



CU's Miller thinks his time is now

Frosh lineman may play his first game for Buffs on Saturday

By Ryan Thorburn
Thursday, September 13, 2007

Gentle giant.

That's the first impression you get of Ryan Miller as your right hand disappears into his Paul Bunyan-sized handshake.

But that's not how defensive linemen would describe Miller during their encounters with the 6-foot-8, 320-pound Colorado freshman between the lines.

There is a chance the Buffs' five-star recruit will see his first game action on Saturday night against Florida State at Folsom Field (8:10 p.m., ESPN).

"I love this sport," Miller said after a demanding practice this week. "You come out here and just get to pick on people. That's one of the greatest things in life right now."

Transitioning from Columbine High School, where Miller helped lead the Rebels to a Class 5A state title last season, to CU has presented some challenges for the big man on campus.

Miller said he had to learn how to manage his time better to balance studying and football. He was gasping for air at times during preseason camp.

And learning to protect the quarterback — which is kind of a big deal for a young offensive tackle trying to make it under the Saturday night lights — on a consistent basis at this level is still a work-in-progress.

Miller's talent, however, is off the charts. It's not a matter of if but when the O-line will be built around this phenom.

"I'm honored," Miller said when told that CU head coach Dan Hawkins had mentioned him as one of a handful of true freshmen that could be ready for their first action of the season against the Seminoles. "I've been working hard for the past couple weeks trying to get some reps in with the 'ones.' Really, the only person that's got any choice if I play or not is me right now."

The coaching staff seems to agree. They're pleased with the development of Miller and classmates Kai Maiava (center) and Mike Iltis (guard).

And the Buffs, currently ranked 97th in rushing offense (80.5 yards per game) and 105th in total offense (267.0 yards per game), could use some help up front.

"I think they've made consistent progress in the last two or three weeks. That's really the key for those young guys," CU offensive line coach Jeff Grimes said. "They think that they're going to come out here and play right away, and it is just proven to be that the other guys are just so much further ahead in terms of their knowledge of the game and how to do things.

"The key that I've tried to stress with each one of them is to try and get better each week. If you get better every day that you're out here, before long you will be in position to help us out and do some things."

Miller worked a lot at guard during the first few weeks of camp but has been backing up senior Edwin Harrison at right tackle lately. Tyler Polumbus, another senior, is the starting left tackle and is backed up on the depth chart by freshman Sione Tau.

Six of the 10 offensive linemen on the Buffs' two-deep are either true freshmen or redshirt freshmen.

Things are looking promising for 2009 and 2010, but what about the here and now?

"There has to be a sense of urgency on my part as the coach and on their part as a player to get them ready to go rather than just saying, 'My time is going to be here in a year or two years or whatever the case may be,'" Grimes said. "A lot of freshmen come in and say that they're redshirting and going to take it easy. If that's their approach they won't be ready to play for a long time."

Miller feels like his time is now. And what better time than a nationally televised game against a storied program in the home opener?

Keep an eye out for No. 73. He should be pretty easy to find.

"I'm going to bust it," Miller said. "And if I make a mistake, I'll make it going 110 (percent), I guarantee it."



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Blood trumps FSU for ex-Seminole

Father of CU's Hartigan played for Bowden

By Ryan Thorburn

Thursday, September 13, 2007

There is one Colorado football player already looking forward to next year's rematch with Florida State.

True freshman linebacker Josh Hartigan, who will likely redshirt this season, was born in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and his father, Sterling Palmer, was a linebacker/defensive end for Bobby Bowden from 1989-92.

"Him and my ma, those are my No. 1 fans," Hartigan said after Wednesday's practice as CU prepares for the Seminoles visit to Folsom Field on Saturday night. "Even though I'm not going to be playing this weekend, my dad said he'll be rooting for us. But his heart is still always going to be at Florida State and with Coach Bowden and everybody."

Hartigan, 18, enrolled at CU last January and participated in spring drills. But unless the Buffs suffer some injuries at linebacker, his chance to crack the lineup will probably have to wait until at least next season.

"I'm still a young kid and I'm still new," said Hartigan, who had 100 tackles during his senior season at Northeast High School in Broward County, Fla. "I have everything down, but I'm still trying to get everything solid to where I can possibly get in the mix next season and get more work this spring coming up."

Palmer, who had hoped to make the trip to Boulder but will not be able to, was a fourth-round draft pick of the Washington Redskins in 1993 and played in the NFL for three seasons.

On Sept. 20, 2008, the Buffs will play at Florida State. Hartigan is motivated to make an impact in that game.

"That would be real special for me," he said.

Smith set to play

Wide receiver Josh Smith has been cleared to play after suffering a kidney injury during the preseason. And the speedy freshman doesn't seem to have slowed down at all during his recovery, according to the head coach.

"We came out here and played Buff ball on (Sunday), and the guy was all-world," Dan Hawkins said. "He has been unbelievable. Conditioning looked good, he's running fast, he's making plays, gets hit, jumps up. Very impressive."

The Buffs' offense will also get a boost with the return of running back Hugh Charles, who missed most of the Colorado State game and didn't make the trip to Arizona State after pulling a hamstring.

"They both look good. They both look really good," Hawkins said. "They're both running well."

Quotable

Hawkins when asked to be specific about which true freshmen will make their debut on Saturday night:

"That's the surprise ... it's like when you're reading Harry Potter and you get down to that last chapter, 'Holy smokes.' You can't give it away before it ends."

Ticket update

The CU ticket office reported that it still had about 1,900 tickets available for Saturday's game as of 6 p.m. on Wednesday.



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CU-FSU game info, stats

Buffzone staff

Thursday, September 13, 2007

Matchup: Florida State (1-1) at Colorado (1-1).

Site: Saturday, 8:10 p.m. at Folsom Field (53,750).

TV: ESPN; KOA (850 AM). Web site: seminoles.cstv.com

Coaches: Bobby Bowden is the winningest football coach in college football history with a 368-113-4 career record, including a 295-81-4 in 32 years at Florida State. The Seminoles have produced a winning record in 30 consecutive seasons and Bowden has won two national championships. Bowden will coach his 486th game against CU.

Dan Hawkins (56-23, 3-11 at CU)

Last Meeting: Florida State passed for 458 yards on Sept. 20, 2003, and the Seminoles ran away with a 47-7 victory over the Buffs. Former CU quarterback Erik Greenberg started for the first time in his career and hooked up with former wide receiver Jeremy Bloom on an 81-yard touchdown pass for the Buffs' only points in the game.

Series: Florida State leads 1-0 with the 47-7 victory in 2003 at Tallahassee.

Stats: [View injuries, stats, history of the series in addition to live game updates during Saturday's game.](#)

Key Players: QB Drew Weatherford: A junior who has started 25 of the past 28 games for the Seminoles. He has thrown for 5,836 yards in his career. The only quarterback in Atlantic Coast Conference history to throw for more yards at the same point in his career is former North Carolina State quarterback Phillip Rivers.

WR De'Cody Fagg: The offensive team captain. He has caught at least one pass in 16 consecutive games. Has 83 career receptions but only two touchdowns.

S Roger Williams: The Seminoles leading returning tackler coming in to this season. He has played in 40 games in his career. Williams made seven total tackles, forced a fumble and recovered a fumble in Saturday's win over UAB.

The lowdown: Tailback Antone Smith suffered a concussion in the Seminoles' victory over Alabama-Birmingham on Saturday and is questionable. ... The Seminoles are 23-5-1 in nonconference games since 1992. The five losses and one tie have come against three opponents Florida, Miami and Notre Dame. ... FSU features six offensive linemen with extensive playing experience. They have started 82 games combined. ... Thirteen of the Seminoles' 15 top tacklers in 2006 returned for this season. ... The FSU roster features 70 players from the state of Florida.

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Bowden in rare form for trip to rarefied air

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By The Associated Press

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Tallahassee, Fla. - Bobby Bowden and Florida State are heading to Colorado this weekend for the first time in his long coaching career, and Bowden said this week he's more concerned about the 8 p.m. start time than the altitude.

"It's past my bedtime, but not theirs," said Bowden, who is 20-6 in his career against Big 12 teams. The mark includes his 0-4 ledger against Oklahoma, as well as a 47-7 rout of the Buffaloes when they made their lone trip to Tallahassee in 2004.

"We won't pay attention to that altitude thing," Bowden said. "I've been asked, 'What are you going to do about the altitude?' I ain't going to do a darn thing. We can't let that get into their (players') head. We'll breathe whatever they give us."

The Seminoles don't head west until Friday.

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cu football

Fundamentals key to stopping 'Noles

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder - A review of game films sometimes reveals that an upcoming opponent isn't as fast or athletic as reputation might suggest.

This does not happen to be one of those weeks, Colorado offensive tackle Tyler Polumbus said Wednesday when asked about Florida State.

"You only need to watch five plays of their defense and you can tell that all four guys up front could be playing linebacker," Polumbus said.

Colorado coach Dan Hawkins is certain Florida State's football team would win a relay race against Arizona State. And ASU, which beat Colorado 33-14 last Saturday, is thought to have above-average speed.

"Based off film, Florida State looks faster than we do," Hawkins conceded. "We're just going to have to be very detailed and execute."

The Bobby Bowden-coached Seminoles (1-1)

almost always have a speed advantage on their opponent. And it's across the board, including positions not usually associated with speed.

The offensive guards are quick. The offensive tackles have great feet. Interior defensive linemen Andre Fluellen (6-feet-4, 280 pounds) and Budd Thacker (6-2, 268) can move. The linebackers can fly.

"They're all just really good athletes," CU sophomore tight end Riar Geer said. "They're big and strong and really fast. They make good reads. They're good reaction guys.

"We haven't played a team this big and this fast. It's going to be a big challenge. We're looking forward to that. We're going to try to hit them in the mouth and do everything we can to gain an advantage."

Sound fundamentals are paramount to playing against a faster team.

"We really have to emphasize our technique," Polumbus said. "If we get sloppy at all, they're going to take advantage of it. They're fast, and they've got motors. They run to the ball."

There are two ways to counteract speed, offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said Wednesday.

"One approach is the 'run directly at them' mentality," Helfrich explained. "And there's the misdirection mentality.

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"We're going to try to do a little bit of both."

Footnotes

A CU student group is organizing an unofficial "Black Out" at Folsom Field for Saturday night's game. The school's athletic department has traditionally asked Buffs fans to wear gold to home games. ... Approximately 1,900 tickets remain for the game, according to CU officials. Tickets may be purchased by calling 1-800-87Buffs. ... Dan Hawkins is starting a pregame ritual for home games that he hopes will become a Colorado tradition. The "Buffalo Roundup" involves the team getting off buses 2 1/2 hours before kickoff and having each player touch the Buffalo sculpture southwest of the stadium before heading to the locker room. "Fans will get fired up, and it gets the players fired up," Hawkins said. ... This will be the first of three home games played on consecutive weekends. That hasn't happened since the 1998 season.

Speed thrills

A sample of Florida State's speed:

Tony Carter, junior cornerback: Made finals in Florida high school 110-meter hurdles championships.

Jamaal Edwards, junior tailback: Clocked in 10.7 for 100 meters in high school.

Michael Ray Garvin, junior cornerback: Personal best of 10.21 in 100 meters for FSU national championship track team.

Patrick Robinson, sophomore cornerback: Runs sprints for the school's track team.

Antone Smith, junior tailback: Consistently timed at 4.3 for 40 yards.

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Local college football notebook

September 13, 2007

CU

Walking a thin line

Through two games, the same five offensive linemen have taken every snap for the Buffaloes.

That could change this week, but a redshirt or two might be burned in the process.

Ideally, the Buffs would like to redshirt linemen such as **Kai Maiava** and 2006 prized recruit **Ryan Miller**, but it wouldn't be a total shocker if either plays Saturday against Florida State.

"We've been rotating the freshman in with some of the (starters) at practice, so they're ready if one of us needs to come out," center **Daniel Sanders** said. "But I'd like to see all those guys redshirt so they get the whole time to learn everything physically and mentally."

Another lineman in the mix to join the rotation is **Keenan Stevens**, a redshirt freshman from Lewis-Palmer High School.

Tall order

While much is being made of the speed the Buffs will encounter against the Florida State receiving corps, the Seminoles also have better size than what Colorado has seen this season.

Included in that mix is 6-foot-6, 215-pound Seminoles receiver **Greg Carr**.

"They've got some size and they run well, but we have some guys that run well, too," CU safety **Ryan Walters** said. "I've never seen anyone as fast as **Terrence Wheatley**, and **Ben Burney** is also a 4.3 (seconds for 40 yards) guy."

Despite not clicking on all on cylinders, the Florida State offense has averaged 237 passing yards during the first two games.

"I like the fact that we're playing these guys," Walters said. "We're not at all intimidated by the decal, not at all worried about anything but ourselves."

Starting slow

Florida State can point to a lot of reasons for slow starts in the first two games.

"I don't think there's really any one thing," quarterback **Drew Weatherford** said Monday. "I think a lot of it is just wanting it so bad and wanting to play so well."

Weatherford said the pressure comes from the desire to follow in the footsteps of the dominating program that hooked most of the current players as young fans.

"These guys want it more than anyone I've ever been around," Weatherford said. "It's almost our own worst enemy at times, it really is, wanting to perform at such a high level and bring this program back."

"If I was a defense, I'd definitely want to come out and see what the freshman quarterback kid could do cause, I mean, I look like 95 percent of the guys on campus. I, of all people, probably am Joe Schmo playing quarterback."

Cody Hawkins,

Etc.

- School officials said about 1,900 tickets for the game remained at the close of business Wednesday.
- A Facebook movement being picked up mostly by CU students is calling for a "blackout" at the game, for fans to dress in black. CU director of athletic media relations **Dave Plati** said it was a "student thing," and he reminded reporters the school encourages fans to wear gold. Players seem more excited by the prospect of having the crowd mostly in black.
- Coach **Dan Hawkins** said aside from a "sluggish last period," practice was productive. He said he pushed the Buffs a little harder, trying to rejuvenate the running game.
- Tailback **Hugh Charles** (hamstring) and receiver **Josh Smith** (bruised kidney) continue to show daily improvement, and Hawkins expects both to play. He said Smith, a true freshman eager to make his debut, seems in good condition and has resumed "making plays." Asked if Smith exhibited any rust from missing about three weeks of practice and two games, Hawkins answered, "Unbelievably, no." Smith said he was "kind of hoping to get roughed a little more" because he hasn't taken a solid hit. "I'm not worried about it, though," he said.

CSU

Rams go for two hours

Colorado State, which doesn't play until going on the road to play Houston on Sept. 22, went through a two-hour, full-pads practice.

The team will have another full practice today, with the schedule Friday to be determined. The team has Saturday and Sunday off and will begin preparing specifically for Houston on Monday.

"We're not working so much on Houston this week as working on our own stuff," coach **Sonny Lubick** said after drills Tuesday. "We're getting some things done. It's crucial for us to get a little better in a lot of areas, to clean up some things. I've really seen some improvement in some areas, especially special teams."

Lubick said starting center **Tim Walter**, who did not play Saturday against California because of an ankle injury, should resume practice Monday and figures to play against Houston.

Starting nose guard **Erik Sandie**, who did not practice Tuesday because of a sore knee, practiced Wednesday.

Backup middle linebacker **Matt Hendrick** (knee) likely will miss at least two more weeks.