



Bohn: Hawkins not on hot seat

CU athletic director remains patient with football coach

By Kyle Ringo

Friday, December 19, 2008

Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn rolled his eyes with a so-what harrumph when told this week his football coach moved to No. 5 on coacheshotseat.com, a website dedicated to forecasting the job security of college football coaches.

The site considers only Notre Dame's Charlie Weis, Louisville's Steve Kragthorpe, Virginia's Al Groh and Texas A&M's Mike Sherman to be on less stable footing than Hawkins.

Bohn hired Hawkins away from Boise State three years ago this week and says he is very satisfied with the job the coach has done, despite the 13-24 record and the program's first three consecutive losing seasons since the early 1980s.

Colorado is sitting at home during bowl the season this year for the second time in Hawkins' tenure and recruiting has moved at a snail's pace with the program unable to build any traction on the field that might have led to things picking up steam off it.

The Buffs missed a chance to finish this season bowl eligible at 6-6 by losing in heartbreaking fashion at Nebraska three weeks ago.

They ended a tumultuous season 5-7 instead, having been inundated with injuries and other issues that led to a dramatic thinning of what already was a young roster.

Bohn said the program is far from where he would like it to be in terms of wins and losses, but he continues to believe the right coaches are in place to get the job done.

"At the beginning of the year, we were optimistic for a bowl bid and recognized that if we were .500 and had a bowl bid, that would be a successful year," Bohn said. "So we fell one game short of that, which is short of our expectations, but the infrastructure of the program across the board, facilities, coaches, athletes, sports staff, all of those things have been enhanced dramatically over the past three years. So our expectations for next year will obviously exceed where we were this year.

"We really are where we thought we would be, as much as it's tough to say that."

Bohn gave Hawkins a contract extension late last spring because of those factors. It was finalized and signed during the season.

Hawkins' deal now runs through the end of the 2012 season with only a slight pay increase over what he had been making. Bohn remains convinced it was the right decision.

Two of the other 10 coaches hired during the same offseason Hawkins came to Boulder (2005-06), have already been

fired from their jobs, including Ron Prince at Kansas State and Chuck Long at San Diego State. Other coaches around the nation were fired this year after four years on the job.

Asked why he appears to be more patient with his coach than some of his peers, Bohn chalked it up to a philosophical approach.

"Every situation is unique, and continuity is the model we're putting together," Bohn said. "We want to keep continuity in our university president, our chancellor, athletic director, head football coach and our head coaches across the board. We want to build a great team across the board. That's how great programs are built.

"So for some programs to be quick, look at their history and what being quick has done for them over time and how being quick continues to fail them. When you've got the right focus and right mission and the right character and integrity in place, why would you not allow that to come to full fruition?"

Bohn attended the CU football senior banquet last weekend and listened to Hawkins' dramatic closing statement in which he set the goal for the 2009 season at "10 wins and no excuses."

Bohn said he wasn't surprised by the statement.

"Dan has talked to me about that before," Bohn said. "There is no question that Dan is challenging his staff. He's challenging his team and he's challenging our fans. That's the goal of the program. That's where we want to be. I salute his vision. I salute his competitive spirit and salute his expectations. That's where we want the program to go.

"As coach (Bill) McCartney has taught us, you accomplish what you emphasize."

Bohn said he has not been contacted by any other programs asking for permission to speak with CU assistant football coaches in consideration for other jobs. Such permission could also come from Hawkins.

Bohn said he is not aware of any assistants leaving the program for other jobs.

Hawkins said two weeks ago that he hoped to keep his entire coaching staff intact once again this year, following the continuity model with which Missouri and others have achieved so much success recently.

It was just two years ago, after all, when Missouri head coach Gary Pinkel ranked high on coacheshotseat.com as well. Since then, the Tigers have played in consecutive Big 12 title games and Pinkel has received two significant pay raises.

Bohn said he believes the vast majority of CU fans realize the scope of the problems Hawkins inherited and continue to be patient with the program.

He also acknowledged hearing some voices who are "anxious" for success. He said he understands that sentiment and expects results to improve.

"Our fans and faculty and staff and community expect more and so do we, but we also recognize where we were and what we were trying to overcome, and we feel in virtually every area we're better," Bohn said. "The problem is, it's not a significant enough improvement to have it show up consistently on the scoreboard."

