



CU's humble Hawaiian on record pace

Dizon averaging nation-leading 17 tackles per game

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, September 20, 2007

He used to make plays on instinct and even luck. In the early days of his college football career, Colorado linebacker Jordon Dizon admits he sometimes stumbled into the right place at the right time.

There were also plenty of instances in his first three years in black and gold when Dizon found himself out of position but was able to make up the difference with superior speed and athletic ability.

But now, in his senior season, Dizon is making plays on a record pace because he is no longer wasting time thinking about his assignments. He knows them, which allows him to have some fun.

The Colorado senior from Waimea, Hawaii, is leading the nation in tackles three games into the season. He has made 51 total tackles and if he continues at this pace — 17 tackles per game — he will set a new single-season tackle record in Boulder, eclipsing the 183 total tackles made by Ray Cone in the 1982 season.

In fairness to Cone, he accomplished the feat in only 11 games. Dizon is assured of 12 this season, barring injury. Dizon, who is on pace to make 204 take-downs, isn't the sort to care about records or leading the nation throughout an entire season.

"I couldn't care less," he said. "If we win the Big 12 championship and I'm leading in tackles, yeah, that would be awesome. If we don't win the championship and I'm leading in tackles, it means absolutely nothing.

"I just want to get the 'W' at the end of the day. I don't care what my stats are."

He's about to have a little more competition for those tackles when the Buffs line up against Miami (Ohio) on Saturday (1:30 p.m., no television). Sophomore linebacker Michael Sipili returns this week after serving a three-game suspension for off-field incidents over the summer. And Sipili is angry.

Sipili said it tortured him to watch the past three games on television or from the sidelines. "I sat out three games," Sipili said. "One game was hard enough."

Dizon is not only the leading tackler in the nation so far this season, he's No. 3 in career tackles among active players (331), trailing only Thomas Keith (357) from Central Michigan and Vince Hall (339) from Virginia Tech.

A tackle is a tackle no matter what down it comes on or where it happens on the field, but Dizon has been particularly valuable to his team thus far because he seems to have a knack for making stops on

third and fourth downs.

After recording 17 third-down stops in 2006 — one shy of the school record held by Chad Brown — Dizon already has registered six in three games this fall.

"It's good to have Sipili back. It's good to have my starting middle linebacker back in there," CU linebackers coach Brian Cabral said. "We'll just kind of take it and see how it goes, but I don't think that's going to make any difference with Jordon's productivity. Jordon is just so active. Jordon is playing well. Jordon is on a roll."

And Dizon refuses to take credit for it.

The humble Hawaiian pointed to defensive linemen George Hypolite, Brandon Nicolas, Alonzo Barrett and Maurice Lucas when the tackle topic came up this week.

"A lot of people don't understand this but the D-line's job is to eat up blocks," Dizon said. "When they have a great day, I have a great day."

"I watch the film and I only shed like five or six blocks a game. So I'm running free having fun and they're in the doghouse taking a beating for me."

Hypolite, who is having quite a season so far himself, smiled broadly when told Dizon is giving the defensive line all the credit for his success.

"As a defensive lineman, it's very comforting to know I can keep guys off him and he's going to make tackles," Hypolite said. "It's a great relationship to have."

In the first three games this season, Dizon has moved past his former teammate J.J. Billingsley, former linebacker Jashon Sykes, who now serves as an on-campus recruiting director for the program, and his position coach, Cabral, on the school's career tackles list.

Mickey Pruitt, Michael Lewis, Thaddaeus Washington and Michael Jones are all within Dizon's range this week. Barring a major drop-off in production, he will become the fifth CU player in history to record 400 tackles in a career, somewhere around the middle of the Big 12 Conference schedule.

"If you watch the same film I'm watching, you can drive a semi-truck through the holes I'm running through," Dizon said. "It's just wide open. I'm running free. I better make the tackle. I've been having the time of my life. It's like tackling practice out there."



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Drawing some ire

Unforthcoming about injury, CU's Charles angers coach

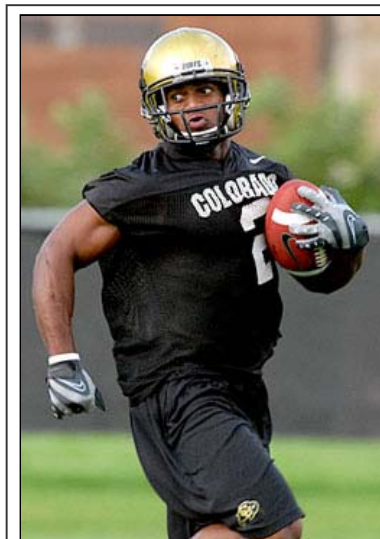
By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — Darian Hagan is mad at Hugh Charles.

Hagan, the University of Colorado's running backs coach, learned after the Florida State loss that Charles, the Buffs' best running back, played Saturday night against the Seminoles even though the hamstring injury he suffered two weeks earlier remained enough of a problem as to affect how he ran.

"I'm not happy with him for doing what he did, but you have to move on," Hagan said Wednesday. "He's 100 percent now, and I told him if he's the big-time back we think he can be and the big-time back he thinks he is, he'll show up this weekend."

Charles, CU's leading rusher the past two seasons, said he expects to be 100 percent healthy on Saturday when CU hosts Miami-Ohio (1:30 p.m., no TV). Hagan said he believes Charles this time based on how Charles has run in practice this week.



CU running back Hugh Charles says he is 100 percent healed from the hamstring injury he suffered in the Buffs' season opener against CSU. **Times-Call/Joshua Buck**

But according to Hagan, the running back was not as forthcoming as he should have been when they discussed his health last week.

"I told him I was (angry) at him because I asked him early in the week if he was OK, and he said he was fine," Hagan said. "He said, 'I didn't want to lie to you,' and I said, 'You did.. You should have told me the truth. We would have gotten somebody else in there, and we would have been all right. You run out of bounds because you're hurt. Guys who would have made that extra effort, we could have scored.'"

"He said he's 100 percent now. He's looking like it. He's running around the corner, he's accelerating, he's doing pretty good."

Charles and Hagan know CU's running game is struggling, and offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said it's an area of "re-emphasis" this week. The Buffs are averaging 1.7 yards a carry and 44.7 a game, which is 116th among the nation's 119 Division I teams.

Charles missed all but the beginning of the opener against Colorado State before he strained the hamstring, and he did not travel to Arizona State the next week.

Charles excelled in camp, putting him in position for a strong senior season. He spent time this summer watching Eric Bienenmy tapes with Hagan, who wants Charles to run as tough as Bienenmy once did at CU.

Charles might have felt obliged to live up to that standard. But now, he's eager to put last week in the past.

"I could've made a difference if I was," Charles said. "This week is a different week, and we're going back to the drawing board. This is going to be a good game to get our confidence back."

Charles finished with nine yards on four carries, plus 41 yards on five catches against Florida State.

Hagan said his rotation will no longer be a “running-back-by-committee deal,” and he’ll now go with who’s playing best.

Coaches pulled Brian Lockridge’s redshirt last week, and head coach Dan Hawkins said they don’t intend to let the freshman sit on the bench.

“We’re not going to waste him,” Hawkins said. “We have to be able to make it meaningful for him, both on offense and special teams.”

CU’s leading rusher is redshirt freshman Demetrius Sumler with 133 yards, 44.3 a game.

On scholarship: Defensive coordinator Ron Collins said reserve linebacker Jeff Smart has been put on scholarship.

Smart, a 5-foot-11, 210-pound sophomore from Boulder High, walked on at CU in 2005. He’s listed as Jordon Dizon’s back up, but when R.J. Brown sustained a concussion last weekend, coaches put Smart at Brown’s spot, and they said Smart played well.

“He comes in and gives us exactly what we need,” Collins said.

Miami QB: Miami will start quarterback Daniel Raudabaugh on Saturday, according to the Oxford (Ohio) Press. He’ll replace Mike Kokal, who has started 14 of the RedHawks’ previous 15 games.

Raudabaugh relieved Kokal last week against Cincinnati and went 24-for-45 for 240 yards and a touchdown, which is the only touchdown Cincinnati’s defense has allowed in 2007. Miami (1-2) still lost, 47-10.

“He gets the ball out of his hands a little quicker,” Miami coach Shane Montgomery told the Press. “Linebackers play a significant amount of (CU’s) one-on-one coverage, and by getting the ball out of his hands quicker, that gives Daniel an advantage there.”

Extra points: Hawkins practically gushed about the way the offense performed in Wednesday’s practice. He said it “did a great job,” and added the 16 live run plays it ran were “awesome.” ... Hawkins said tight end Riar Geer (knee) will be on the “ready ready” for Saturday, even though Geer has not been practicing. Geer is listed atop CU’s tight end grouping, followed by seniors Joe Sanders and Tyson DeVree.... Collins said Brown has not been practicing. ... Punter Matt DiLallo has been named to the Ray Guy Award watch list. Through three games, he’s averaging 41.2 yards per try and has placed six inside the opponents’ 20. He’s one of 41, and one of five underclassmen, on the list.

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Rocky Mountain News

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Local college football notebook

By B.G. Brooks and Paul Willis (CU); Randy Holtz(CSU); Jim Benton (Air Force); Pat Rooney (UNC) and wire services (Wyoming).
September 19, 2007

CU

Eberhart safe - for now

Kevin Eberhart doesn't have to look over his shoulder. At least not quite yet, according to Colorado coach **Dan Hawkins**.

But if the placekicker continues to struggle - he has made only half his six field-goal attempts this season and missed from 37 and 46 yards against Florida State on Saturday - waiting in the wings is true freshman **Tyler Cope**, who has handled kickoff duties for the Buffaloes.

Hawkins said he hopes Eberhart can stay on an even keel despite the ever-changing hero-goat status of kickers.

"Stay off the mountain, stay out of the valley," Hawkins said.

Eberhart, who has waited four years for his turn at CU, made the game-winner against Colorado State in the Buffs' opener and also converted a 22-yarder to send the game to overtime. But he has yet to exhibit the consistency of predecessor **Mason Crosby**, now with the Green Bay Packers in the NFL.

Directional running

Hawkins recognizes **Hugh Charles'** speed, but he's still pushing his senior tailback to be more straight ahead than side to side.

"There's no question he's fast, but I want him to be able to put his foot on the ground and go north-south," Hawkins said, noting that, while Charles improved in that respect during training camp, "It's different when it's live and . . . for all the marbles. We talk about if you block a play for 5 (yards), get 8. If you took a 4-yard play and made 9, to me, that's the measure of a great back.

"You have to do that down in, down out. The lights are on, there are 50,000 people in the stands and somebody's playing against you that's a pretty good football team. You prove it there. That's where it's got to come down."

Charles, who missed the Arizona State trip because of a strained hamstring, has rushed four times for 9 yards and caught six passes for 56 yards in two games.

Spoils of victory

After losses, don't expect the coaching staff to choose any weekly award winners.

Why?

"People ask that. . . I guess a lot of it is like I told (players), 'Think about yourself (being) 45 years old in your law firm, and you've got a game ball sitting on the mantel,' " Hawkins said.



Kevin Eberhart

"(Someone asks), 'What's that for?' And you go, 'I was the player of the week against Florida State.'

"You were? Did you guys win?"

"No."

"I'm just not sure that's what you want sitting on your mantel."

Etc.

- Though tight end **Riar Geer** is listed as probable for the game Saturday, he will not play, according to a published report. The *Daily Camera* reported Geer, CU's leading receiver last season, tore meniscus cartilage in his left knee and also injured the medial collateral ligament. But Hawkins said after practice Wednesday that Geer "is going to go. We'll have him in the ready-ready."

- **Shane Montgomery** is in his third season (10-16) as Miami's coach and his seventh season overall at the school. Among the other finalists for the RedHawks job was former CU offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach **Shawn Watson**, who now holds the same position at Nebraska.

- Miami's athletic director is **Brad Bates**, a former CU strength and conditioning coach.

- Hawkins said the offense "did a great job (Wednesday). They were about perfect 7-on (-7 drills) with very few repeats. They're starting to feel it and figure out how to practice that will pay dividends."

He said it

"If you're playing fantasy football on Saturday night, how many Buffs are you drafting? . . . But it's not about what's on paper."

Hawkins, on CU's slim margin for error and making the most of chances.

CSU

Brewer questionable

Redshirt freshman linebacker **Ricky Brewer**, who suffered a freakish injury to a finger on his right hand during warm-ups before CSU's loss to California, will make the trip to Houston but might play only on special teams, if at all. Brewer is practicing but wearing heavy padding on his right hand.

"He'll make the trip, but we'd prefer to give it some more time to heal before we use him at linebacker," defensive coordinator **Steve Stanard** said. "We'll have to see how his hand comes along and how he does with the padding he has on there."

Brewer, the preseason Mountain West Conference freshman player of the year, played sparingly in a backup role in CSU's opener against Colorado. The Mullen High School graduate broke a finger on his hand while playing catch with Stanard during a drill before the game against California.

He said it

"You guys (in the media) ask about a must-win game five times every year. Colorado was a must-win. Cal was a must-win. If we win those two, everybody's saying we're great, but then if we get our butts beat by Houston, everybody's wondering what's wrong. I'd still like to win seven or eight games this year, and I still think that's a possibility. They're all important."

Sonny Lubick, CSU coach.

Etc.