to do so again on Friday.

Also, the status of starting free safety Ryan Walters remains unclear, CU coach

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Dan Hawkins said during his weekly media luncheon. Walters, a senior captain, suffered a high ankle sprain while making a tackle during Oklahoma State's first offensive play from scrimmage. Patrick Mahnke, a true-freshman from Mountain Vista High School, took Walters' place for the remainder of the game.

"That's been kind of the nature of the season (for Colorado) and the nature of football," Hawkins said. "You've just got to pick it up and roll with it."

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"I thought those young guys (Perkins and Mahnke) have come along. They played pretty well against Okie State. And Anthony (Perkins) played pretty well when he subbed against West Virginia.

"We lose some experience there, but those young guys are getting some snaps."

Nebraska senior quarterback Joe Ganz ranks 11th nationally in passing yards per game (282.09) and total passing yards (3,103). In the last two games, victories over Kansas and Kansas State, Ganz has combined for 594 yards passing and five touchdowns.

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# Rocky Mountain News

## CU's Hawkins won't forget year

### Loss of nine players to injury 'amazing'

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

Published November 24, 2008 at 11:13 p.m.

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David Zalubowski / Associated Press/David Zalubowski / Associated Press

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins has done a lot of soul-searching this season as nine season-ending injuries and three academic disqualifications have challenged the Buffaloes.

Regardless of the outcome of his team's final regular-season game Friday at Nebraska, Colorado Buffaloes coach Dan Hawkins will reflect on the 2008 season as perhaps the most challenging of his career.

Not only that, Hawkins conceded Monday, "This whole venture has been a challenging thing for coach 'Hawk' - but a good one. Again, that's why I came (to CU).

"I knew it wasn't going to be easy. I knew there were going to be a lot of curveballs and a lot of testing going on. That's part of throwing yourself in the fire."

After his five Boise State teams suffered only 11 losses, Hawkins' foray into the Big 12 Conference and a more difficult nonleague schedule has resulted in 23 losses (13 wins) in nearly three full seasons at CU.

But this season, mainly because of the mounting injury toll, has been unlike any other for Hawkins, who in October signed a two-year contract extension that goes through the 2012 season.

"In terms of (players) being injured, I can't ever remember (a similar year)," he said. "We've lost very few guys during the year - ever. To lose this

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# Rocky Mountain News

many guys permanently is pretty amazing really."

Add senior safety D.J. Dykes to the list of those permanently scratched. Held out of the West Virginia and Oklahoma State games for what the school called an "undisclosed illness," Dykes won't play this week for what CU termed "health issues."

Also, senior safety Ryan Walters (high ankle sprain, knee) was listed on CU's game-week news release as questionable. Walters has worn a protective boot and not practiced since being injured on his first play against Oklahoma State.

As a result of losing nine players for the season to injury and three more to academic ineligibility, Hawkins said character lessons continue to be taught to himself, his staff and players.

"When you have the kind of mettle to be able to show up every day and continue to strive and work . . . it has some good moments," he said. "And to not succumb to the pressures of failing, I mean, that's huge stuff. You learn a lot."

He also contended the absence of expected contributors from the lineup has ramped up the creativity shown by his assistants: "The staff really has been amazingly creative every week about trying to come up with new ways to block things and move the football."

Nevertheless, CU remains last in the Big 12 in the major statistical offensive categories.

**SCOTT UPDATE:** Tailback Darrell Scott (ankle) is

listed as day to day for Nebraska. Hawkins said the highly touted freshman's confidence and speed should develop further as he gets healthier and gets more repetitions in practices and games.

"It's a natural occurrence of several factors," Hawkins said. "The more experience he gets, the healthier he gets, the faster he's going to be."

**NO BIG RED BREAK:** From 2009 to 2012, as CU's schedule stands, the Buffs will not have their traditional open week before playing the Cornhuskers.

And with the game still being scheduled on the Friday after Thanksgiving - that date also could change - Colorado will face preparation time of five or six days.

Hawkins said he likes the Friday-after-Thanksgiving format: "It's very traditional . . . something that everybody looked forward to, and from that standpoint, it's really great."

As for not having a bye before the Nebraska game, he seemed ambivalent: "In terms of intensity and preparation, it's what you do going in (to the game)."

**ETC.:** Injured offensive linemen **Ryan Miller** and **Max Tuoti-Mariner** appear to be on track to get an extra year of eligibility. Hawkins said no official word has been given, but "we don't expect any issues there." . . . Freshman quarterback **Tyler Hansen** has a role in this week's game plan, Hawkins said. Sophomore

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**Cody Hawkins** will start. . . . Oklahoma was Hawkins' No. 1 on his weekly *USA Today* /Coaches Top 25. . . . The Buffs will leave for Lincoln on Thanksgiving afternoon. Kickoff is 1:30 p.m. MST Friday (KMGH-Channel 7).

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Longmont, Colorado  
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2008

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## Nebraska week dawns on Buffs

*By Patrick Ridgell*

*Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Nebraska week dawned early Monday for Colorado defensive tackle George Hypolite. Real early.

The senior awoke at 4 a.m. to drive his girlfriend to the airport, then return home to resume preparing for Friday's game at Nebraska (1:30 p.m., ABC). He was a little sleepy when he spoke following Monday's practice, one closed to the media but in which scout players wore red jerseys and Nebraska helmets. Still, he offered one assessment of his team's demeanor.

"Everybody's hair is up a little bit, and I think everybody is taking this seriously, as it needs to be, not only because it's Nebraska week, but most importantly because it's a football game we need to win," Hypolite said. "Plain and simple. It's a football game we need to win for our season, for our team, for everybody."

CU (5-6, 2-5 Big 12) needs to win or it'll miss out on a bowl for the second time in three seasons. Nebraska (7-4, 4-3) is seeking better positioning for the postseason, which could see the Cornhuskers in the New Year's Day Gator Bowl if things go their way.

Bowl hopes were concerns for both programs Monday, but far from their only ones.

Nebraska coach Bo Pelini insisted quarterback Joe Ganz, ranked sixth in the Big 12 in passing yards, total offense and passing efficiency, is fine. Nebraska newspapers reported last week that Ganz had an MRI on a bruised right shoulder and missed practice time. Pelini said Ganz practiced Sunday, and that he could have practiced last week had coaches deemed it necessary.

Pelini also might be about to lose his recruiting coordinator and receivers coach. Ted Gilmore, CU's receivers coach in 2003 and 2004, is a candidate for the Wyoming head coaching job that opened Sunday when the school fired Joe Glenn.

Pelini said Monday morning that Wyoming had yet to ask permission to interview Gilmore, who played at Wyoming in 1988 and 1989. Pelini also said that he was not sure if Gilmore was scheduled to interview with Wyoming today.

Former CU coach Gary Barnett could also be a candidate.

CU has its own issues, most notably the loss of senior strong safety D.J. Dykes, who's out for the season with what's listed as "health issues." Dykes did not play Nov. 15 against Oklahoma State. He was not available for interviews Monday.

Free safety Ryan Walters (knee and ankle sprains) is listed as questionable. Redshirt freshman Anthony Perkins is expected to start, his third, in Dykes' place. True freshman Patrick Mahnke will replace Walters if Walters can't play.

"That's been the nature of the season and the nature of football," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "You have to pick it up and roll with it."

CU is also trying to win just its third game outside of the state in three years, and to do so in one of college football's more remarkable venues. That, to the Buffs, is another point of emphasis.

"The way you handle it is, you focus on football, you focus on the preparation, you focus on everything so you're confident when you hit the field," Hypolite said. "So no matter who's yelling at you, what wall of trophies you have to walk through on a red carpet, no matter who curses you, who spits on you, tells you your mother is nothing, no matter what happens, you know when you hit that field, it's football. And I'm prepared to do what I came here to do, regardless of all that other stuff. I think that's how you handle it."

This game will be the fourth time since 1988 neither team is ranked when they meet. Missouri has already won the North Division. So stakes are smaller, and the rivalry is not what it once was, right?

Hypolite downplayed things, saying Folsom Field is a louder venue than Nebraska's Memorial Stadium, and adding that once the first play passes, it's all about who can execute.

"We're just going to have fun," Hypolite said. "Maybe it's emotional for them, but for us, it's business as usual, it's another game we need to win to get to a bowl game."

**EXTRA POINTS:** CU lists Eugene Goree as its back-up right guard and its back-up nose tackle. ... Freshman tailback Darrell Scott (ankle) is day-to-day, but expected to play. ... Hawkins said freshman quarterback Tyler Hansen is part of the game plan. ... Hawkins said procedures to secure extra years of eligibility for sophomore tackle Ryan Miller and freshman guard Max Tuioti-Mariner are "in the works." He said he anticipates "no issues." Miller and Tuioti-Mariner suffered season-ending injuries in September. ...

Nebraska linebacker Cody Glenn remains indefinitely suspended for violating team rules, Pelini said. Pelini would not say when Glenn will return. ... Hawkins apparently has some very good news sources. He said that he first got wind Kansas State might want to re-hire former coach Bill Snyder last summer. Kansas State, which fired Ron Prince three weeks ago, made Snyder's return official Monday.

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