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TIMES-CALL

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Cantrell content with role

CU fullback: Rushing attempts not a concern

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — The block fullback Maurice Cantrell threw Wednesday morning at Colorado football practice should've been illegal.

The senior sent some unsuspecting defender tumbling backward with a thunderous hit that crackled through the morning air.

Teammates howled with approval. They hope to see similar pancakes on many occasions this fall.

What no one has seen since Cantrell made the switch from linebacker to fullback in August 2006 is him get a carry in a game. Will that happen in 2008?

Head coach Dan Hawkins, a former fullback himself, joked every CU fullback will get two carries a year, "whether he likes it or not."

The 6-foot, 245-pound Cantrell does not sound worried about it.

"I'm just doing what they tell me to do," Cantrell said.

Does he expect one?

"Right now, I don't think they have anything in there for me to get a carry," Cantrell said. "But we have some routes.

"As long as we win. I'd rather win without a carry than get a carry and lose."

Cantrell said he's comfortable after two years in the system. He has worked to learn the "nuances of how to play fullback," and said he does not regret waiting to move to the position after spending his first two years in college as a linebacker.

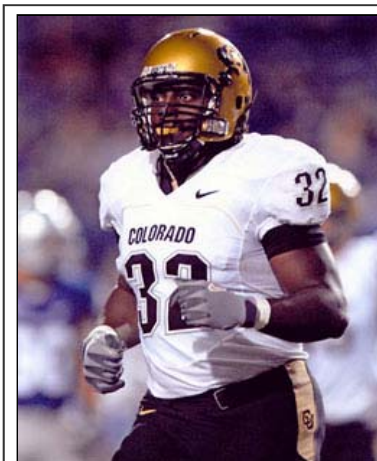
"Everything happens for a reason," he said.

Cantrell caught two passes in 2006, both in the same game, and none in 2007. So handling the ball is not something he does a lot.

His top priority is flattening would-be tacklers like he did Wednesday morning, and it appears to have made him popular with teammates. As Cantrell approached an interviewer Monday, linebacker Brad Jones and defensive tackle George Hypolite were there escorting him, smiling broadly, offering any sort of assistance he wanted.

Hawkins called Cantrell a "huge" part of CU's offense.

"Moe is a pretty strong kid and he's very smart," Hawkins said. "And you have to have those guys who are willing to



Two years ago, 6-foot, 245-pound Maurice Cantrell made the switch from linebacker to fullback, and he's found a home there for the Buffs. **Photo courtesy CU**

do whatever it takes to make the offense move. There's only one football and it can't go to everybody.

"You're going to throw him the ball a little bit each game. He's going to be a pass protector and a lead blocker and he's got to understand the whole scheme. And it's not always exactly cut and dry. You have to figure a few things out.

"He's one of those kids that's always so dog-gone consistent and mature, and he shows up every day."

SCOTT HURTS THUMB: Tailback Darrell Scott said he sprained his left thumb Wednesday morning in a pass-blocking drill, but added he does not expect it to be a lingering problem.

"Overall I'm good," Scott said. "I was having a pretty good practice before this."

Scott wore ice around his left hand after practice.

CU had a short practice Monday and team unity projects on Tuesday, giving Scott some time off his sore groin. He said it helped.

"We've basically had two days off, and I'm 100 percent," Scott said.

CU running back coach Darian Hagan said following Sunday's scrimmage that Demetrius Sumler will begin the season as the starting tailback.

Hagan said Scott could see early action as a short-yardage back. Scott is not expected to redshirt, Hagan said.

DEPTH CHART

COMING: CU is expected to release an updated depth chart any day now. It's expected to show redshirt freshman Matt Ballenger as the back-up quarterback.

An abdominal muscle injury has slowed senior Nick Nelson in recent days, keeping him out of Sunday's scrimmage.

Tyler Hansen has shown he can run and throw, but as a true freshman, is unlikely to enter a game before Ballenger if starter Cody Hawkins gets hurt.

Ballenger said he'll prepare just like he did last year while he redshirted.

"I'll take mental reps from Cody, get mental reps with the twos, just being the best prepared I can be, so if I do go in, I'll be ready," Ballenger said.

"Trying to get better, that's the biggest challenge."

EXTRA POINTS: Hawkins said the knee tendinitis that slowed senior defensive end Maurice Lucas in past years no longer bothers him as much, and Lucas is playing better. "I think he's just moving that much better," Hawkins said. ... No practices have yet been held this month at Folsom Field, which received new sod earlier this summer. Hawkins said he hoped his team would work on it before its first home game, Sept. 6 against Eastern Washington. ... Game-planning for the season opener against Colorado State (5:30 p.m., Aug. 31 at Invesco Field) starts today. ... Tuesday's day off was used for team-unity exercises, including a trip to the pool at the campus rec center and a trip to Dave & Buster's.

Read Patrick Ridgell's CU sports blog at timescall.com/blogs/ridgell. He can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.



Lucas letting loose for senior year

CU defensive end finds new outlook energizes his effort

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, August 21, 2008

Maurice Lucas appears to have found the symmetry he's heard his head coach promoting for two years now, a Zen-like existence where a man reaches his potential because he is happy and healthy on and off the football field.

The 6-foot-4 defensive end once fought over in a recruiting war between Colorado and Kansas State, is finally looking like he was worth all that attention back in 2004.

And the transformation hasn't been limited to what happens when he's wearing a helmet. He has found a comfort zone that has allowed him to be at ease with other people outside the football program.

At some point in the past year with his senior season on the horizon, Lucas said he came to a realization. It was something simple many of his teammates never give a second thought.

"Have fun," he said. "That's been a big emphasis to me. Sometimes I just need to have fun and stop being so tense and so stressed. I just need to have fun."

That approach has helped him in a lot of ways. He now embraces visits to the training room for treatment to help his body recover from the wear and tear he puts it through on the field and in the weight room. He used to opt to grin and bear the aches and pains.

He has dealt with tendonitis in his knees throughout much of his career, but has found relief for the pain this year. Coach Dan Hawkins said he noticed improvement in Lucas' play toward the end of last season and so far in training camp he has been solid as one of three seniors on the defensive line.

"To not be in pain all the time I think helps him play better," Hawkins said.

Hawkins is just one of many who have enjoyed seeing Lucas come out of his shell on and off the field.

Defensive line coach Romeo Bandison said after the second scrimmage of fall camp he believes Lucas has made the most improvement of all his players. It's not often coaches say that about a player who has been in the program for three years and is immersed in his fourth training camp.

Sophomore offensive tackle Ryan Miller was asked what defensive lineman he least likes to face in scrimmages and drills. He named Lucas in a blink, but then needed a few moments to explain why.

"Well, there isn't a word to describe how incredibly freakish he is," Miller said. "Mo is a manchild. He's strong. He's just kind of this quiet, hard worker, but, boy, that kid will bring it."

That wasn't always the case and Lucas is the first to say so.

Whether it was pain from his knees, the stress of wanting to do his best in school where he is pursuing a degree in criminology and defense, or that he just wasn't enjoying himself, he didn't always bring the right frame of mind to practices.

That's no longer the case.

"I feel comfortable," he said. "I feel so much more relaxed. I guess it's being a senior. I don't know how to explain it. It's just so much better right now."

Lucas said he wants to play in the National Football League before becoming a police or corrections officer. He believes he has a lot of work to do to get there.

At the outset of his final year in black and gold, his stats don't scream "future pro," even though he definitely looks the part, having added 20 pounds of muscle in the offseason. He will play this season at 270 instead of the 250 he weighed a year ago.

Lucas has played in 30 games and a total of 950 plays in his career but has been in on just four tackles. He also has made three sacks, but looks like he could equal that total in a hurry this season.

He said he wants to be noticed this season and remembered after it and that realization led to him making some changes.

"After you get your butt kicked a lot of times and you have to stay after practices, you finally learn to do things right," Lucas said. "You get tired of getting hurt every season, and you go, 'You know what? I'm going to go ahead and rehab after practice and I think I'm going to go watch film 'cause I'm tired of getting beat on that zone play.'"

"It's like after getting beat up so much and doing something wrong and being told the same thing over and over, it just kind of clicks in. It's like, 'OK, let's do something right.'"



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colorado football

come over and transition and get going."

Bufs turning attention to opener

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Seventeen days and more than two dozen practices or walkthroughs since August camp began, the Colorado football team commences game-planning today for its season opener.

CU plays Colorado State on Aug. 31, but to coaches and players, game-week preparation couldn't come soon enough.

"You just start limiting everything," CU coach Dan Hawkins said Wednesday. "Right now . . . you've got every blitz and front and play and formation. Kids are out here carrying a bazillion concepts in their head.

"(Beginning today) you can start honing down. You can simplify and do more reps on what you're actually going to do in a game."

From now on, starters and top backups figure to get most of the repetitions.

"The other guys are going to have to get mental reps and be great scout team players," Hawkins said. "Then, hey, if their number is called and they're paying attention and know the game plan, they're able to

Colorado Football

- [Watch](#) video of CU coach Dan Hawkins on first day of practice
- [Watch](#) video of CU freshman running back Darrell Scott
- [Watch](#) video of CU beginning fall practice
- [Visit](#) the CU Stats Page
- [Visit](#) Tom Kensler's All Things Bufs blog for a behind-the-scenes look at CU sports
- [Play](#) Pick'em for the upcoming CU football game

Hawkins has said he knows little about CSU quarterback Billy Farris, a first-year starter as a fifth-year senior. But Hawkins did recall watching the Rams' QBs warming up before last year's meeting.

"I was a big Caleb Hanie fan, but they all looked good," Hawkins said, referring to the former starter who completed his eligibility last season.

Fun and games.

In his tenure at CU in the 1990s, coach Rick Neuheisel was ridiculed by some fans for taking his squad tubing down Boulder Creek. Hawkins also believes it is important for players to get to know one another in a different setting. "Team unity" functions this week have included a trip to Dave and Buster's and to the CU rec center, where players did belly flops at the pool.

"I just believe there is so much magic in the world and so much magic in people; sometimes you let life

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trample that down," Hawkins said. "The more they connect with their families and us and the team, that's a huge deal."

Footnotes.

Hawkins said he does not believe the sprained thumb suffered by freshman tailback Darrell Scott during Wednesday's morning practice is serious. . . . Redshirt freshman safety Anthony Perkins, a 2006 All-Colorado selection at Northglenn High School, is in the mix for playing time in the nickel and dime formations, as well as on special-teams units, Hawkins said. . . . Senior fullback Maurice Cantrell had the hit of the day on a block. "You've got to have those guys to make the offense move," Hawkins said.

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CU report: Buffs work on 'team unity'

By B.G. Brooks

Wednesday, August 20, 2008

The Buffaloes spent much of Monday evening and Tuesday engaged in what coach **Dan Hawkins** terms "team unity" functions, which included a trip to Dave & Buster's, an impromptu diving competition at the CU recreation center pool (receiver **Josh "J-Fly" Smith** is reportedly the Buff to beat) and a three-point-shooting contest at the rec center's basketball courts.

Hawkins is a huge believer in the benefits of team chemistry, what it does for individuals and the formula required to achieve it.

"There's so much magic in the world, and sometimes, we let life trample that down," he said. "If I can get every single guy on our team to understand the dynamics and believe in those dynamics and have that pumping in their heart, we're going to graduate 100 percent of our guys, keep 100 percent of our guys out of trouble, we're going to win all our games. . . .

"That's my quest always with these guys - getting them to realize that."

Talking redshirt

Hagan plans to discuss whether a redshirt is a good idea for running back **Ray Polk**, which Hagan said the freshman from Phoenix initially opposed.

Hagan conceded that with Scott and **Rodney Stewart** on hand, and barring injuries to any more of his players, having Polk sit out this season was the "best-case scenario."

Polk has said he is not opposed to playing only special teams during his first season.

Thumbs up (and iced)

Prized freshman tailback **Darrell Scott** gave coaches a scare Wednesday morning when he suffered a sprained left thumb during a pass-protection drill. Scott left practice but returned later with his thumb iced and immobilized.

"I'm just glad he didn't break it," running-backs coach **Darian Hagan** said.

Scott said the injury would not keep him out of any work, and Hawkins said: "I think he'll be OK. We'll just have to tape it up and keep it from moving around."

Meanwhile, senior quarterback **Nick Nelson**, who missed Sunday's second scrimmage with a torn abdominal muscle, said he is out at least two weeks, putting redshirt freshman **Matt Ballenger** in the driver's seat to be **Cody Hawkins'** backup.

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