



Celestine hoping for Independence Bowl

CU receiver from Louisiana already getting ticket requests

By Kyle Ringo

Sunday, December 2, 2007

Colorado freshman wide receiver Kendrick Celestine might be the only guy on the team rooting for a trip to the Independence Bowl when the bowl lineup is announced today, but no one is going to hold it against him.

If Celestine gets his wish — and things are definitely in his favor — he might be the most popular guy on the team over the next month — a tour guide so to speak.

Celestine is the only member of the team from Louisiana. He grew up in Mamou, La., about a three-hour drive south of Shreveport, La., off Interstate 49. Celestine said he already has had ticket requests from friends and family and the Buffs haven't received an official invitation.

He said he will probably need at least 20 tickets, which means coaxing a few of his teammates into giving up their seats.

"I can't wait to go back home," Celestine said. "I've been looking forward to going home for the past month and when I found out we might play in the Independence Bowl, I really got excited because that would give my family a chance to come to the game."

The bowl lineup will be finalized today and announced this afternoon. Colorado is believed to be heading to the Independence Bowl in Shreveport for the first time. The Buffs could also go to the Texas Bowl in Houston or the Insight Bowl in Tempe, Ariz. However, it appears as if Oklahoma State will receive an invitation from the Insight Bowl ahead of the Buffs.

Both teams have the same 6-6 record, and the Buffs have established theirs against a much more difficult schedule, which has had some around the Colorado program wondering why Insight officials would choose OSU.

If the Buffs do go to the Independence Bowl, Alabama is thought to be the most likely candidate from the Southeastern Conference to meet them there. South Carolina and Arkansas also are possibilities.

The Crimson Tide finished the regular season with four consecutive losses including a surprising setback against Louisiana-Monroe and a bitter loss to rival Auburn.

Colorado also has only one player on the roster from Alabama and senior defensive end Alonzo Barrett said he would relish the opportunity to play against the Crimson Tide in his final college game.

Barrett came to CU in 2004 from Alabaster, Ala., where he played his high school ball at Thompson

High. Barrett played against several members of the current Alabama team.

"It would be a great way to go out," Barrett said. "I played a lot of those guys in high school and it would be fun playing hometown and state. I know I'd have a lot of people watching. Talk a little trash to all the Alabama fans back home."

Barrett said he will probably have a high number of ticket requests as well regardless of whether the opponent is Alabama. Barrett's father grew up about 20 minutes outside Shreveport and there is still plenty of family in the area.

Barrett has blocked two punts in the final three regular-season games of his college career and has produced a solid senior season. He underwent a minor arthroscopic knee surgery this week and is expected to be ready for the bowl game.

He said he's looking forward to a final opportunity to put on his uniform and chase after a quarterback.

"It's one last hoorah with my fellas and just go out on a winning note," he said.

Notable

Coach Dan Hawkins said he hasn't heard whether assistant coaches will have to pay for their families to make the bowl trip as members of the 2005 coaching staff were forced to do. He said he believes it won't be a problem. "I don't think it's going to end up being an issue. So I'm not real worried about it," he said. ... Hawkins said the team looked like it hadn't practiced in a while at the start of the first bowl practice Saturday afternoon. He said things got better as the practice moved along. Hawkins said the first eight or nine bowl practices are usually used for generic-type stuff. ... Defensive tackle George Hypolite and cornerback Terrence Wheatley are nursing injuries but they are expected to be ready for the bowl game.



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Bufs, 'Bama bound for Independence Bowl

Dec. 30 game will be only bowl played that day

Sunday, December 2, 2007

Every college football player dreams of playing on Sundays. The Colorado Buffaloes and Alabama Crimson Tide will get their chance.

The two storied programs will meet for the third time in the postseason on Sunday, Dec. 30, in Shreveport, La., in the 32nd annual Independence Bowl, officials announced Sunday. It is the only bowl game scheduled that day and will kickoff at 6 p.m. (MDT), following action in the National Football League.

"We historically get teams on the way up and I think that is definitely the case this year with these two teams," Independence Bowl chairman Joe Darwin said. "The most intriguing thing about it for us is we've never had Colorado here before. From a television standpoint, it's a great matchup. ESPN is very excited about it."

Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn said CU will have an advance team in Shreveport on Thursday to scout practice sites and begin planning team activities and hospitality events for fans. The Buffs will travel to Louisiana on Dec. 26 for the 28th bowl in program history.

"Obviously, we're excited because the Independence Bowl committee is so excited to have the Buffs," Bohn said. "That says a lot. We want to match their enthusiasm and give them a game that leaves them with a good impression of our team and our program as a whole."

Colorado has been inconsistent in supporting teams with fan support in bowl games and Big 12 Conference championship games. With the game located in SEC country, it figures to be another neutral-site game that feels more like a road game for the Buffs.

Bohn said he is committed to doing whatever possible to draw large number of fans clad in black and gold to Shreveport, including the possibility of chartering a plane for fans if the demand exists.

Darwin said the Independence Bowl isn't worried about CU's reputation of not traveling well.

Alabama is making an NCAA record 55th bowl appearance and its second consecutive trip to the Independence Bowl. The Crimson Tide lost last season to Oklahoma State in Shreveport, but it comes to town this year with a new coaching staff led by Nick Saban, who was hired away from the Miami Dolphins in January for a reported \$32 million.

Saban said he has great respect for CU coach Dan Hawkins and he's looking forward to the contest against a quality Big 12 Conference team. He's also looking forward to seeing Ralphie IV, CU's live

Buffalo mascot make her run.

Saban said he has seen Ralphie's pregame and halftime romps once before, when he served as an assistant coach at Michigan State in 1984 and the Spartans visited Folsom Field. Saban's team won that day 24-21.

"I think it's one of the great things about college football is the tradition and Colorado has great tradition," he said. "I cherish those traditions in college football."

Both programs finished the regular season with 6-6 records. They share one common opponent in Florida State. Colorado lost to FSU, 16-6, and Alabama lost to the Seminoles, 21-14.

The Buffs did so in Hawkins' second season as coach following a 2-10 season in 2006. The Buffs competed against one of the most difficult schedules in all of college football. CU played seven bowl teams, including four that were ranked among the top-14 teams in the Bowl Championship Series standings — the teams eligible to play in BCS games.

Alabama was disappointed to finish at .500 in Saban's first season as coach in a tradition-rich southern stronghold. The Crimson Tide started well in the Southeastern Conference, arguably the toughest conference in the sport, but lost its final four games, including a head-scratcher against Louisiana-Monroe.

CU and Alabama have played only twice before and both times came in bowl games. The Buffs won the first contest 47-33 in the 1969 Liberty Bowl in Memphis, Tenn. It was the final game in former CU running back Bobby Anderson's Hall of Fame career.

Alabama beat the Buffs 30-25 in the 1991 Blockbuster Bowl, a game memorable to many CU fans because of former coach Bill McCartney's decision beforehand to scrap the program's I-bone offense and switch to a passing-oriented attack.

McCartney explained the decision at the time saying he believed passing offenses were the future of college football. Looking around today, he appears to have been ahead of his time.

Katoa commits

Along with the bowl bid, the Buffs also received some good news in the recruiting department on Sunday. According to Scout.com, five-star linebacker Lynn Katoa committed to CU over the weekend. Katoa is a 6-2, 220-pounder from Cottonwood High School in Salt Lake City who is ranked by Scout as the No. 2 middle linebacker in the nation.

Among the other schools who offered Katoa a scholarship were Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas and Florida.

Paired with Ponderosa's Jon Major, that gives the Buffs two five-star linebackers in the current recruiting class.



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cu football

Buffaloes appear set for Independence Bowl

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Unless the BCS bowls pull a surprise and do not take a second team from the Big 12 Conference, look for Colorado to play in the Dec. 30 PetroSun Independence Bowl in Shreveport, La.

The official announcement of bowl pairings will be made today.

"Things can happen, but that's the way it looks," Independence Bowl chairman Joe Darwin said Saturday. "We think Colorado is an exciting team. We've had good conversations with them. They're obviously excited to go to a bowl.

"Being in the Big 12 and playing the schedule they did, winning six games is a statement of the kind of season they had. They had a good season. They've been on our radar since the beginning of the year. We'll be excited to have them."

Colorado (6-6, 4-4 Big

12) will play a representative of the Southeastern Conference: Alabama (6-6, 4-4 SEC), South Carolina (6-6, 3-5) or Arkansas (8-4,

Colorado Football

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4-4).

"I think Colorado matches up with any of those SEC teams," Darwin said.

Colorado is likely headed to the Independence Bowl because the Tempe, Ariz.,-based Insight Bowl will take Oklahoma State, Darwin said. Oklahoma State never has played in the Insight Bowl, and Colorado would be making its first appearance in the Independence Bowl.

Colorado is known to people in Louisiana, Darwin said. The Buffaloes have played against LSU, and former CU coach Bill McCartney recruited out of Louisiana, getting quarterback Kordell Stewart from the New Orleans area.

"Yeah, Kordell is one that got away," Darwin said with a chuckle. "Colorado might be able to use our game to get back in here and expand their recruiting territory."

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If the BCS does not take a second Big 12 team (in addition to Saturday night's winner of the conference championship game, which qualifies automatically), the Independence Bowl probably would choose between CU and Texas A&M. That could bump the Buffaloes to the Dec. 28 Texas Bowl in Houston.

"But conventional wisdom is the Big 12 will get two teams in the BCS," Darwin said.

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Buff's giddy to be practicing in December

CU's bowl destination to be determined today

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — A week away from practice didn't change the Colorado Buffaloes' stance regarding the postseason.

They're just happy they're going.

"It feels good just to be out practicing in the month of December," redshirt freshman cornerback Jimmy Smith said. "Sitting home last year felt horrible."

The Buffs (6-6) held their first bowl practice Saturday, outside of their new practice bubble, after taking the previous seven days to study, rest and recuperate. They will learn their destination today, which will be either the Insight Bowl, Independence Bowl or Texas Bowl.

The Big 12 has eight bowl-eligible teams and eight guaranteed spots, including at least one BCS Bowl.

Oklahoma and Texas newspapers reported this week Oklahoma State appears headed to the Insight in Tempe, Ariz., on Dec. 31, against a Big Ten team.

The Insight has the sixth choice of Big 12 teams.

The Independence picks seventh, and may have no choice but to take CU if the league has two teams in BCS bowls and the Buffs fall that far. The other team in the Independence Bowl, which is Dec. 30 in Shreveport, La., will be from the SEC.

If the Big 12 manages only one BCS bid, CU could fall to the Texas Bowl, which has the last choice. If that happens, the Buffs will play Houston — in Houston — on Dec. 28.

Oklahoma, by virtue of winning the Big 12 title Saturday night, will play in a BCS bowl, probably the Fiesta. Kansas and Missouri are hopeful of receiving BCS at-large spots and will also learn their fate today. The Fiesta Bowl has reportedly developed an interest in the Jayhawks, and may even pair them against Oklahoma.

CU players and coaches continue to shrug at questions about where they're headed.

"I think we're excited as a team, in general, just to be in a position where we can go practice for another game and get better, because we're so young, and go play in a bowl game," redshirt freshman receiver Scotty McKnight said.

"Obviously we have our preferences, and me being a Californian, I'd love to play close to home. But I love traveling and I'll play anywhere."

FRESHMAN PHENOMS: Three Buffs were placed on The Sporting News' all-Big 12 freshman team: offensive linemen Ryan Miller and Kai Maiava, and McKnight.

McKnight is a walk-on, but recently had talks with CU coach Dan Hawkins about being placed on scholarship, possibly

as early as spring.

“That wouldn’t change anything for me,” said McKnight, who led CU with 43 catches for 488 yards in 2007. “Maybe it would be for my parents, because they won’t have to pay for my school anymore for me. But you don’t get treated any differently on this team if you’re a walk-on.”

McKnight predicted big things for another CU freshman in 2008. Markques Simas, who’s redshirting in 2007, will be a “great receiver.”

“He’s so smooth, and he catches the ball really well,” McKnight said.

Miller, who is six weeks into growing a beard, called the honor “an accomplishment.”

“It’s great and all, but we have a bowl game to focus on,” Miller said.

EXTRA POINTS: Ryan Deehan, a 6-foot-4, 228-pound tight end from Poway, Calif., has committed to CU, according to the San Diego Union-Tribune. Rivals.com lists Deehan as a four-star prospect. He’s the 12th known commitment in CU’s class, according to recruiting sites. ... Hawkins said the issue of whether assistant coaches will have to pay their family’s way on CU’s bowl trip is a non-issue. He said there are talks going on now about it, and he thinks it’ll get worked out. Assistants had to pay for their family’s travel when CU went to the Champs Sports Bowl in 2005 ... CU practices again today before coaches scatter for recruiting. Hawkins said the first eight or nine bowl practices will be “general stuff.” He said CU will have about 17 bowl practices.

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