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cu football

Buffs' Solder: 6-feet-9, 305 . . . and counting

Top tackle has literally grown into his role

By Jim Armstrong
The Denver Post

Posted: 07/30/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT



Left tackle Nate Solder started all 12 games for CU last season. (Karl Gehring, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — OK, so maybe Nate Solder is exaggerating a little. Maybe he shouldn't be holding his hands two feet apart.

"You look at my kindergarten picture," he said, "and I'm this much taller than everyone else."

On second thought, maybe it's OK if Solder exaggerates a little. Who wants to argue with a man who stands 6-feet-9 and weighs 305 pounds?

Solder is all of that, and it's not like he's going to

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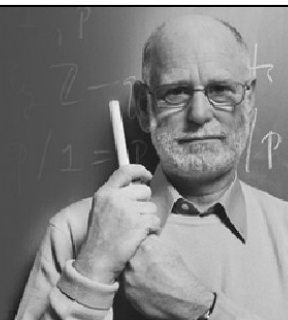


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shrink anytime soon. By the time he leaves CU after the 2010 football season, he might be . . . he could be . . . think Mount Evans in shoulder pads.

A 6-10 offensive tackle?

"I was supposed to stop at 6-6, so who knows?" Solder said. "My mom is 6-2, so that translates into a large kid."

And, in the case of the junior-to-be, a growing legend. It isn't just his height that strains the neck and captures the imagination. There's an unmistakable Bunyanesque quality to him too. Stuff happens, it seems, when you grow up and up and up while flipping hay bales on the family ranch.

Solder didn't sign with CU out of Los Angeles or Houston or Denver. He was all the rage in tiny Buena Vista (population 2,500), nestled 8,000 feet high in the Rockies between Salida and Leadville. He is living proof that you can take the boy out of the small town, but you can't take the small town out of the boy.

"I used to take my girlfriend back to Buena Vista," he said. "She'd say, 'Wow, I knew you were from a small town, but you really are a hick.' I had a tractor in the backyard."

At least there's a McDonald's in Buena Vista. Or not.

"Subway," he said.

Wal-Mart?

"Alco."

Stoplights?

"One."

Ladies and gentlemen, we give you the Buffs' starting left tackle — last year, this year and, in all likelihood, next year. After that, the only question is whether the boys from the Sunday league come calling. Solder is that big, that talented and oozing with that much potential.

"He's someone we've got real high

CU Football

[View slide show of CU offensive lineman Nate Solder from Buena Vista .](#)

expectations for, and he has them for himself," CU offensive line coach Denver Johnson said. "He's an immensely God-gifted kid both physically and mentally. He's got the whole package — intangibles, physical gifts and work habits. I hope he has ambitions to maybe play in the NFL because, if he works hard and puts himself in position to have that opportunity, he could do it."

And to think, Solder came to CU as a 6-7, 230-pound tight end. No, really, we're not making this up. He caught three balls for 50 yards as a

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redshirt freshman in 2007. Soon thereafter, he found himself sitting in former offensive line coach Jeff Grimes' office.

"I didn't feel like I failed at tight end," Solder said. "I could have lasted there as long as I wanted to. But Coach Grimes pointed out how good I could be at tackle if that's what I wanted to do, and I agreed. I'm more comfortable there. I love it. I always prided myself on being a good blocking tight end, so it comes natural to me."

How natural? Consider this: Solder went into spring ball 2008 as essentially "a tight end playing tackle," but emerged last August as the starter at left tackle. But first, there was the little matter of getting bigger . . . and bigger . . . and bigger.

He weighed in at 270 last spring, then reported to fall camp at 302.

Now, for the numbers within the numbers: During his tight end days, his body fat registered as low as 2 percent, the stuff of runway models. It hovered around 5 or 6 percent as he piled on weight but never got above 10. As of today, it's at 8 percent, well below the 25 percent limit mandated for CU's offensive linemen. In other words, he could get a lot bigger.

By comparison, CU right guard Ryan Miller has 19 percent body fat, one of the lowest figures on the offensive line. Said Miller, when asked if Solder were lean by offensive linemen's standards, "He's lean by anyone's standards."

"I've always been like that," Solder said. "When I hit 10 percent, I freaked out. Some guys can carry 20 percent, but not me. It takes some commitment to gain weight when you're built like me. There have definitely been times when I was like, 'Wow, this isn't 270 anymore.'"

Solder's commitment to calories is the stuff of legend on the CU campus, starting with his typical seven-egg breakfasts. Then there was that night at the CUSPYs, CU's version of the ESPYs.

"They had steaks and sandwiches," Solder said. "I left with a whole tray of Jimmy John's sandwiches. I was loading them on plates and the guy said, 'Hey, just take a whole tray.' I was like, 'All right.' I love taking advantage of those things because it gets expensive eating as much as I do."

Despite piling on all those pounds, Solder's 4.8 time in the 40-yard dash is off the charts for a lineman. His speed and strength — he's among the strongest players on the CU roster — helped him hold his own last year vs. the likes of Texas' Brian Orakpo and Florida State's Everett Brown. Solder graded out at 99 percent against Kansas State, the highest number for a CU lineman since 1990.

Add it all up and Solder can't help but be noticed by NFL scouts. But if he doesn't play on Sundays, his dream is becoming an equine veterinarian.

That's the other part of the story. He didn't sign with CU to become a force on the football field.

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He carries a 3.4 grade-point average in biology and is gearing up to reach 3.5 so he can qualify for vet school at Colorado State. And if an NFL career, shall we say, ruins those plans?

"That would be great financially and awesome to play in the NFL, but I want to be a vet. I figure being big will help me, because sometimes you've got to wrestle those horses."

Jim Armstrong: 303-954-1269 or jmarmstrong@denverpost.com

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cu briefs

CU: Ten wins a goal, not a guarantee

Posted: 07/30/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

IRVING, Texas — In no surprise, the first question asked of Colorado coach Dan Hawkins during Big 12 Conference football media-day interviews was about his "10 wins" statement to players and boosters during the team banquet in December.

Hawkins, whose team went 5-7 in 2008, appeared ready — almost eager — for the question. Hawkins said he did not guarantee 10 victories this season. But he did want to set a high bar of expectations for his team.

"I always love good Internet rumors out there that everybody kind of jumps on as fact," Hawkins said, with a chuckle. "Here's the deal with that. It's like bringing our football players to (the new Dallas Cowboys Stadium on Tuesday). I think the goal is always excellence.

"I'm never going to sell our guys short. I'm a big believer in your expectations and your vision, and what your standard is. . . . It's not about the wins.

I didn't guarantee anything. I didn't promise anything. I didn't threaten anything. That was never part of it."

"The equation was, 'We should always expect the best,' " Hawkins added. "If a kid doesn't expect to get an 'A,' how is he going to get an 'A.' It's all that. That's everything we do in our program."

Senior tight end Riar Geer, who was joined by senior linebackers Jeff Smart and Marcus Burton for media days, said he was asked about the 10-win "guarantee" in just about every interview.

"Saying we should get 10 victories, that was a bold statement, coming from a bold, bold man," Geer said. "It's fun to see that our coach has that much confidence in us. His confidence has rubbed off on us. That definitely fired us up. It makes getting up at 6:30 in the morning for those workouts and runs a little bit easier, knowing we have something to prove, something to work for."

Simmons expected on board.

Hawkins said the academic status of junior college transfer Andre Simmons should be resolved in the next day or two. Hawkins expects the 6-foot-3, 210-pound wide receiver to be eligible for this season after completing summer credits.

Simmons' maturity and athleticism could soften the loss of junior Josh Smith, who transferred to UCLA. A native of South Carolina, Simmons

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starred at Independence (Kan.) Community College.

"We're counting on him to do some big things," Hawkins said. "The thing that probably impressed me most about the kid is that he wanted to be at Colorado. He could have gone to other places with less (course) work, but he wanted to be at Colorado. That fired me up."

Who's No. 1?

Hawkins gave no timetable for settling on a starting quarterback. Junior Cody Hawkins and sophomore Tyler Hansen are expected to battle for the job, although true freshman Clark Evans, who certainly looks the part at 6-5 and 225 pounds, could get some repetitions.

"We'll see how it plays out," Dan Hawkins said. "Obviously, we want to try to get something done before we get to the final stages of prep for Colorado State, our (Sept. 6) opener."

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

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college football

CU's Hawkins backs his expectations, vision

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 07/29/2009 11:20:32 AM MDT

Updated: 07/30/2009 12:57:03 AM MDT



Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins at Big 12 media day in Irving, Texas, on Wednesday. (AP | Donna McWilliam)

IRVING, TEXAS — In no surprise, the first question asked of [Colorado](#) coach [Dan Hawkins](#) this morning during Big 12 Conference football media-day interviews was about his "10 wins"

statement to players and boosters during the team banquet in December.

Hawkins, whose team went 5-7 in 2008, appeared ready - almost eager -- for the question. Hawkins said he did not guarantee 10 victories this season. But he did want to set a high bar of expectations for his team.

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[View](#) slide show of CU offensive lineman Nate Solder from Buena Vista .

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- [Visit](#) Tom Kensler's All Things Buffs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports .

"I'm never going to sell our guys short. I'm a big believer in your expectations and your vision, and what your standard is. It's not about the wins. I didn't guarantee anything. I didn't promise anything. I didn't threaten anything. That was never part of it.

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the best,' " Hawkins added. "There's always some classic example. The [Arizona Cardinals](#) . It was awesome that last year they had a road swing back East, I think they were playing [Washington](#) and Philly maybe, back to back. Well, they stayed there for a week so they could get used to what would happen in the [Super Bowl](#) .

"We'll, if you're somebody covering the Arizona Cardinals and you're a fan of the Arizona Cardinals , you think, 'What? In preparation for the Super Bowl ?' Guess what? They were in the Super Bowl . [Minnesota](#) -Duluth won the Division II championship at 15-0. Last year they were 4-6.

"If a kid doesn't expect to get an 'A,' how is he going to get an 'A.' It's all that. That's everything we do in our program."

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Simmons expected on board. Hawkins said the academic status of junior-college transfer Andre Simmons should be resolved in the next day or

two. Hawkins expects the 6-foot-3, 210-pound wide receiver to be eligible for this season after completing summer credits.

Simmons' maturity and athleticism could soften the loss of junior Josh Smith, who transferred out of the program. A native of [South Carolina](#) , Simmons starred at [Independence](#) (Kan.) Community College.

"We're counting on him to do some big things," Hawkins said. "There obviously will be a learning curve for him, both in getting in shape and learning. He's a big, strong kid that can run and do some things with the ball.

"The thing that probably impressed me most about the kid is that he wanted to be at Colorado . He could have gone to other places with less (course) work, but he wanted to be at Colorado . That fired me up."

Settling on a starting QB. Hawkins gave no timetable. Junior Cody Hawkins and sophomore Tyler Hansen are expected to battle for the job, although true freshman Clark Evans, who certainly looks the part at 6-5 and 225 pounds, could get some repetitions.

"We'll see how it plays out," Hawkins said. "Obviously, we want to try to get something done before we get to the final stages of prep for Colorado State, our (Sept. 6) opener. We'll see how it plays out. It might be early (in August drills), it might be late."

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big 12 briefs

Leach's playoff proposal would be December madness

Posted: 07/30/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

IRVING, Texas — All you folks who hate the Bowl Championship Series and favor a playoff, meet your new hero: Texas Tech coach Mike Leach. He doesn't want a Plus-One. He doesn't want an eight-team playoff.

How about 64 teams?

"The thing that always interested me on this is: 'Oh, my God! This has never been done! How can you suggest this? This has never happened in college football,'" Leach said Wednesday on the last day of the Big 12 media days. "Everybody else does it this way. There's nothing unique in what I'm saying. I'm the mainstream. This other system is not the mainstream."

Leach's idea is to cut the schedule to 10 games and run the playoffs through December, like Division I-AA, D-II and D-III and use the bowls in the process.

"Texas high school champion: 16 games," Leach

said. "Division II: 16 games. Division III — and some of them fudge on a game — 15 or 16 games. And everybody thinks I went into a cave and carved all this out."

Brown against tiebreaker.

It's no surprise Texas coach Mack Brown wasn't happy that the Big 12 stuck to its tiebreaker format for three-way ties.

Oklahoma tied for the South Division's best record with Texas and Texas Tech but won last year's title because of a higher ranking in the BCS standings.

"I was obviously against the decision," said Brown whose Longhorns beat Oklahoma, 45-35, but lost at Texas Tech, "not because it happened to us last year but because I thought it was best. It may work for us this year."

McCoy makes hay.

Quarterback Colt McCoy, Texas' Heisman Trophy runner-up, didn't just take the normal route in preparing for his senior season by spending it on the football field. He spent it in a hayfield.

His grandfather had him baling hay on his farm in Brownwood, in the middle of the state.

"I've been doing that every summer since fifth grade," McCoy said. "That was my getaway for the weekend. We hauled about 350 bales from about 4 o'clock to midnight. It is the worst labor a man

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can do, I promise you. It's worse than building fences, and I did that earlier in the summer."

All Things Buffs



Post reporter Tom Kensler posts entries on this blog devoted to CU athletics. [Visit it here](#).

John Henderson, The Denver Post

CU's Smith going west.

Receiver and kick returner Josh Smith, who left Colorado in the spring, in part because he wanted to pursue a music degree that CU does not offer, will enroll at UCLA in September and redshirt. Under NCAA transfer rules, Smith will sit out the 2009 season and be eligible for the 2010 season. He will have two years of eligibility remaining when he returns to the field.

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sports

Big 12's civil war: North loses

The teams in the South Division are a bit miffed the weak North is hurting power rankings.

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

Posted: 07/30/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT



The rest of the Big 12's North Division has been feeling the pain from the South, just as Kansas and QB Todd Reesing did vs. Texas and Henry Melton last November. (G. Newman Lowrance, Getty Images)

IRVING, Texas — Many in the Big 12 Conference know that to be mentioned in the same breath as the powerhouse Southeastern Conference, the Big 12's North Division must start holding up its part of the bargain.

The prevailing sentiment this week at the Big 12 football media days: It is time for the North to

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compete.

The South's dominance has been the talk for a few years, but coming off last season when the South was 15-3 against the North, it's hard to shake the national perception of "And you're saying that's a powerhouse conference?"

It doesn't help that 21 of the 26 players on this year's preseason all-Big 12 list come from the South Division.

"We have to prove that all of these teams, from top to bottom, can play with each other," Kansas senior quarterback Todd Reesing said. "That's what we strive for — to get that recognition and be on the national scene, year in and year out."

For the foreseeable future, at least, the divisional imbalance appears alarming. The major polls have not yet been released, but preseason college yearbooks do not afford the North much respect.

The Sporting News' top 25 has No. 2 Texas and No. 3 Oklahoma challenging Florida for the top spot, and Oklahoma State at No. 10. Texas Tech checks in at No. 20, but readers might lose interest before getting to a Big 12 North team. That's Kansas, at No. 25.

Lindy's Football includes seven Big 12 players on its preseason All-America team. You guessed it. All are from the South Division.

"I don't see a lot of SEC football, Pac-10 or anybody else," Oklahoma State coach Mike

Gundy said. "But one thing that people don't talk about is the 'lower half,' whoever that may be depending on preseason polls — you'd better be careful playing those teams because they have guys that make plays."

Those big wins by the North in 2007 — including Colorado over then-No. 3 Oklahoma and Kansas State at No. 7 Texas — seem long forgotten.

And now the South's one pushover team — Baylor — isn't a pushover any more. The Bears went just 4-8 last season and won just one of their last six games. But Art Briles' first team battled Missouri (31-28) and Texas Tech (35-28) to the end and gave a good account of itself at Nebraska before falling 32-20.

Two preseason all-conference players (linebacker Joe Pawelek and safety Jordan Lake) wear green. And the Bears' offense features a sophomore quarterback, Robert Griffin, who goes 6-foot-3 and 210 pounds and may make the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team as a 400-meter hurdler.

In April, Baylor provided the second overall pick in the NFL draft, offensive tackle Jason Smith. Briles did not recruit Smith, having arrived before last season, but the coach is trying like heck to entice talents like him to make Waco their home for four or five years. Briles dangles a carrot: the chance to play in the Big 12 South.

"We feel like, without argument, the Big 12 South is the toughest division in college football today," Briles said. "In the recruiting world, we try to sell everything. What we try to do is approach

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people from the mind-set of 'How much of a competitor are you? Where do you want to land? Where do you want to play? Where do you want to excel?' "

In addition to their crazed football tradition, teams in the South Division have an inherent advantage. Gundy said he can count on the states of Texas and Oklahoma combining to produce about 360 major-college recruits every year, "give or take a few." By comparison, Colorado may supply 25 to 35 prospects. Kansas will provide a few more.

Does the North stand a chance? Most South Division programs also have boosters with deep pockets and plush facilities.

"When you look at Mack Brown at Texas and Bob Stoops at Oklahoma, and even with Mike Gundy at Oklahoma State, they give the South more of an 'entrenched' feel at the coaching position. Everybody knows that," said former Colorado quarterback Joel Klatt, a college football analyst. "There are no comparisons with the past head coach. There are no 'hot seats' or that sort of thing.

"That helps in two ways. For four or five years, players have the same scheme. By the time they're juniors and seniors, they can play at a much higher pace than if they were learning a new system."

Still, trends can change. The South Division wasn't quite so dominant, from top to bottom, before Kansas State coach Bill Snyder began

what amounted to a three-year retirement in 2005. North teams claimed three of the Big 12's first six titles. But the South has won five in a row and six of the past seven.

"Like the old saying, 'What goes around, comes around,' " said Snyder, looking as energetic and spry as ever at age 70. "It makes sense that the Oklahomas, the Texases, the A&Ms . . . there's a hotbed of high school football that surrounds those programs, tradition with those programs beginning in the Southwest Conference.

"There's a lot of different things. You look at great coaches, the kind of recruiting they're able to put together. It leads to being able to say that they'll continue to do well. (But) the North will probably rise to the occasion. It will go back and forth, would be my guess. That's kind of the history."

*Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or
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Of quarterback sophomore slumps
 by Tom Kensler on July 29, 2009

With reporters gathered around during the "breakout" portion of Big 12 media-day activities on Wednesday at an Irving, Texas, hotel, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins talked about his son, quarterback Cody Hawkins, having an off year in 2008. After throwing for about 3,000 yards as a redshirt freshman in 2007, Cody finished with 1,892 yards last fall and lost his starting job for a spell. The dreaded "sophomore slump," Dan said. "One of the bad things I've done in coaching, I've never had a quarterback that's been able to avoid the sophomore slump," Dan Hawkins said. "I don't know why. I talked to him. I coached him. I use every psychological ploy I can. It's 100 percent. Every second-year kid I've had (at quarterback) has not played as well as in his first year."

Dan Hawkins said he believes there are two explanations. "One is, I'll bet people were pleasantly surprised with what Cody did his freshman year," the coach said. "Then what is the next move? The next move is, he should go up. Everybody has a natural expectation of being better the next year. So when it doesn't happen, the human reaction is it's not good. "The other thing that I think happens as a quarterback, even though you try to coach against this, is they expect to get better. The way you get better is you focus on your drop, your read. But quarterbacks want to go out and win more games. They want to throw for less interceptions. They want to throw for more yards.

"But how do you do that? You focus on all the little things that make that happen."

Hawkins said he likes to use the example of Joe Montana after his Super Bowl victory over Cincinnati.

"Everybody was asking Joe after the game, 'Were you thinking about the score? Were you thinking you had to score a certain amount of points in so much time?'" Hawkins explained. "He was going, 'No. I'm thinking about what the snap count is and what the drop count is going to be.'"

"There's a certain amount of emotional angst that you go through to get to that point where you realize, 'That's what I've got to focus on.'"

"I've always said, you've got to go through the valley of death sometimes to rise up to the top of the mountain. It's certainly true with a lot of quarterbacks."



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Hawkins expects more out of Colorado QBs this season

By Kyle Ringo
Thursday, July 30, 2009

DALLAS — Dan Hawkins is not ready to commit to a starting quarterback with a week remaining before the start of fall camp, but he said his son, junior Cody Hawkins, probably holds an advantage over sophomore Tyler Hansen because of his age and experience.

Hawkins also continues to leave open the possibility of playing both players this season and riding a hot hand at times. It's a situation the fourth-year Colorado coach is not a huge fan of, but he is willing to play both players if it leads to wins.

Hawkins said he is expecting to get better performances from his offensive line and running backs this season because of more experience and hopefully better health. That should also allow more efficiency at the quarterback position.

Cody Hawkins endured a sophomore slump last season, playing in a different offense from what CU ran during his redshirt freshman campaign in 2007 when he led the Buffs to the Independence Bowl.

Hawkins threw for 1,892 yards, 10 interceptions and 17 touchdowns last season and lost his starting job for a game to Hansen. Dan Hawkins said he did his best to help Cody avoid taking a step back because he had seen it happen to other quarterbacks who have played for him.

"I don't know why. I talked to him. I coached him. I try to do every psychological, physical ploy I can. I'm 100 percent. Every second-year kid I've had (at quarterback) has not played as well his second year as in his first year."

Hawkins said he expects to choose a quarterback before the final week of preparation for the season arrives, but he won't rush it if the competition is close.

Kasa impressive

Two of the three Buffs on hand here Wednesday were asked which new teammate has been most impressive this summer. Linebackers Marcus Burton and Jeff Smart didn't hesitate when naming true freshman defensive end Nick Kasa, who was the highest rated player in the 2009 recruiting class.

Burton and Smart said Kasa is physically and mentally mature and they believe he will be one of the handful of freshmen to play this season. They have been impressed with Kasa in the weight room. He has added about 10 pounds this summer and is now 6-foot-7, 260 pounds.

Tight end Riar Geer also is impressed with Kasa, but his choice was cornerback Deji Olatoye, a true freshman from Ohio. All three veterans said they believe Olatoye will remain at cornerback throughout

his career. They said most defensive backs are first tried as corners and move to safety if they don't have the stuff for coverage.

Mission statement

Max Tuioti-Mariner won't play for the Buffs this season as he recovers from two torn ACLs in the past year. The young offensive lineman is still considering taking a year away from school and the CU program to complete his Mormon mission.

Tuioti-Mariner hasn't made a decision, but Hawkins said he believes the guard will decide soon.

"He might," Hawkins said. "He's kicking it around."

Healthy habits

Hawkins encouraged reporters to take better care of themselves and drink more water after being hospitalized earlier this month with kidney stones, and, later, fluid in his lungs.

"I wasn't near death, but it was not fun," he said.

Notable

Geer was one of the 30 tight ends named to the John Mackey Award watch list Wednesday. The award is given annually to the nation's best tight end. Geer said he was surprised by the honor but he had hoped to make the list. "Now it makes me want to work harder," he said. ... Hawkins said he expects to have wide receiver Andre Simmons on the team this fall. Simmons is a junior college wide receiver who is finishing classes at that level this month. "We expect him to get there," Hawkins said. "He's doing well."



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Bufs' Dan Hawkins on 10-win season: 'I didn't guarantee anything'

By Kyle Ringo
Wednesday, July 29, 2009

DALLAS — For the second time in his four years as coach of the Colorado football team, Dan Hawkins spent the bulk of his time at the Big 12 Conference's media days explaining the nature and intention of some of his offseason comments.

In 2007, it was his famous signing-day rant about an anonymous letter he received from a player's parent. This time around, Hawkins was repeatedly asked to clarify whether he promised 10 wins or simply challenged his team to achieve that number when he said "10 wins and no excuses" at the team banquet in December.

"I always love good Internet rumors out there that everybody kind of jumps on as fact," Hawkins said. "Here's the deal with that. It's like bringing our football players to (Dallas Cowboys Stadium) yesterday. I think the goal is always excellence.

"I'm never going to sell our guys short. I'm a big believer in your expectations and your vision, and what your standard is. It's not about the wins. I didn't guarantee anything. I didn't promise anything. I didn't threaten anything.

"That was never part of it."

Hawkins brought three players and assistant coach Brian Cabral with him to media days. Linebacker Jeff Smart and Marcus Burton and tight end Riar Geer said they also were repeatedly asked the question. More than 300 media members are in attendance.

"It must have been 200,000 times," Burton said.

All three players said they believe many of the journalists asking about their coach's quote mistakenly believed Hawkins had made a prediction or even a guarantee about the coming season. The Buffs are 13-24 in three seasons under Hawkins.

"A lot of them think he guaranteed it," Burton said. "He was challenging us to win 10 games and not make any excuses."

The media picked the Buffs to finish fourth in the North Division in its preseason poll behind Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. The Buffs shared the spotlight today with Texas, the return of Kansas State's legendary coach Bill Snyder and the antics of Texas Tech coach Mike Leach.

Hawkins is looking for his first winning season at Colorado in 2009, facing the least daunting nonconference schedule of his tenure with games against Colorado State and Wyoming at home and on

the road at Toledo and West Virginia.

The perception is that Hawkins must show progress this year or he could be in danger of losing his job at the end of the season. Hawkins clearly isn't worried about that notion.

When asked by one radio host about the idea that he is on the coaching hot seat, he said. "Talk to our AD. We're good to go."

Athletic director Mike Bohn scoffed at the notion that Hawkins' job would be in jeopardy at any point this season when asked about the possibility shortly after last season. He recently reiterated his belief that four years is not sufficient time to rebuild the program from where it was left after the scandal and recruiting troubles it endured in the final years of the Gary Barnett era. Barnett led the Bufs to four Big 12 championship games in five seasons despite those issues.

Hawkins was hoping to get his players to visualize their first trip back to the title game when he took them on a tour of the new Cowboys Stadium on Tuesday. The title game will be played there in December.

"If you're not a high-standard guy, you're a low-standard guy," he said.

At one point today, Hawkins asked a Big 12 Conference representative to bring the conference championship trophy to him so he could touch it. The coach held the crystal football while a nervous worker watched.

"I won't drop it," he said. "I'm an old fullback. I know how to carry the ball."



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Jul 29, 2009 8:26 pm US/Mountain

Hawkins Has High Expectations For Buffs



Reporting
Eric
Christensen
E-mail

DENVER (CBS4) — Much has been made of Dan Hawkins 10-win guarantee back in December. Today we learned that guarantee never happened. Hawkins spoke at the annual Big 12 media gathering in Texas.

"I always love the good internet," said the Buffs 4th year head coach. "Gotta have the good internet rumors that people jump on as fact."

At a team banquet in December, Hawkins didn't guarantee but rather challenged his team to win 10 games. Whether it was a guarantee or a challenge, it doesn't really matter. Hawkins' point remains crystal clear. It's time for the Buffs to start achieving on the field.

"I'm never gonna sell our guys short and I'm a big believer in what your expectations and your vision and what your standard is," said Hawkins. "I didn't guarantee, promise or threaten anything. The equation is you should always expect the best."

Easier said than done for a Colorado team which is coming off it's 2nd losing season in 3 years under Hawkins. The Buffs finished a disappointing 5-7 last year. A 10-win season this season would be a huge turnaround, one Hawkins doesn't consider unattainable.

"A classic example is the Arizona Cardinals. They were back east playing Washington and Philly back to back and they stayed there for a week so they could get used to what would happen at the Super Bowl. If your somebody covering the Cardinals or a fan, you're saying what? The Super Bowl? Well guess what they were in the Super Bowl. I think as a coach and as a player you want that expectation that this is what we're all about."

Hawkins will have more of a hands on approach with the 2009 Buffs. The head coach will also be in charge of coaching the wide receivers. Former receiver coach Eric Kiesau is the new offensive coordinator after Mark Helfrich left for a similar position at Oregon. This isn't a new role for Hawkins, he coached the tight ends while being the head coach at Boise State.

"I'm really excited about it and I love coaching and teaching," said Hawkins. "I think it's always great to be in the trenches. I've always said that after 5 years every head coach should go back to being an assistant because you figure out what it will be like in the trenches."

Coaching the receivers is going to be an interesting challenge for Hawkins. The position is regarded as one of the weakest if not least experienced on the team. Speedy sophomore Josh Smith left the program this summer leaving the Buffs with only one returning receiver (Scotty McKnight) who's caught a pass in a Division one game. The receiving corps should pick up a boost from sophomore Markques Simas who was a highly recruited back in 2007 but was academically ineligible last year. Junior College transfer Andre Simmons was another recruiting coup but he still needs to complete some classwork to become eligible. A pair of promising freshman from Texas are on campus and already working out. Terdema Ussery and Jarrod Darden are huge targets standing over 6-4 and weighing over 200 pounds.

The Buffs are still young but this will be Dan Hawkins most experienced Colorado team. Hawkins has high expectations for the 09 Buffs while fans have high expectations of Hawkins. For the first time since Hawk became coach there is legitimate pressure to produce a winning team. These expectations make 2009 the most important season to date in the Dan Hawkins era in Boulder.

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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, July 30, 2009

Publish Date: 7/30/2009

Great expectations

Hawkins doesn't shy from 10-win benchmark: 'The goal is always excellence'

*By Andy Friedlander
Special to the Times-Call*

IRVING, Texas — Dan Hawkins had just finished his print news conference at Big 12 football media days when a conference official swooped in to remove the prop posted in front of the coach's seat.

But before the man could leave with the sparkling crystal football that signifies the BCS national championship, Hawkins halted him in his tracks.

"Let me touch that," the Colorado coach said, his eyes as bright as the trophy. "I'm serious. I won't drop it."

The moment said much about Hawkins' coaching style, a style long on motivation and visualization. Before you can achieve a goal, he tells his players, you have to believe.

That belief was behind Hawkins' now-famous "10 wins and no excuses" comment at the team banquet in December, which certainly raised eyebrows throughout the league. Indeed, the first question to Hawkins in Wednesday's session at the Westin DFW Airport hotel was about that statement, and Hawkins was ready for it.

He smiled as the question was asked and was chuckling as he began to answer, emphasizing that his statement was not a prediction so much as a lofty — but reachable — benchmark for his team to live up to.

"The goal is always excellence," he said. "The bar is always high. ... I think it's awesome that this trophy is sitting right here, because that's what it's about. To me, your goal ought to always be to win the national championship and win your conference.

"It's not about the wins. I didn't guarantee anything. I didn't promise anything. I didn't threaten anything. That was never a part of it. The equation was that we should always expect the best. ... That's where we're going and that's what we're all about, because you're not going to get there if you don't have that expectation."

The Buffaloes say they have that part nailed. And when their coach made their target of 10 wins a matter of national discussion, it only cemented their belief.

"You kind of look at it as a team mantra, so to speak," linebacker Marcus Burton said. "I think people are surprised because the media doesn't think we should do so good next year but you don't go into a season expecting to lose. I say it every year. Do you have it in you? And the answer is always the same. Yes. If you prepare yourself, you'll get what you deserve."

Hawkins has convinced his team it deserves a big season — despite its 5-7 finish in 2008 — through the force of his personality, backed up by some quirky exercises, such as having the players lie down and close their eyes during practice while he told them how good they could be.



Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins speaks during Big 12 football media days in Irving, Texas, on Wednesday. Hawkins defended his "10 wins and no excuses" comment at the team banquet in December, emphasizing that his statement was not a prediction so much as a lofty — but reachable — benchmark for his team to live up to. **Donna McWilliam/AP**

Tight end Riar Geer said he was a little dubious when Hawkins brought in a “life coach,” who asked the players to write down good things about themselves and repeat them to themselves.

“We had to write out affirmations — how cool we are, like, I’m a great student, I’m a great football player — and we had to recite those in the mirror twice a day,” Geer said. “I’d never heard of that before and I felt kind of weird doing it, but I felt like it helped me and made me believe in myself a little more.

“Under (previous coach Gary) Barnett we were just so emotional — everything was high and low, high and low — but under Hawkins there’s less stress. He makes us do some weird stuff sometimes, but it’s all in fun. We don’t hate doing it, and it’s a different way of looking at football.”

And, linebacker Jeff Smart said, it has produced a confident team. When Smart heard the “10 wins and no excuses” line, he not only wasn’t surprised, he was already thinking it himself.

“I think all the players were thinking that in the back of our heads,” Smart said. “Hearing coach Hawk say that publicly just gives us a lot of confidence and motivation to live up to that. He’s not going to sell us short and tell us something we can’t do. We know that’s a very good possibility. If we do everything we can to prepare and play as well we can, we can easily win 10 games.”

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Thursday, July 30, 2009

Publish Date: 7/30/2009

QB choice remains up in the air

*By Andy Friedlander
Special to the Times-Call*

IRVING, Texas — Cody Hawkins started 10 games at quarterback for Colorado last season, and he's the son of the coach.

But on the Buffaloes' preseason depth chart, Hawkins is not listed as the starting quarterback. The 5-foot-11, 190-pound junior shares the No. 1 spot with sophomore Tyler Hansen heading into the Aug. 6 opening of fall workouts.

Wednesday, during Big 12 football media days, coach Dan Hawkins said there is no timetable for making a decision on a starter, and has not ruled out using both quarterbacks. He said Cody Hawkins has a slight advantage in experience, but that doesn't mean he will automatically be the starter.

"I don't know how you always just say, well, somebody's the incumbent and that's the way it is, and there's no challenge," the coach said.

Tight end Riar Geer said he has confidence in both quarterbacks but believes Hawkins will win the job.

"They bring two different aspects of the game — Tyler being more of an athletic quarterback and a threat to run while Cody's a scholar of the game," Geer said. "It's fun to watch both of them play, but I have all my confidence in Cody with all the workouts I've done with him. He stays after with me to throw extra routes. He's putting in that extra effort and he's becoming that leader we need on offense to lead us to great things."

AN ADDED ROLE: In addition to his duties as head coach, Dan Hawkins will serve as receivers coach this season while he grooms his successor in that role, technical intern Ashley Ambrose. Hawkins said he's excited about doing more hands-on coaching, something that is often lost in the head coach's role.

"I think every five years, every head coach ought to go back and be an assistant to remember what it's like in the trenches," he said. "Sometimes you wake up and you go, 'I'm not doing as much coaching as I want to. I'm doing all this other stuff.' It's going to be really fun to get back in the trenches."

HOME FOR THE TITLE GAME? Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe said the league is seriously considering the Dallas Cowboys' new stadium in Arlington, Texas, as the permanent host of the conference championship game. The game will be played at the \$1.25 billion facility, which is billed as the world's largest domed structure, the next two seasons. Beebe said a decision will probably be made in June, and said the league might also place its basketball tournament in Kansas City on a permanent basis.

The Colorado contingent took the media tour of the Cowboys' facility and came away awed.

"Oh, my gosh, it was absolutely amazing," Geer said. "Just picturing myself down on that field made me want to get back to that place (for the title game)."

BRIEFLY: Hawkins said junior college wide receiver Andre Simmons is on track to complete his academic requirements in the next week or so and should be ready for fall practice. ... Hawkins said he is 100 percent again after a recent bout with kidney stones and serious complications that included fluid in his lungs. "I wasn't near death, but it was not fun," he said. "I needed some serious oxygen there for awhile."

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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, July 30, 2009

Publish Date: 7/29/2009

CU's Hawkins ready for what awaits

By Patrick Ridgell
© 2009 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Cody Hawkins has learned beyond all doubt this summer one of life's more inescapable realities.

Pizza is everywhere.

He's a guy who's trying to clean up his diet, who shops with the purpose of stocking a kitchen full of food that leaves him little choice but to eat healthy. So Hawkins — a self-described "Domino's guy" — said he has given those pies up while so many college kids around him savor them daily. It hasn't been easy.

"No pizza kills me," he conceded.

What he gains is better health, lower body fat, and feeling stronger as he embarks on his junior season at Colorado, where a battle for the starting quarterback spot with Tyler Hansen awaits him in August. Hawkins believes better health bodes well, so pizza was sacrificed.

It wasn't exactly a big one, either. Hawkins has grown tired of losing. In his two seasons as CU's primary starting quarterback, the Buffs are 11-14. They're 10-13 in games he's started. They haven't won a bowl or their division in the Big 12.

Fans might be restless, but they have little on Hawkins. This is a guy who was 60-0 as a starting quarterback before he lost at Arizona State in the second game of his redshirt freshman season. Think he likes 10-13?

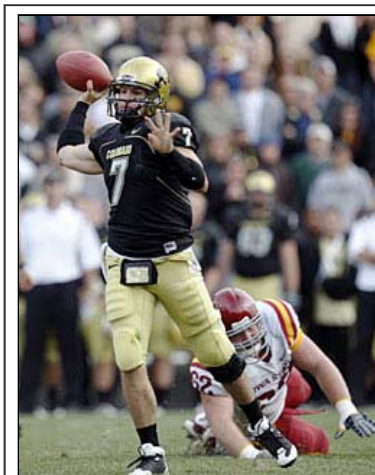
"When you get used to being good at everything, there comes a point where you're getting sick of tired of being mediocre," Hawkins said. "So I'm trying to do everything I can to take my team and myself to the next level."

Hawkins said he had a long talk with teammate Scotty McKnight at the end of May about these feelings. While he didn't reveal all of its details, it seems clear they believe they've grown up enough to know what to expect, and, therefore, know how to win.

The lessons have been intense. Hawkins saw his playing time reduced midway through his sophomore season when coaches burned Hansen's redshirt against Kansas State. The move worked and CU won. But Hansen was not as effective after that night, during which fans booed whenever coaches reinserted Hawkins.

That was hardly the only challenge Hawkins faced in 2008. The offensive line lost Ryan Miller, Max Tuioti-Mariner and Mike Iltis to injuries. Ethan Adkins and Devin Head were suspended at times. Erick Faatagi didn't make grades. Sione Tau was academically ineligible. Kai Maiava, a 2007 starter, transferred. That's a lot of missing blockers.

Markques Simas, possibly CU's best receiver, was out due to grades. Brian Lockridge redshirted. Rodney Stewart



Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins heads into the 2009 season battling for a starting job.

David Zalubowski/AP

broke his leg. Darrell Scott arrived late and suffered injuries. Josh Smith sat during key times for reasons coaches didn't want to publicly discuss. That's a lot of missing playmakers.

Some of Hawkins' statistics dropped from his freshman year; his yards per pass and completion fell from 6.4 and 11.3 per to 5.9 and 10.3 as a sophomore. Eleven of his 25 career interceptions have been tipped at the line of scrimmage, including one at the end of the loss at Nebraska last November.

Raw numbers suggest he did not evolve as a sophomore. Look beyond the raw numbers, and Hawkins might have grown more in 2008 than anyone can fathom.

"I think I learned a lot about how to play quarterback and how to handle people and situations as a man and as an athlete," he said. "I think I really learned what I need to work on; what it takes to take that jump to the next level."

Asked for examples of situations he's learned to handle like a man, Hawkins pointed to summer conditioning.

"If somebody didn't want to come out and work out, I just didn't bother him anymore," Hawkins said. "But the more I talked about it, the more I realized I really need all these guys."

"You're going to have some guys that need different buttons pressed. Not everybody loves football as much as I do, and not everybody always has the drive to be out here. ... My job is to make those guys feel that passion when they come out here. So I have to keep working on that."

As a counselor at the Elite 11 Quarterback Camp, Hawkins last Tuesday won a throwing accuracy contest against the likes of Mark Sanchez of the New York Jets, Texas' Colt McCoy, Oklahoma State's Zac Robinson and others. After completing his work there Thursday, he headed straight for an airport, flew back to Colorado, drove to Boulder and worked out with some teammates at a voluntary session on CU's practice fields.

Hawkins was the last to arrive. Nothing really happened at that workout until he arrived.

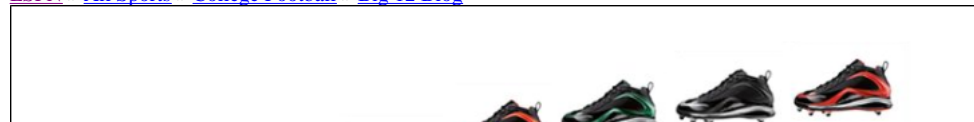
It remains to be seen if Hawkins can win at CU like he craves to. It remains to be seen if he can beat out Hansen. It shouldn't surprise anyone if both play meaningful minutes this year, just like last season.

With Hawkins, the only certainty is that whatever awaits, he'll be ready for it.

"Last year we thought we were going to be pretty good, but with that rash of injuries, we found out how young we really were," he said. "Now we finally have that mix of talent, depth and experience, and we want to make sure we're ready to make sure those breakthrough moments happen when we need them."

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com

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[Hawkins returns to his coaching roots](#)

July 29, 2009 5:52 PM

Posted by ESPN.com's Tim Griffin

IRVING, Texas -- The late departure by former Colorado offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich to Oregon resulted in a hole in Dan Hawkins' staff that he decided would be better settled with his own personal interest.



Hawkins inserted former Colorado receivers coach Eric Kiesau as his coordinator and will handle coaching wide receivers himself when the Buffaloes report for their first practice of preseason camp on Aug. 7.

"I'm really excited," Hawkins said. "I love coaching and I love teaching. I coached the tight ends when I was the head coach at Boise State. It's always great to be in the trenches. I think every five years, every head coach ought to go back and be an assistant."

Hawkins hopes the new duties will help invigorate his coaching skills as well as provide him with a more hands-on feel for his team.

"Every head coach will tell you that as you go along in this profession, sometimes you wake up and you're not doing as much coaching as I want to," Hawkins said. "In terms of the position, I really like those guys a lot."

Hawkins is expected to have a challenge boosting production at the position, particularly after the departure of [Josh Smith](#). The Buffaloes' top deep threat left the program after spring practice and will transfer to UCLA.

But Hawkins said the Buffaloes could get better production than expected, particularly if junior wide receiver [Scotty McKnight](#) blossoms in his role as Colorado's top receiver.

"Obviously, Scotty is a guy who's been around and been battle-tested for us, and we'll rely a lot on him," Hawkins said. "But I do think the young guys have a chance to make some plays for us."

[2009 Big 12 media days](#), [Colorado Buffaloes](#), [Mark Helfrich](#), [Dan Hawkins](#), [Eric Kiesau](#), [Boise State Broncos](#), [Josh Smith](#), [UCLA Bruins](#), [Scotty McKnight](#)

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• **Tim Griffin**



Tim Griffin joined ESPN.com in February

2008. He has covered the Big 12 since its inception, among a variety of beats during a 24-year career at the San Antonio Express-News. Griffin, a Memphis State University graduate, lives in San Antonio with his wife and son.

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[Hawkins insists he didn't predict 10-win season](#)

July 29, 2009 4:28 PM

Posted by ESPN.com's Tim Griffin

IRVING, Texas -- Colorado coach Dan Hawkins claimed Wednesday during his appearance at the Big 12 media days that he never made his celebrated "10 wins and no excuses" promise for the upcoming season.

Instead, he said he merely used the statement to challenge his players to achieve that number when he said "10 wins and no excuses" at the Buffaloes' team banquet last December.

"I always love good Internet rumors out there that everybody kind of jumps on as fact," Hawkins said. "But here's the deal with that. It's like when we brought our football players to the stadium [the Dallas Cowboys' stadium] yesterday. I think the goal is always excellence.

"I'm never going to sell our guys short. I'm a big believer in your expectations, your vision and what your standard is. It's not really about the wins. But I didn't guarantee or promise anything. I didn't threaten anything. That was never a part of it."

But no matter how Hawkins spins it, there's no doubt he's expecting vast improvement from last season's disappointing 5-7 season -- the second time in three seasons the Buffaloes have failed to make a bowl trip under Hawkins. Colorado is 8-16 is conference play in Hawkins' coaching tenure there.

"The statement is about what your expectations and your level of excellence are," Hawkins said. "What do you expect to have happen? That's the concept of it. I told the guys it's not about having eight, nine, 10, 11 or 12 games. It's about the bar of excellence and what they expect.

"If you don't expect to get an A, how are you going to get it? I know that great things can happen and we're only a stone's turn from having it happen. Every place I've ever been at, we've won championships. It's a part of our expectations."

Colorado players say that Hawkins' proclamation enthused them as soon as they heard it. And whether it was meant to be a prediction or not, they said it was a stimulus for them that helped spur strong off-season work in the preparations for the upcoming season.

"I think it's purely motivation," Colorado senior linebacker Jeff Smart said. "It motivates us to hear that the coach thinks we can win 10 games. It just makes us want to work harder knowing if we do everything we're capable of, we have a shot of winning 10 games."

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GRIDIRON DOMINATION COMES IN 7 FLAVORS.

[No timetable set on settling Colorado's QB battle](#)

July 30, 2009 8:46 AM

Posted by ESPN.com's Tim Griffin

IRVING, Texas -- Colorado coach Dan Hawkins said he has not decided when he'll choose his starting quarterback heading into the 2009 season.

Hawkins' son, Cody, is involved in a tight battle with Tyler Hansen that continued through spring practice. The two quarterbacks finished in a virtual dead heat coming out of spring practice. Hansen broke the thumb on his throwing hand during the Buffaloes' spring game and underwent surgery soon after.

Hansen has made a quick recovery and is expected to challenge for the job when the Buffaloes begin preseason practice on Aug. 7. The Buffaloes start the season Sept. 6 against Colorado State.

"We'll see how it plays out," Dan Hawkins said. "Obviously, we want to get something done before we get into the final stages of our prep for Colorado State, but it will play out like it plays out. It might be early, might be late. We'll just see."

Both [Cody Hawkins](#) and Hansen had starts for the Buffaloes last season. Colorado was 4-7 in games started by Hawkins and 1-0 in Hansen's starts. That record is deceiving because the Buffaloes won Hansen's start, 28-24 over Iowa State, only after Hawkins came off the bench to lead a comeback victory with four touchdown passes.

[2009 Big 12 media days](#), [Colorado Buffaloes](#), [Dan Hawkins](#), [Cody Hawkins](#), [Tyler Hansen](#), [Colorado State Buffaloes](#)

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• Tim Griffin



Tim Griffin joined ESPN.com in Februar

2008. He has covered the Big 12 since its inception, among a variety of beats during a 24-year career at the San Antonio Express-News. Griffin, a Memphis State University graduate, lives in San Antonio with his wife and son.

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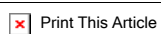
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Thursday, Jul 30, 2009
Posted on Wed, Jul. 29, 2009

Big 12 previews: Colorado, Kansas State, Texas, Texas Tech

Colorado

Coach: Dan Hawkins (4th season, 13-24 at Colorado; 66-35 overall as college coach)

2008 record: 5-7, 2-6 in Big 12

Reporting date: Aug. 6

Season opener: Sept. 6 vs. Colorado State

Key issues: Colorado returns only four starters on defense, none in the defensive line. That looms as a major concern heading into fall drills. Colorado also is in transition mode at receiver, where Josh Smith — who doubled as the team's top kick returner last season — has left school with plans to transfer. The Buffaloes have ongoing competition for the starting QB job (Cody Hawkins, Tyler Hansen) but plan to lean heavily on a ground game led by RBs Rodney Stewart and Darrell Scott. Stewart, who broke his leg last season against Texas A&M, is fully healed and took part in spring drills.

Kansas State

Coach: Bill Snyder (18th season, 136-68-1 from 1989-2005)

2008 record: 5-7, 2-6 in Big 12

Report date: Aug. 5

Season opener: Sept. 5 vs. Massachusetts

Key issues: Five offensive starters and eight on defense return, but the biggest void Snyder has to fill is at quarterback. Three-year starter Josh Freeman, who in essence was the offense, left early for the NFL and took with him career marks for total offense (8,421), yards passing (8,078), touchdowns (44) and attempts and completions. The successor appears to be two-year backup and redshirt junior Carson Coffman, who is 28-of-46 passing in two years as a reserve after never having lost a game he started in two years of high school.

Texas

Coach: Mack Brown (12th season, 115-26 at Texas; 201-100-1 overall as college coach)

2008 record: 12-1, 7-1 in Big 12 (defeated Ohio State 24-21 in Fiesta Bowl)

Reporting date: Aug. 8

Season opener: Sept. 5 vs. Louisiana-Monroe

Key issues: Texas led the nation in sacks last season (47) but lost three of its top four pass rushers to graduation. DE/LB Sergio Kindle (10 1/2 sacks) returns but most of this season's primary pass rushers are unproven. Texas remains unsettled at RB, with Fozzy Whittaker, Cody Johnson and Vondrell McGee projected to split time in that role. The ground game could be hampered by the loss of TE Blaine Irby (knee), who will not play this season. The Longhorns have no clear replacement for Irby and might lean heavily on four-receiver sets to avoid putting a tight end on the field.

Texas Tech

Coach: Mike Leach (10th season, 76-39 at Texas Tech and overall as college coach)

2008 record: 11-2, 7-1 in Big 12 (lost to Mississippi 47-34 in Cotton Bowl)

Reporting date: Aug. 8

Season opener: Sept. 5 vs. North Dakota

Key issues: First and foremost, the Red Raiders must replace the production of two-time All-America wide receiver Michael

Crabtree and three-year starting quarterback Graham Harrell. Taylor Potts is set as Harrell's replacement, and coach Mike Leach believes he has a bevy of receivers who can more than make up for what Crabtree gave Tech the past two seasons. All-America guard Brandon Carter, who didn't allow any sacks last season, is back to help protect Potts and open holes for running backs Baron Batch and Aaron Crawford. On defense, the Raiders will have two new safeties and must plug some holes on the line.

Jimmy Burch, Mike Jones and Dwain Price contributed to this report.



Posted on Wed, Jul. 29, 2009

Colorado at a glance

•**2008 record:** 5-7 overall, 2-6 Big 12 (tied for fourth in North)

•**Key returners:** OT Matt Bahr; OG Blake Behrens; TE Riar Geer; TB Darrell Scott; QB Cody Hawkins; QB Tyler Hansen.

•**Key losses:** DT George Hypolite; DE Maurice Lucas; NT Brandon Nicolas; FS Ryan Walters; C Daniel Sanders.

•**Top story line:** Coach Dan Hawkins intends to run, hoping to take advantage of league defenses primed to stop more prevalent passing games.

The problem is that most league defenses seem to have more trouble stopping the pass — particularly out of spread offenses — than any running game.

But, as one Colorado-based media wag cracked on Wednesday: “Would you pass if Cody Hawkins was your quarterback?”

There is the other question. Will Hawkins retain his starting job or be replaced by Hansen? That position battle could be the key to Colorado sticking with the run-first option on offense.

THE WORD

•“We’re going to be kind of the wild card (trying to run more than pass). I think that’s going to be such a great asset for our team. The defense has to prepare for something different.”

| **Geer, who averaged 14.1 yards on just 13 catches last season.**

•“It’s more of an, ‘I’m tired of losing and I hope you guys are, too.’ ”

| **Colorado linebacker Marcus Burton on coach Dan Hawkins setting 10 victories as a goal for Colorado.**

•“It’s like a hotel or museum or something like that; it doesn’t even get the type of feel of a football stadium.”

| **Colorado linebacker Jeff Smart on the team’s tour of the Dallas Cowboys’ new stadium, site of this season’s Big 12 Conference title game.**

| Mike DeArmond, mdearmond@kcstar.com

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Big 12 notebook: Texas' Sergio Kindle says texting caused wreck

By Berry Tramel, Jake Trotter and Brandon Chatmon
Published: July 30, 2009

Timing is everything

Texas Tech coach **Mike Leach** said his Red Raiders probably were overlooked at the end of last season, when they finished in a three-way tie with OU and Texas for the Big 12 South title.

Leach referred to pollsters' tendency to punish teams that lose late and said, "If we'd lost to Oklahoma the second game of the season instead of the second-to-last game, we'd have gone to the championship game."

Texting I

Texas defensive end **Sergio Kindle**, a preseason all-American, said he's working his way back into the good graces of his team after crashing a car into an Austin apartment building.

Kindle, who was pulled over for drunken driving two years ago, left the scene of the late-night crash but has maintained that he hadn't been drinking before the crash. Kindle said the crash was caused from text-messaging while driving.

Kindle said Texas coach **Mack Brown** already has taken disciplinary action that will not include suspensions from either games or practices. No charges have been filed against Kindle.

Brown said he could sympathize with Kindle. "When I drove, I text-messed all the time," Brown said. "I've stopped. But I still pick it up when I'm at a red light."

Quarterback derby

Colorado quarterback **Cody Hawkins** is a two-year starter but is expected to be challenged by sophomore **Tyler Hansen**. Hawkins has some big wins to his credit (OU and Texas Tech in 2007), but Hansen is a far better athlete.

CU coach **Dan Hawkins** admitted his son has the edge, because of experience, "but when we get going, we'll divide those guys up and they'll share reps, and we'll see how it goes."

Familiar faces

Bill Snyder returned to Kansas State after three retirement years and has a staff that includes familiar faces. Ten of his top 13 staff members either played for or coached with Snyder. Former Wyoming head coaches **Dana Dimel** and **Vic Koenning** are on the staff, as is former OSU offensive coordinator **Del Miller**.

Working knowledge of Snyder is important. His demands are legendary in the coaching profession.

"To be able to have a staff that has a good understanding of what the expectations are, what the program is all about, really has been very beneficial to me," Snyder said.

Inspired in Iraq

Texas coach Mack Brown spent eight days in June visiting U.S. troops in Iraq. He had been inspired by a visit from **Maj. Gen. Jeff Hammond**, from Fort Hood. Hammond brought an unnamed soldier with him to talk with the Texas squad.

"We felt like the Texas coach should go and say 'thank you,'" Brown said. "That's why I did it."

Brown talked of eating lunch with soldiers who were carrying machine guns, and chatting with soldiers who were OU, Texas A&M and Ohio State fans.

"They're proud," Brown said. "They're fighting for their country."

Pilgrim's progress

Taylor Potts takes over the quarterback throne at Texas Tech. Leach gives the junior from Abilene, Texas, high praise.

"He's got some **John Wayne** qualities," Leach said. "Sort of quiet, dust-and-tumbleweeds-coming-through-Abilene kind of guy. I liked him a lot."

Texting II

Snyder, who admits to being a "hard-copy guy," said he is mastering text messaging and e-mails. On Christmas Day, he sent a mass e-mail to the parents of every player, wishing them a Merry Christmas, and the next day he sent another mass e-mail to every faculty member and every KSU student.

"I'm very proud of that," Snyder said. "We may lose a hundred ballgames, but I can e-mail."

No guarantee

Dan Hawkins refuted a rumor that he had guaranteed 10 Colorado victories in 2009.

But he said he wants expectations high.

"It's not about the wins," Hawkins said. "I didn't guarantee anything. I didn't promise anything or threaten anything. The equation was we should always expect the best."

To that end, Hawkins took his players — linebackers **Jeff Smart** and **Marcus Burton** and tight end **Riar Geer** — on a tour Tuesday of Cowboys Stadium, where the Big 12 title game will be staged.

Replacing Freeman

Snyder's rebuilding job at K-State was made more difficult when **Josh Freeman** declared for the NFL Draft (he was selected in the first round). Junior **Carson Coffman** is the leading candidate to quarterback the 'Cats.

"Good, young guy, understands the game," Snyder said. "He's making the transition like everyone, going in one system, a little different terminology ... so there's a learning curve, but he handles it quite well."

Breakout year for Jeffers?

Former Lawton Eisenhower running back **Harrison Jeffers** opened eyes during Texas Tech's spring game and is expected to be a big contributor in his redshirt freshman year.

"I think he'll turn a lot of heads," Tech defensive tackle **Colby Whitlock** said. "He's very elusive, I think he'll have a breakout year."

Coaching receivers

Hawkins is returning to his roots — he will coach Colorado receivers this season.

"I'm really excited," Hawkins said. "I love coaching and I love teaching. I coached the tight ends when I was the head coach at Boise State. It's always great to be in the trenches. I think every five years, every head coach ought to go back and be an assistant."

Wrestling key for Whitlock

Texas Tech's Whitlock was an Oklahoma state champion wrestler for Noble. The 6-foot-2, 287-pounder credits the sport as a big part of his emergence as one of the Big 12's top defensive tackles.

"It's helped tremendously," Whitlock said. "The mental toughness, the leverage, the footwork, the hands, being one-on-one. I think a lot more kids should get into it if football is something you want to do for the rest of your life."

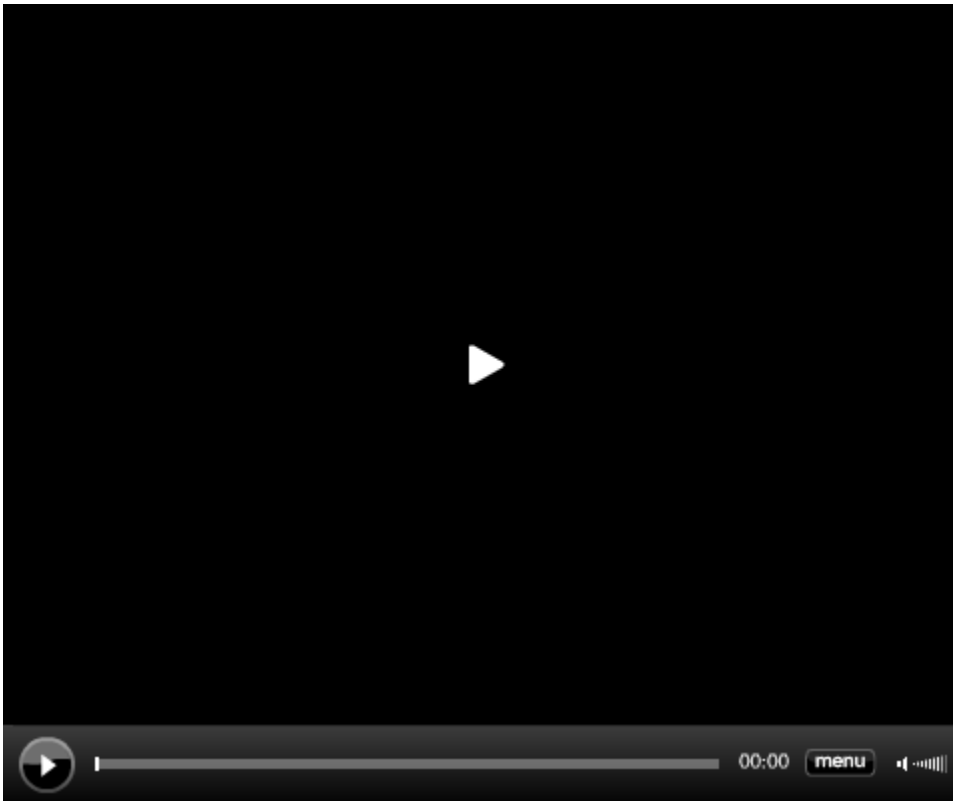
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Football: Hawkins' goal appears far-fetched at CU



Despite going 13-24 in his first three seasons as Colorado's head coach, Dan Hawkins has challenged his squad to win 10 games this season — and no excuses.



IRVING, Texas — “Ten wins and no excuses.”

Those words, uttered by Colorado coach Dan Hawkins at a team banquet in looking ahead to 2009, have echoed off the Rocky Mountains and around the Big 12 since.

It sounded goofy at the time.

It still does, considering Hawkins hasn't had a winning season at CU entering his fourth year, is 13-24 overall and is coming off seven losses in last season's final nine games.

To no one's surprise, the "10 wins" comment was the first question he heard Wednesday at Big 12 media days — and the question most repeated in the largest variety of ways.

Hawkins doesn't want a mulligan for having said it. He simply asked for the idea to be considered in context.

"I didn't guarantee anything," he said. "I didn't promise anything. I didn't threaten anything."

So what's the real message?

"The crux of it is the expectation of excellence," he said. "Being able to raise the bar academically, socially, in the weight room, on the football field — that's important to me."

Setting a goal of six wins for bowl eligibility or simply finishing above .500 isn't enough for Hawkins.

He compared it to dealing with a child who comes home from school convinced an A in math class isn't possible.

"If he gets a C," Hawkins said, "and you go, 'OK, good job, son, way to be average,' that's what he's going to be.

"But when you start saying you should get an A, and here's how you get an A, and here's why you get an A, and here's what you should do to get an A, he's going to get an A. He will. Trust me. I've got four kids."

Other Big 12 coaches, when asked this week if they would publicly state a goal for number of wins, responded as if the questioner had three heads.

But the message has sunk in with Colorado's players, senior linebacker Marcus Burton said.

"Coach Hawkins always seems to be good for some kind of sound bite," Burton said, smiling. "But any coach in the Big 12 who doesn't say that kind of stuff to his team doesn't deserve to coach.

"To tell you the truth, I was surprised he said 10 wins. I thought he would say 12."

The Buffaloes appear a long way from winning 10 or 12 games.

The quarterback situation between junior Cody Hawkins, the coach's son, and sophomore Tyler Hansen, who suffered a torn ligament in his throwing thumb in the spring game, remains unresolved.

Neither was a strong choice last year as CU finished 100th nationally in scoring at 20.2 points a game.

Adding to the drama on offense were the departures of wide receiver Josh Smith, CU's clear No. 1 big-play threat, and coordinator Mark Helfrich.

Smith unexpectedly transferred to UCLA. Helfrich took off after spring practice for similar work at Oregon. That has left Hawkins to coach the wide receivers.

Defensively, just four starters return. And place-kicker Aric Goodman is coming off a 5-for-14 field-goal performance.

You wonder, though, if the perception of Colorado in 2009 would be different if Nebraska's game-winning 57-yard field goal in the regular-season finale against the Buffs had drifted wide.

"If he misses that and we go to a bowl game, we probably win that bowl game," Hawkins said. "We get a couple of more wins.

"But I try not to get our guys so hung up in all that. Just keep plugging, keep doing your best and keep having high expectations."

In that spirit, Hawkins took the Colorado entourage at Big 12 media days on a tour of the new Dallas Cowboys stadium, site of the league title game in December. It's all about visualization.

Hawkins did another untraditional thing Wednesday.

The coaches' national championship trophy has been on display at media days. When reporters rush the podium to ask follow-up questions after the formal press conference, a handler grabs the crystal football off the trophy and stores it.

When Hawkins saw that, he told the handler: "Hey, bring it over here."

The handler paused. Most coaches consider touching or holding a championship trophy without playing for it bad luck.

But Hawkins said, "I'm serious." So he was handed the crystal ball, and silently cradled it for a few moments.

We applaud anyone for daring to dream. We fear for those who do it without sufficient respect for reality.

Contact the writer:

444-1201, sports@owh.com

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Bufs stay grounded

BY [KEVIN HASKIN](#)

Created July 29, 2009 at 3:32pm

Updated July 30, 2009 at 12:13am

IRVING, Texas - Colorado dares to be different.

A run through the Rockies could be the Buffaloes' slogan in football. And while America's favorite live mascot, Ralphie, leads the pregame charge, the running backs also get ample opportunities to gallop.

This is rare in the Big 12, where spread offenses spin numbers at pinball pace.

'If we can be that one wild card, where they have to prepare for something different, we feel like that can be a huge asset," senior tight end Riar Geer said Wednesday at Big 12 Media Days. 'We want to be that smashmouth team, kind of the odd-ball out in the Big 12.'

Listening to Geer, however, the Buffs' approach is not so radical. After all, this was the way the game was devised.

Dan Hawkins introduced his system in 2006 and Geer became the first freshman to ever lead CU in receptions. Of course, he only snagged 24 balls. Since then, knee and shoulder injuries limited Geer's effectiveness, but he's fully healed and ready to play, both as a pass catcher and a blocker.

'That's football. That's what I've been raised on," Geer said. "You hit the other team as hard as you can. I love that style of football. It fits my personality.'

The move makes sense. Some of Hawkins' biggest gets on the recruiting trail were running backs.

Unfortunately for the Buffs last season, injuries prevented a breakout from their top recruit, Darrell Scott, who picked Colorado over Texas on the eve of signing day in 2008. That created an opportunity for an unheralded freshman, Rodney Stewart, and the 5-foot-6 gnat led the Buffs with 622 yards before he was lost in the ninth game with a broken fibula. Demetrius Sumler and Brian Lockridge should also get into the rotation.

Injuries also devastated the Colorado line throughout the season. Actually, the entire two-deep. By the end of the season 20 Buffs were on the inactive roster, accounting for 121 missed games, and left Hawkins with just 47 scholarship players to count on. Colorado finished 5-7 overall and out of a bowl after going just 2-6 in the Big 12.

The redesigned offense should enable the Buffs to place less pressure on their quarterbacks. Junior Cody Hawkins, the coach's son, returns as the incumbent starter. But his inconsistency prompted Hawkins to take the redshirt off Tyler Hansen last season in game seven, a 14-13

victory against Kansas State.

"They'll share reps and we'll see how it goes," Dan Hawkins said. "I don't know how you always just say, 'Well, somebody's the incumbent and that's the way it is.' There's no challenge to that."

Without revealing many secrets, Geer advises not to overlook the tight end.

"Everybody thinks we'll be blocking all the time," Geer said, "But if you look back to the first and second years, the tight ends were catching a lot of balls. It doesn't get much better than that."

Kevin Haskin can be reached at (785) 295-1159 and kevin.haskin@cjonline.com.

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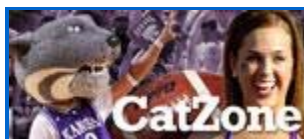
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Big 12 media days: Colorado players embrace Hawkins' 10-win challenge

by: BILL HAISTEN World Sports Writer
Wednesday, July 29, 2009
7/29/2009 12:08:53 PM

IRVING, Texas — Last season, after beating West Virginia in a nationally televised showdown, Colorado had surged to a 3-0 start. It looked as though the Buffaloes were capable of contending in the Big 12 North.

Instead, the Buffs were destined for yet another disappointing finish. Colorado closed with records of 5-7 overall and 2-6 in the Big 12. In December, during the Buffs' football banquet, while looking ahead at the 2009 season, coach Dan Hawkins presented this challenge to his players: "Ten wins and no excuses."

That comment was a hot topic on Wednesday, when Hawkins and three Colorado players — linebackers Marcus Burton and Jeff Smart, and tight end Riar Geer — met with reporters during the final session of the Big 12 Media Days event.

"It felt realistic to us," Geer said of Hawkins' 10-win proclamation. "We definitely feel like we can win 10 games."

Said Burton: "If you go into the season not expecting to win, you're selling yourself short. You should always want to win 10 — or 12."

Entering his fourth season as the Colorado head coach, Hawkins' record is 13-24. Since 2005, when the Buffs captured their fourth North title in five years, Colorado has gone 8-16 against conference opponents.

"The goal is always excellence. The bar is always high," Hawkins said. "To me, we talk about excellence with class — I'm into that. If you coach and play, your goal should always be to win the national championship and your conference. If you're not a high-standard guy, you're a low-standard guy."

"You want to have that expectation. You're not going to get there without that expectation. That's the crux of that whole deal."

As the Buffs prepare for the start of the August preseason, Hawkins has not decided on a starter at quarterback. His son, junior Cody Hawkins, competes against sophomore Tyler Hansen.

Accuracy has been an issue for Cody Hawkins, who has completed 57 percent of his passes. Quality Big 12 quarterbacks typically complete at least 65 percent of their pass attempts.

"(Cody Hawkins) probably has an advantage in that he's older than Tyler," Dan Hawkins said. "We'll split up the reps and see how it goes."

In their four nonconference games, the Buffs host Colorado State, visit Toledo (now coached by former Oklahoma State defensive coordinator Tim Beckman), host Wyoming and visit West Virginia.

In an ESPN-televvised contest played on a Thursday night, Colorado travels to Oklahoma State for a Nov. 19 contest.

Associate Images:



Coffman's time at Kansas State comes with Snyder

Associated Press
Thursday, July 30, 2009

IRVING, Texas -- The six-win mark means more than bowl eligibility for Kansas State quarterback Carson Coffman.

It means matching the number of victories his father, tight end Paul Coffman, had in three years with the Wildcats in the 1970s.

"We'll definitely surpass that total," said Coffman, also the younger brother of former standout Missouri tight end Chase Coffman. "In one year, yes."

Coffman's declaration during Big 12 media days Wednesday would have qualified as a bold statement 30 years ago. Bill Snyder has changed the expectations in Manhattan, Kan., which is why the father of Kansas State football has returned from a three-year coaching hiatus to replace his replacement, Ron Prince.

The Wildcats have reached six wins just once in the past five years (two under Snyder) after 11 straight seasons that were at least that good, and usually much better.

Now Kansas State will try to recapture the Snyder magic with a quarterback who grew up idolizing the coach.

"I never thought I'd have this opportunity," Coffman said. "When he was named head coach, it was pretty intimidating because of what he's done and his credentials. I'm really excited to learn from him."

Snyder said Coffman was the starter but didn't declare the competition closed.

"He's making the transition like everyone," Snyder said. "So there's a learning curve, but he handles that. Sharp young guy, handles it quite well."

Lesson learned

Texas linebacker Sergio Kindle says he learned a lesson last month after crashing his car into an Austin apartment building while he was text messaging.

Appearing Wednesday at Big 12 media days, Kindle said Texas coach Mack Brown took disciplinary action against him but declined to provide specifics. He said the punishment didn't involve suspensions from practices or games.

The senior from Dallas says the wreck was a wake-up call, and that he had spent the past few weeks rebuilding his credibility with teammates.

The June 24 crash caused about \$8,700 damage and no one inside was hurt. After the crash, Kindle pushed the car back into the street and went home. He was checked by team doctors and told he had a concussion but did not have to be hospitalized.

A police spokeswoman said no charges have been filed against Kindle, who says he wasn't drinking at the time of the crash. Two years ago, Kindle was arrested on a drunken driving charge.

"I felt like in the last two or three weeks I earned my credibility back with the team," said Kindle, who had 10 sacks last year. "I've made smarter decisions and become more of a type of leader trying to instill in guys not to make the decisions that I made so they won't have to go through what I went through."

Brown said he learned his own lesson through the episode because he had a tendency to text while driving.

"We're really lucky he hit the side of an apartment instead of some child or hurting himself or somebody else," Brown said. "The message will be to our players: Don't do it. Just stop. And I've stopped."

No hard feelings

Texas Tech coach Mike Leach said he has moved on from the messy contract stalemate that was aired out in public during the offseason.

Leach and the school had agreed on financial terms, but Leach objected to some of the clauses in the deal. The biggest sticking point was a requirement that Leach notify the school before he interviewed elsewhere or risk being fired and penalized \$1.5 million.

Ultimately, the sides agreed on a five-year, \$12.7 million deal without the contentious clause and with favorable buyout arrangements for Leach.

"There's always bumps in the road and ups and downs," Leach said. "In the midst of that, you just go to work every day and continue to work, and then once it all got solved, just continue to proceed without distractions."

When a reporter suggested Leach now had the best deal in the Big 12 because of the buyout arrangements, he said there were at least three Big 12 coaches with better deals. Pressed further, he wouldn't name names.

Snyder 2.0

Kansas State coach Bill Snyder was asked to compare in several ways the differences between now and when he left coaching three years ago. Technology stood out to him as much as anything else.

"You know, I get up every morning early in the morning, and you get this BlackBerry thing out, and it's got all the recruiting services, and they each have a long story on every youngster that is above the age of 4 in the nation. Tells you what he had for breakfast and what position he plays and who's recruiting him and so on," Snyder said. "It's a change for me, but ... over the past two or three years it's been a change for everybody, I think."



THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

Up for grabs

The Boston Globe

Pats camp will feature stiff competition for several positions

By Christopher L. Gasper, Globe Staff | July 30, 2009

On the face of it, training camp competition is good. It should bring out the best in individuals and make clear what is best for the team. But competition at a position also can be a harbinger of a hole on a team's roster that will linger throughout the season. Sometimes a competition doesn't turn out to be much of one at all.

Last year, the Patriots opened camp with an intriguing contest at left cornerback that had, among its participants, Fernando Bryant, Jason Webster, Lewis Sanders, and then-rookie Terrence Wheatley. In the end, none of the four "won" the job. Bryant and Webster, who later returned to the team, were cut before the season began. Sanders started the opener at left corner, but it was the only start he made at the spot all season. Wheatley made one start at left corner, but he suffered a season-ending injury. Among the four of them, there was not a single interception last season for the Patriots.

With the caveat of last year's cornerback derby and today's opening of 2009 camp, we focus on this year's key position competitions. Some battles are obvious, such as the outside linebacker spot opposite Adalius Thomas. Others are positions with incumbents who are going to have to fend off challenges, like right tackle Nick Kaczur.

Like left cornerback last year, the outside linebacker slot rendered vacant by the trade of Mike Vrabel to Kansas City is this year's competition du jour. With the team's unsuccessful attempts to obtain Jason Taylor, Greg Ellis, or Derrick Burgess, who did not report to Raiders camp yesterday and still could force his way out of Oakland, the spot is up for grabs. The early favorite is fourth-year man Pierre Woods, who started three games at outside linebacker last year after Thomas was lost for the season with a broken right forearm. The biggest question about Woods is whether he can rush the passer; he has one career sack.

Second-year man Shawn Crable was expected to push Woods at this spot, but is opening camp on the physically unable to perform list. That could create an opportunity for Vince Redd or Tully Banta-Cain, who returned to the Patriots after two mediocre seasons with San Francisco.

Kaczur has started all 29 of the regular-season games he has played in the last two seasons at right tackle and has been a starter since his rookie season of 2005, when he filled in at left tackle for an injured Matt Light.

However, Kaczur's play has seemed to plateau the last couple of seasons, and the Patriots used a second-round pick on offensive tackle Sebastian Vollmer, who at 6-feet-8-inches and 315 pounds has a prototypical right tackle frame. Fourth-year right tackle Ryan O'Callaghan missed all of last season with a shoulder injury but could push Kaczur as well. Mark LeVoir, who filled in at right tackle for two games last season when Kaczur was out with a right ankle injury, also should be in the mix, depending on the severity of the shoulder injury that has him starting camp on the PUP list.

Regardless of who gets the nod, they'll be expected to open holes in the running game. The question is which back will be rushing through them? This is one of the deepest positions on the Patriots, thanks to the addition of Fred Taylor. At 33, Taylor's days as a feature back could be in the rearview mirror. That opens the door for Laurence Maroney. The enigmatic Maroney was limited to three games last season because of a broken bone in his shoulder. Despite a 4.3 yards per carry average in his three NFL seasons, Maroney has been viewed as a disappointment. A lot of eyes will be on him in camp to see if he's going to have a breakthrough year or simply break down again.

Sammy Morris doesn't have the flash of Taylor or Maroney, but he gets every yard available. The 32-year-old Morris led the Patriots in rushing last season with a career-high 727 yards and a career-high seven rushing

touchdowns. Veteran Kevin Faulk usually ends up playing as many snaps as any Patriots back because of his ability and versatility as a blocker, pass catcher, and runner. BenJarvus Green-Ellis provides depth.

Although the Patriots rushed for 2,278 yards last season, the sixth-highest total in team history, they're still a passing team that favors a three wide-receiver set. Randy Moss and Wes Welker are a given, but what about the third receiver? Jabar Gaffney was an underrated and reliable component of the offense, but he departed for Denver. To fill the void, the Patriots traded for Greg Lewis and signed Joey Galloway.

A great game-breaker, Galloway's career 15.7 yards per catch average is the highest among active players with at least 300 receptions (Moss is second at 15.66). However, you have to be wary of a 37-year-old wideout whose game is built on speed that was limited to nine games last season by foot and ankle issues. After three consecutive 1,000-yard seasons in Tampa Bay, Galloway had just 13 catches for 138 yards and - for the first time in his career - no touchdowns in 2008.

The 29-year-old Lewis had a combined 32 receptions the last two seasons - six fewer than Gaffney had last season - and was traded away by the always receiver-needy Eagles. However, Gaffney was once an Eagles castoff, and in 2007 three of Lewis's 13 receptions went for scores. He opened the 2008 season against St. Louis with his first career 100-yard game (five catches for 104 yards, including a 52-yard touchdown).

Other positions to keep an eye on are tight end and long snapper.

At tight end, the team added Chris Baker via free agency and traded for Alex Smith. They join Benjamin Watson, David Thomas, and Tyson DeVree in a deep field that could have the team keeping four tight ends.

With Lonie Paxton now snapping away in Denver, the Patriots need a replacement. The candidates are veteran Nathan Hodel, who made every long snap for the Cardinals from 2002-08 and was perfect on his snaps last season, and rookie Jake Ingram, a sixth-round pick out of the University of Hawaii. ■

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