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## Finding a happy place

CU's Dykes settling into life in Boulder, position with Buffs

*By Brian Howell*

*The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Growing up in the fast-paced world of Southern California, Daniel Dykes may seem a little out of place in Boulder.

However, Boulder is simply a happy medium for Dykes.

“It’s not so fast, but I don’t mind it at all,” the University of Colorado junior safety said. “I don’t mind slowing things down to this extent.”

The culture shock for Dykes came three years ago, when he left Los Alamitos (Calif.) High for Moscow, Idaho. He became a two-year starter for the University of Idaho, but that wasn’t enough to keep him there.

“I just wasn’t happy there anymore,” he said. “I came from the (Los Angeles) area and went to a school like Idaho, in Moscow, where it was just slow, and it wasn’t my style.

“With a couple years left to play, I decided to get out and try something new.”

Dykes gambled by leaving Idaho for CU. He gave up a scholarship and a starting spot to walk on, with no playing time guarantees, with the Buffaloes.

“I knew coming here it would be tough to get on the field,” he said. “I knew I was a good player and I had some experience with me, but there’s a lot of good players here.

“I was ready for it. I knew making my decision that’s what was going to happen. I tried to embrace it. I tried to make a positive thing out of it.”

So far, Dykes’ decision has paid off. After redshirting and playing on the scout team in 2006, he is now listed atop the depth chart at strong safety and eager to play his first game with the Buffaloes. He and senior Lionel Harris are likely to get the bulk of the playing time at strong safety.

“I think he really is sort of a blueprint, to some degree, for what I’m all about and what I want a program to be all about,” CU head coach Dan Hawkins said of Dykes. “He’s a hard-working and tough guy that does things right and loves football.”

Hawkins was impressed from the start with Dykes’ approach to his new situation at CU.

“He came in here with no pretenses and came here to prove himself, and he really has,” the coach said. “Some people have measurables of height, weight, speed and all that. He’s got measurables of brain and heart.”

Hawkins has a history of handing out scholarships to deserving walk-ons. He said that during his eight years of coaching at Boise State, “we put 46 or 48 guys on scholarship ... that were walk-ons. I just love those guys. They just come with their hardhat on, their sleeves rolled up and their lunch pail packed and ready to go to work.”

Dykes has yet to earn a scholarship at CU, but Hawkins said, “He will.”

To get to this point, Dykes — who had 141 tackles and six interceptions while starting all 24 games at Idaho — said he had to prove himself all over again.

“There’s just a lot of talent here,” he said. “There’s better players to play against in practice; there’s more competition pushing you at the starting position, and you’re always competing for a job. It just makes you push yourself harder.”

After all his hard work, Dykes is ready to make an impact on Saturdays this fall.

“It’s pretty exciting,” he said. “I’m really ready to go. I’m ready to get back on the field. Just to hear that I’m going to be getting a lot of playing time, if not out there with the first team, it was a really big moment for me.”

**Smith update:** Hawkins said he is still unsure when freshman receiver Josh Smith will return to the field.

Smith bruised a kidney during Saturday’s scrimmage and went to Boulder Community Hospital that afternoon. The coach said he visited Smith on Sunday night.

“He’s doing great,” Hawkins said. “He just has such a great countenance to him. He’s going to minimize anything that’s wrong with him.”

There is no timetable for Smith's return, but he remained at Boulder Community Hospital on Monday night for further observations, according to head trainer Miguel Rueda. Smith is expected to be released from the hospital today.

**Ready for the Rams:** After weeks of fall drills, the Buffs will begin this week putting in the game plan for the Sept. 1 opener against Colorado State.

The players are ready to start preparing for an opponent, and so is Hawkins.

“I love football, but practicing football after a while ... you need Saturday and you need a game plan,” he said.

Monday morning, the Buffs had a short walk-through at Folsom Field, and Hawkins was pleased.

“I was encouraged by the way they were paying attention out there a little bit,” he said.

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No man is an island

By JEFF GRAHAM Colorado Daily Staff Writer  
Tuesday, August 21, 2007 8:57 PM MDT

The college football season is officially upon us as teams across the country start game week preparations. With a September 1 match-up with in-state rival Colorado State quickly approaching, the Colorado Daily takes an in-depth look, position - by - position, at coach Dan Hawkins' Buffs.

The first position group to go under the microscope is defensive secondary coach Greg Brown's cornerbacks and safeties. The group has several key returning players in senior Terrence Wheatley and junior Ryan Walters, but will look to some inexperienced athletes to sew up some loose ends at other positions.

With the void left by the graduation of Lorenzo Sims, J.J. Billingsley, Terry Washington and Dominique Brooks, Brown has had little less than a month to manage the remaining talent and said that there is still plenty of time to compete for playing time.

"We are just trying to fit the pieces of the puzzle together, guys are making progress, but nothing is set in stone,"

Brown's crew made strides last year not giving up a number of big plays to opposing offenses, but teams did complete almost 67 percent of their passes against CU's secondary. And with only 12 interceptions, Brown said he hopes to see improvements across the board.

"Oh no question and a lot of things go into that. Mainly if you got the chance and the ball is thrown your way, you can't be satisfied with a pass deflection," Brown said. "You need to have the interception and that is a huge point of emphasis for us."

#### Projected Starters:

#26 Terrence Wheatley, 5-10, 175, Sr.-5. Wheatley is currently listed atop the depth chart at left cornerback and is a returning first team All-Big 12 selection. He started every game last year at left cornerback after coming off a season-ending wrist surgery the year before. He finished last year leading the team with five interceptions and if his production continues he could make a run for the Thorpe Award given to the nation's top defensive back.

"He is someone who the younger guys look up to and as well they should because he works hard on and off the field," Brown said.

#42 Benjamin Burney, 5-11, 190, Jr. After spending much of the season last year at safety, Burney made the switch back to cornerback at seasons' end and has been practicing there since. He started two games last year, (Montana State, Baylor) making 23 tackles including 14 solo. He is currently listed opposite Wheatley at the right cornerback position.

"Ben Burney has the spot right now but I mean there are still a lot of people competing and we're making progress but we are not there yet," Brown said.

#9 Daniel Dykes, 6-2, 210, Jr. Dykes joins a talented groups of supporting players as he transferred from the University of Idaho last year but had to sit out per NCAA rules. He is currently listed along side Lionel Harris for the starting spot at strong safety. As a freshman and sophomore at Idaho, Dykes started all 12 games and was third both years on the team in tackles with 72 and 69 respectively. Dykes also had six career interceptions at Idaho.

"The starting two safeties are going to be Ryan Walters and D.J. Dykes," Brown said.

#25 Lionel Harris, 6-0, 195, Sr. Harris started six of the final seven games of the 2006 season in place of an injured J.J. Billingsley and finished fourth on the team in tackles with 67. He had four outings with at least 10 tackles and is currently sharing reps with Idaho transfer Daniel Dykes for the starting strong safety position.

"Lionel Harris is still right in the thick of it fighting for a job. Linoel played a lot last year for us when J.J. went down with an injury.

#15 Ryan Walters, 5-11, 200, Jr. Walters, originally recruited as a quarterback out of high school, has since become one of CU's hardest hitters at free safety and is currently currently listed as a game one starter. He had his first two interceptions

of his career last year against Texas Tech and was tied for fifth in total tackles with 57.

#### OTHER CONTRIBUTORS:

#29-Cha'pelle Brown, 5-7, 175, So. - Listed second behind Burney at right corner

#6 Gardner McKay, 5-11, 160, Jr - Listed third on the latest depth chart at right corner

#23 Jalil Brown, 6-1, 205, R. Fr - One of two red-shirt freshman, Brown is listed second behind Wheatley

#3 Jimmy Smith, 6-2, 195, R. Fr - The other red-shirt freshman listed third on the depth chart at left corner.

#21 Anthony Wright, 6-0, 185, F. - One of two freshmen that could see time in nickel formations

#46 Anthony Perkins, 5-10, 185, Fr. - Will vie for playing time as Walter's backup against Wright.

#30 Joel Adams, 5-11, 185, Jr. - A former scholarship skier for CU.

#31 Lamont Smith, 5-8, 160, Fr.

#35 Nate Vaiomounga, 5-10, 195, Fr.

#18 Jonathon Hawkins, 5-11, 180, Fr.

CU's secondary gave up 228.5 passing yards per game last year to many teams that they will once again meet in 2007. Among some of the predominant passing teams they will face are Arizona State, Texas Tech and Missouri, all of whom threw for well over 200 yards per game and a combined seven touchdowns per game.

Other match-up problems on CU's schedule include the Florida State wide-out tandem of 6-foot-6 Greg Carr, and 6-foot-3 De'Cody Fagg. FSU comes to Boulder on September 15. Carr averaged 18.2 yards per reception and 14 touchdowns while Fagg chipped in with 37 receptions and an 11.9 average per catch.

Needless to say, the secondary will have another tough road ahead this fall. But, with a former NFL coach of 15 years calling the shots in Greg Brown, it's safe to say they are in good hands.

"All I know is that we are an unfinished product and we've got good people who work hard," Brown said. "It's going to require us to be blue collar and come to work with a lunch pail and see what kind of improvement we can make day by day."

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## Missed practices not helping CU's Jackson

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News  
August 20, 2007

BOULDER — Bernard Jackson's missed practice time could jeopardize his status for the University of Colorado's Sept. 1 opener against Colorado State.

Eric Kiesau, CU's passing game coordinator/receivers coach, said the offensive captain is in danger of falling behind players who have not missed work during preseason camp. Jackson was not at Monday's 60-minute walk-through at Folsom Field.

"We've got other guys who are doing good things, so how do you justify, if he's eligible, bringing 'B-Jax' back in?" Kiesau said. "It's not really fair to the other guys making plays."

Coach Dan Hawkins said game-planning for CSU is scheduled to begin today, which should sharpen the Buffaloes' focus in the final week of a grueling camp.

"Guys will start seeing some relevancy to (practices) and develop a sense of urgency," Hawkins said. "Usually that's when guys start going, 'OK, we're going to be doing this (in a game) in a couple of weeks, I'd better get it right.' "

But with only 10 days of practice scheduled before the opener, Jackson could be running out of time to find a Game 1 niche.

At best, he was an on-and-off participant for the first two weeks of August camp, missing the entire first week while summer school still was in session.

He has not participated in either major camp scrimmage but has said on several occasions he expects to be OK academically.

Hawkins said Monday he had no further word on summer session grades, later adding he was "waiting to see how (Jackson's status) plays out."

Jackson, CU's starting quarterback in 11 of 12 games in 2006, is slotted for a utility offensive role; when present, he has been used as a tailback, receiver and return specialist. Coaches also talked about giving him a look at safety.

But CU's first camp depth chart, released Sunday, showed him fourth in Kiesau's "x" grouping, and Jackson was not listed at any other position.

At receiver, he trails Patrick Williams, Cody Crawford and Stephone Robinson. Also, injured freshman Josh Smith (bruised kidney; out indefinitely) plays the "x" spot, so Jackson likely is fifth.

Kiesau said Jackson "is very athletic, and I think we'll try to find a spot for him, whether it's the first game or the third game. (But) what we're really focused on is getting him academically healthy."

Hawkins has said players' academic issues always take precedence over practice, and Kiesau added, "It would be a moot point to have them come out and practice if they're ineligible and can't play."

**SMITH UPDATE:** After spending a third night in a hospital for observation, Smith is expected to be released today.

Hawkins visited Smith on Sunday night and said he "was great . . . he just has such a great countenance to him. He's going to minimize anything that's wrong with him and maximize his mental, psychological and emotional situation."

Kiesau said CU's medical personnel cannot give an approximate time for Smith's return.

"With this kind of injury, you don't know," he said. "You have to take a new test every week and see how it's healing. It's kind of a week-to-week deal.

"You have to see how it heals, then if he can take contact. It's frustrating from one point, but we've got to make sure he's safe and not push him."

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## Hawkins, CU "fine-tuning" for CSU

By Tom Kensler  
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder — During a two-hour morning practice today, Colorado began installing its game plan for the Sept. 1 season opener against Colorado State.

Buffaloes coach Dan Hawkins wasn't exactly ready to turn cartwheels afterward.

"It was sluggish," Hawkins said.

And to some degree that's to be expected, he added.

"It becomes difficult when you start throwing some game-plan stuff at players," Hawkins explained.

"They go through another wave of the anxiety curve.

"That's something again that, when you have a veteran team, they brace themselves for that.

"You get into that heavy dose of, I've got to think a lot again." And you have to get ready physically as well."

Hawkins said components of the game plan had already been introduced to the team. But now the

fine-tuning has begun.

"It's really when you start talking about the little

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details - that's where they have to heighten their awareness," Hawkins said.

**Footnotes Hawkins said he expects freshman receiver Josh Smith to be released from Boulder Community Hospital sometime today. Smith bruised a kidney in the Saturday morning scrimmage. Hawkins said he didn't know when Smith will be cleared to do anything physical.**

... Hawkins evidently has kept up on reports of Colorado State running back Kyle Bell returning to top form after missing the 2006 season with a knee injury.

"He's a great football player," Hawkins said. "When

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you have a player on your team like that, it means a lot, not only from a production standpoint, but (also) from a psychological standpoint and a mentality standpoint. When you have proven players on your club, it gives you confidence."

Staff Writer Tom Kensler can be reached at 303-954-1280 or [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com)

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# Gearing up for CSU invigorates Buffaloes

## Game plan for Rams starting to be installed

By Kyle Ringo

Tuesday, August 21, 2007

The dull part is over.

It's still the middle of August and still the middle of training camp — the dog days as they are called — but when Colorado football players stroll across their gravel parking lot onto lush green practice fields this morning, it will probably feel a little different than the past two weeks of the same routine.

Coaches plan to begin working on the game plan for Colorado State today, which means the defensive backs won't always know what route is coming and defensive linemen will have a harder time guessing where the man in front of them is going.

Every player on the field will have a greater sense of urgency now, with the Sept. 1 season opener just a week and a half away.

"I think it brings a lot," quarterback Cody Hawkins said. "You kind of do hit a point where practice becomes kind of monotonous. When you're starting to throw in those new plays and watching that Colorado State film it gets your blood flowing a little bit."

This week isn't all about the season opener. There are still position battles going on and jobs to be won before game week arrives. But players are beginning to see a light at the end of the tunnel now that their first opportunity to mash someone other than a teammate is fast approaching.

"Finally you're planning for someone else instead of your own offense," linebacker Jordon Dizon said. "It's just fun. When you do something for two weeks straight and you do it twice a day sometimes, you get a little mundane and a little repetitive."

Dizon said this season's training camp has been better than the first under coach Dan Hawkins, and it's probably because there is more trust between the players and coaches. Dan Hawkins said a group of veteran players approached him prior to training camp and asked that he occasionally give them time to recuperate.

Hawkins said he was happy to work with the players because he knew they weren't asking him to go easy on them. He said players have held up their end of the bargain by practicing well in almost every session so far this month.

Cody Hawkins said his second training camp in Boulder seems very different from his first, and it's not just because he is now the starting quarterback instead of a true freshman planning to redshirt.

"I think there is definitely a lot more excitement with the guys," Cody Hawkins said. "Last year, I think guys were kind of looking around, excited for the season to start, but nobody really knew where they stood, where this team stood or what things were like.

"I think we have much more of an identity this year."

One of the special parts of playing football at Colorado is beginning almost every season with a rivalry game and



ending it the same way — against Nebraska. Dizon said being able to begin preparations for an opponent would have the Buffs excited today, but the fact that the first opponent is Colorado State again this year instead of Montana State like last year, will get adrenaline flowing.

“Always having them first, you’ve got a lot of fire in you,” Dizon said. “You hit your own team for six months straight and your ready to hit someone else, especially with it being an in-state rival. A lot of it is about the ‘W’ but most of it is about the pride.”

## Notable

Hawkins said he visited injured wide receiver Josh Smith in the hospital Sunday night and the freshman from Moorpark, Calif., was in high spirits. Smith is expected to be released from the hospital today after suffering a bruised kidney in Saturday’s scrimmage. ... Players and coaches spent part of the afternoon swimming Monday in the campus recreation center pool. Players also helped freshmen move into dorms in the afternoon. ... The team is scheduled to practice twice today, including another 8-10 p.m. practice. Coaches hope practicing late will help the team prepare for playing two of its first three games at night with 8 o’clock start times.



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