



CU football camps drawing record numbers

Hawkins will host more than 3,200 participants this summer

By Kyle Ringo
Monday, June 8, 2009

It has taken three full years and a lot of work to get over bumps in the road, but seven summer football camps run by Colorado coach Dan Hawkins have swelled to attendance levels never before seen in Boulder.

Hawkins and his staff members will work with more than 3,200 football players beginning with today's youth camp through the end of the month. Hawkins runs a variety of camps for all ability levels, from youngsters still getting used to putting on helmets and shoulders pads to elite level high school recruits who will be packing their bags and heading to college this time next year.

Hawkins' camps have more than tripled in size during his tenure in Boulder. Two years ago, he hosted approximately 1,000 campers. Last year, the totals grew to about 1,800, setting a new record at the time. The camps raked in \$492,481 in revenue and cost the school \$488,755 in expenses, including well over \$200,000 in professional staff salaries in 2008.

Those totals will pale in comparison to the numbers expected this year.

Robert Tucker, CU director of football operations, said the numbers probably won't grow much beyond current levels in the future because stretching resources too thin would make the camps less effective and less fun for campers.

Hawkins says he emphasizes teaching in each camp and wants campers to spend as much time on the field with coaches as possible. CU boasts on its Web site a 10-1 camper-to-coach ratio.

"In one way, it's a grassroots effort to build a love for CU football through young kids in Colorado and beyond," Tucker said. "To have them growing up loving Ralphie, loving CU football and the University of Colorado."

Hosting more than 3,000 campers on campus in a matter of weeks is nothing new to Hawkins. He ran a series of popular summer camps when he was the head coach at Boise State (2001-05) as well.

The biggest reason behind the surge in growth is the addition of a team camp several years ago and its growing popularity. Tucker said the first year Hawkins was in Boulder, the team camp fell well short of living up to its name. Only the Erie High School team and the defense from a high school in California attended.

Hawkins is expecting at least 25 teams to participate in this year's team camp June 15-18. CU also runs a kicking camp at the same time. CU also offers a passing Jamboree and Big Man's camp, both on June

13.

Hawkins also offers a Father-Child camp June 20 for kids entering first grade through eighth grade.

"I would say this, our coaches and myself are involved," Hawkins said when talking about his camps last summer. "I know that's a lot of it. Sometimes head coaches aren't particularly visible and around and involved.

"And then in our high school camp, our coaches really do coach in it and run drills and work with guys."

Some CU football players are allowed to work the camps where current recruitable athletes are not involved, and Tucker said more than half the current team will likely participate this summer. True freshmen and newcomers to the roster are not eligible to work camps.

2009 CU football camps

Youth Camp — Today (morning and afternoon session)

High School Passing Jamboree — June 13, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. (Teams only)

High School Big Man's OL/DL camp — June 13, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

High School Full-Contact camp — June 15-18 (Day and overnight campers)

CU Kicking camp — June 15-18, featuring Paul Assad and Kent Riddle (7th-12th graders)

Father/Child camp — June 20, fathers and father figures with boys and girls entering 1st-8th grades.



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Awards roll in for voice of CU football

Dusty Saunders reports on the airwaves

By Dusty Saunders
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Larry Zimmer also was an integral part of radio coverage for the Broncos, including a long stint in the broadcasting booth at old Mile High Stadium. (John Leyba, Denver Post file photo)

Larry Zimmer has broadcast 444 CU football games, including 22 bowl contests.

On air, he's talked about 34 starting

quarterbacks and seven CU head coaches. And here's a really impressive stat — Zimmer has welcomed all five rambunctious Ralphies onto the playing field.

And if you're really interested in events surrounding Zimmer's radio tenure, he'll tell you that since his CU broadcasting debut in 1971, Colorado has had six governors and that 46 individuals have served on the university's board of regents.

Such statistics show the resilient career of the 73-year-old broadcaster, who last week was the 2009 recipient of the annual Chris Schenkel Award, honoring those who have had long and distinguished careers broadcasting college football.

Another Zimmer statistic: The Schenkel Award is his second major honor within two weeks as Zimmer was recently inducted into the Broadcast Professionals of Colorado Hall of Fame.

A fascinating doubleheader fact: Zimmer began his CU broadcasting career doing play-by-play in 1971 while also signing on as a color analyst for the Broncos, teaming with Bob Martin, the late, legendary broadcaster who did play-by-play. The duo worked together for 19 seasons on KOA-AM (850).

When Martin died in 1990, Zimmer took over play-by-play duties for seven years, while continuing to be the voice of the Buffs on KOA.

Zimmer's debut as a CU broadcaster had all the

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elements of a dreamy-eyed sports novel.

Born in New Orleans, Zimmer, as a youngster, would travel regularly to Baton Rouge with family members to watch Louisiana State University football games.

Zimmer recalls: "I can remember when I was 12, sitting in the stadium and looking up at the broadcast booth, thinking 'that's what I'd like to do some day.' "

That "some day" occurred on Sept. 11, 1971, when Zimmer made his CU broadcasting debut, following a stint as a football and basketball announcer for the University of Michigan.

The Buffs upset the favored Tigers 31-21 in Baton Rouge, en route to providing Zimmer with his favorite CU memories.

The team finished third in The Associated Press rankings (behind Nebraska and Oklahoma, respectively) and went on to beat Houston in the Bluebonnet Bowl.

His "down time": the Chuck Fairbanks era (1979-81).

When KOA hired Mark Johnson in 2004 as sports director and the main voice of the Buffs, Zimmer was moved to the analyst role.

"There was some politics involved. And a lot of people wanted a change," Zimmer said.

"But I'm not bitter. Johnson is a pro. We work

together well and are friends in and out of the booth."

While Zimmer's career is highlighted by football coverage, his resume also includes play-by-play of Buffs basketball and the Denver Rockets of the old ABA.

An announcer of Zimmer's long tenure is always the target of critics.

Some have vocalized that Zimmer is "too much of a homer" when it comes to CU radio coverage. And in the minds of many, he suffered in comparison to Martin after taking over Broncos play-by-play duties.

"Such criticism comes with the territory," Zimmer said. "I've been a 'homer' in an upbeat way, telling listeners about the positive aspects of the team's play. But I never try to alibi for a team's bad performance."

Zimmer will be in the Buffs' booth again this fall for his 37th season of CU football.

Ratings roulette.

The headline on the Sports Media Watch website said it all:

"Magic make ratings disappear."

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Game 1 was tough for even the Magic to watch. (Jae C. Hong, AP)

The report went on to note that Thursday night's Game 1 of the NBA Finals on ABC was down 14 percent from the initial Celtics-Lakers clash a year ago.

The Lakers-Magic game was the fourth-lowest-rated Game 1 since 1981.

Meanwhile, the Stanley Cup Finals are flourishing in the Nielsen audience reports.

NBC's widely discussed back-to-back coverage (May 30-31) averaged a 21 percent increase over the network's broadcasts of the first two games last season.

Game 3 on Thursday night between the Red Wings and Penguins on Versus reached 2.96 million viewers — the largest audience in the history of the cable sports channel.

Longtime Denver journalist Dusty Saunders writes about sports media each Monday in The Denver Post. Reach him at tvtime@comcast.net.

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