



# Bufs' Smart making name for himself

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, September 3, 2008

There might come a point in the future when Jeff Smart tires of being compared to Jordon Dizon. The guy deserves his own identity after all.

If he continues to play at a Dizon-like level, the day could come when Colorado coach Dan Hawkins compares future Buff linebackers to Smart.

Hawkins has made the Dizon comparisons when talking about Smart multiple times in spring and fall practices and he did it again Tuesday when asked to critique Smart's play in the season opener against Colorado State.

"He played great," Hawkins said. "I was telling Brian Cabral he really made some plays that were sort of reminiscent of Jordon.

"You know, not just your run-of-the-mill, hey-I-go-tackle-the-guys, but knifing through people and getting in there and being slippery."

Smart started at the "will" linebacker spot in the game, the position formerly manned by Dizon. Sophomore Michael Sipili started at middle linebacker where Smart played most last season. Smart said he began practicing at both the "mike" and "will" linebacker positions two weeks ago and is comfortable playing in either spot.

Hawkins said coaches will continue to slide him around depending on defensive approach to each opponent. Smart led the team with 12 tackles against the Rams.

"Having a year under my belt helps a lot," Smart said. "I think sometimes people get too caught up in playing the blocker, and sometimes you don't have to play the blocker if you can just get in there and make the play."

## Out the gate

Most members of the CU coaching staff wear headphones and microphones during games to communicate. When coaches see a big play developing, they say, "It's out the gate."

During the second quarter of the season opener, they believed they had designed such a play and it was working well right up to the point that quarterback Cody Hawkins' screen pass for running back Rodney Stewart was tipped and intercepted.

"As the play started to develop, everybody started yelling, 'It's out the gate, it's out the gate,' " Hawkins said. "Uh, no, it's not out the gate."

It was one of two plays involving Stewart that ended in CU turnovers. The pass was not his fault, but his fumble later in the game is something from which coaches hope he learns. Hawkins said he didn't say anything out of the ordinary to Stewart about the fumble.

"We always talk about high and tight," Hawkins said demonstrating the proper way to secure the ball. "Unfortunately, he had it low and loose."

Hawkins went on to say that running backs face a different level of intensity in tackling when making the jump from high school to the college level.

"Runners at this level need to understand that they're not just trying to tackle you," he said. "They're trying to separate you from the football."

### **Touchbacks please**

Hawkins said part of the problem in covering the kickoff CSU returned for a touchdown in the second quarter Sunday was the kick itself, a low line drive.

He said freshman Jameson Davis did well overall with three touchbacks in seven kickoffs. He said touchbacks are a huge boost to a defense.

Based on research special teams coach Kent Riddle has done on past seasons at CU and at Boise State, Hawkins said the more touchbacks the Buffs can get, the better.

"The odds of a team driving the ball and scoring it are very minimal," he said. "We've had years before in the past where it's happened maybe once or twice during the year. ... That's big. You want to get them trapped back there inside the 20. When that ball starts getting out toward the 50, the ratio of points goes up in a huge way."

### **Scouting report**

Of all the spread offenses Hawkins has faced, he said Eastern Washington most resembles Texas Tech because it doesn't ask its quarterback to make plays on the run. He said the Eagles will occasionally play under center with traditional tight ends.

### **Notable**

The CU-CSU game generated a 12.3 rating on Fox Sports Net Rocky Mountain and was the highest rated regular-season sporting event in history on the network. ... Hawkins said he hopes to hire senior safety Ryan Walters as a graduate assistant when Walters completes his eligibility and any possible pro career. Hawkins said Walters is like a coach on the field. Walters made an interception and 10 tackles against the Rams. ... Hawkins said the team is "a lot faster, a lot stronger, a lot more explosive" than when he took over the program 2½ years ago. ... The Buffs received three votes in the latest USA Today coaches' poll and zero votes from Associated Press voters.



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# Bufs have learned lesson from Montana State loss

## CU able to prepare differently for Eastern Wash. than Montana St.

By Kyle Ringo  
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There might be no better gauge by which to judge how far the Colorado football program has come in two years then watching how it performs this Saturday.

Two years and four days after an historic loss to Montana State to start coach Dan Hawkins' tenure in Boulder, the Buffs will be back at Folsom Field with another Football Championship Subdivision team staring at them from the west sideline.

The Eastern Washington Eagles visit town this week with a top-10 national ranking in what used to be called Division I-AA. Coach Dan Hawkins has already talked to his team about the lessons that could and should be learned from the Montana State loss and others like it around the nation over the past two years.

"We've brought it up, though you don't have to do it too much," he said. "Although in my mind I wasn't taking anyone lightly I know that. But that provides some recent history.

"I think the landscape of college football is so different than it used to be. Every weekend you say, 'Wow, how about that game,' or 'Wow, look at that score,' and that's pretty commonplace these days, just because of proliferation and development of players in a lot of really good programs."

Hawkins never has been one to doubt the talent level at FCS schools. In fact, he surveys the Super Bowl rosters every year counting up the number of non-Bowl Championship Series players on each roster and the number of players who didn't play major college football. He said both teams usually feature about 10 players from FCS programs.

"It's always amazing to me when you go and look at the rosters and you're going, 'Wow, wow, wow, wow,' " Hawkins said.

With so many days gone by and so many former teammates off tackling new endeavors, current Buffs who participated in the Montana State debacle or were at least part of the program in 2006, have a bit more honest assessment of what led to the loss than the reasons given then.

Defensive tackle George Hypolite shakes his head and smiles as he looks back on the first game of his sophomore season. The Buffs lost 19-10 that day, kicking off a 2-10 season in which scoring points was a challenge each week with only a very basic passing game because of limitations at quarterback.

"It's almost surreal when you look back and you think about it," Hypolite said. "You're like, 'No, that's not the end of the fourth quarter. There is some other quarter. No, this is not real.' And then seeing it on ESPN and thinking, 'What is going on here?'"

"The thing that really sticks out to me is the preparation. We didn't prepare to beat them. We prepared just to play. We weren't ready for the those guys to walk in and hit us in the mouth. But unlike us, they prepared to hit us in the mouth. They prepared like it was their Super Bowl, and they walked right in here and hit us in the mouth and kept going."

It was a tumultuous time in the program. The previous season had ended with the firing of Gary Barnett following another historic defeat to Texas which beat the Buffs 70-3 in the 2005 Big 12 Conference championship game.

Barnett's assistants coached the team in the Champs Sports Bowl before Hawkins took over. Changes weren't instituted in the strength and conditioning program until late in the spring when coach Jeff Pitman left Boise State behind to rejoin Hawkins in Boulder.

The Buffs were still clearly lacking in toughness at that point and some players simply assumed victory, failing to give Montana State the respect it deserved. The respect any opponent deserves.

"I think now everybody treats people with respect, but coming in I think a lot people were a little over-confident while still questioning themselves," said quarterback Cody Hawkins, who was on the sideline that day in the first game of his redshirt season. "They thought we were going to go in and pound a bunch of people without really putting in the work and knowing exactly how they were going to go about that."

Hawkins thinks the Buffs benefit this time around from playing the FCS team in the second game because they were able to see that Eastern Washington gave Texas Tech, a fellow Big 12 Conference team, a tough game in Week 1.

Hypolite doesn't necessarily agree. He said the current team is much more mature and doesn't need such examples to know it can be beaten if it doesn't give the opponent respect. He said the 2006 team might have benefited had it been able to watch Montana State play a fellow BCS program.

"I would definitely say that the culture of this team has changed," Hypolite said. "We're just a group of guys who bring our hard hat to work every day, and we care more about University of Colorado football than the decal on any helmet."

"We care about the Buffalo and we care about supporting the former Buffs that were here, the Buffs to come and putting a good product on the field every Saturday."



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college football

## CU: Jameson takes over kickoffs

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

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**BOULDER** — The fact that Colorado coach Dan Hawkins never forgot about place-kicker Jameson Davis looks like it will pay off in a big way.

A freshman, Davis showed the leg that can get the ball into the end zone — booming his first two on Sunday night against Colorado State so deep that they could not be returned.

Davis, from Eagle, Idaho, originally signed with Boise State in 2004 when Hawkins coached the Broncos. Davis delayed his enrollment at Boise State and then participated in 2005 spring drills before heading off to Guatemala for a two-year mission for the Mormon church. He rejoined Hawkins at CU this year in time for spring practice.

"He's got a very powerful leg," Hawkins said. "(Forcing a touchback), it's huge. The odds of a team driving 80 yards and scoring a touchdown are very, very minimal. It might happen once or twice a year. So that's big. You want to get them trapped back there."

Playing in his first live football game since earning Idaho all-state honors in 2004, Jameson said he felt "some jitters" before his first kickoff Sunday night.

"But when I woke up (Sunday), I felt pretty confident," he said. "I just wanted to maintain that feeling the whole day."

"I was pretty confident I could get the ball into the end zone," he added. "Then as the game progressed, maybe I got a little lax. That's why I popped a couple up."

Davis said he matured as a person during the two-year mission. He is majoring in Spanish at CU.

"To not know what you really want in life, then to go all by myself to Guatemala for two years - I experienced so many things, it really helped me as a person," he said.

Davis said that maturity translates into more consistent kicking, Davis said.

"Psychologically, once you're more mature, you have a lot more confidence," he explained. "You don't think about what bad things could happen. You only think about positive things."

Davis said he has no problem sharing kicking duties with Wyoming transfer Aric Goodman, a sophomore. Goodman handles field goals and extra points.

"That's fine with me," Davis said. "Aric is making every single one, so it's whatever helps the team. That's all I care about."

"Since I'm kicking off farther than he is, and he is making all the field goals, I think that's a pretty good combination."

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## Buff's vow to take Eagles seriously

*By Patrick Ridgell*

*Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Colorado Buffaloes get another crack at a I-AA team Saturday.

The Eastern Washington Eagles are good, they say, as evidenced by their work in the 2007 postseason, and by the way they hung with Texas Tech last Saturday, entering the fourth quarter within 11 points.

It's just that the Eagles are a Football Championship Subdivision — formerly I-AA — team, and are only the second such program CU has ever faced.

The mere mention of the first still makes CU fans wince.

That'd be Montana State, which beat the Buffs in coach Dan Hawkins' first game in 2006. The Buffs insist to anyone and everyone Eastern Washington will give them all they can handle. As CU prepares for Saturday's home opener (1:30 p.m., no TV), Hawkins said he and his staff have "certainly" brought up what happened that sobering day two Septembers ago.

"I don't think you have to (talk about it) too much," Hawkins said. "Although I'd say this, too, certainly in my mind in that game, I wasn't taking anyone lightly. I know that.

"I think the landscape of college football is so different than it used to be. Every weekend you sit back and say, 'What about that game?' or 'What about that score?' and those games are becoming pretty commonplace these days."

Commonplace? Possibly. Appalachian State's upset at Michigan last year still scares the stuffing out of any coach. Last weekend, Cal-Poly beat San Diego State on a last-second field goal in another FCS upset of a I-A program.

According to research compiled by the Cedar Rapids Gazette, of the 32 games last weekend pitting I-A programs against FCS teams, the I-A teams won 31. Only eight of the matchups were decided by 24 points or less.

Eastern Washington, ranked No. 7 in the NCAA Football Subdivision rankings, lost Saturday at No. 12 Texas Tech, 49-24, despite 18 Red Raiders penalties. Texas Tech built a 21-0 lead, then struggled to put the Eagles away. Red Raiders coach Mike Leach praised his first-game opponent.

"Of all the teams I've played in however many years, they're one I admire the most," Leach said.

"We provided a lot of adversity to them, and a lot of times you do that to a team and they collapse or get discouraged and not play as hard. That wasn't the case with them."

There are obvious differences between FCS and I-A programs. Two big ones are FCS teams are restricted to 63 scholarships (I-A football teams get 85), leading to depth differences, and FCS has a postseason playoff to determine a national champion. Otherwise ...

"Once they settled down (at Texas Tech), it was pretty much a ping-pong match from there," Hawkins said.



Colorado's Demetrius Sumler, left, picks up a first down in the fourth quarter against Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High on Sunday. Sumler and the Buffs host Eastern Washington on Saturday.

**Joshua Buck/Times-Call**

“For anybody to take them lightly is a great miscalculation.”

Will the Buffs? George Hypolite and Ryan Walters said it’s not necessary to broach Montana State. It sounds like the sting from that day remains.

“I think in a lot of instances we were guessing,” Hypolite said. “We weren’t really playing hard and I think we just kind of thought we could mail it in.”

“You have to move past that. You have to realize it’s about us. And if we’re really the kind of team we are and we have the kind of guys we think we have, then it shouldn’t matter what it says on the front of a jersey or what decal it is. It should matter about us, that we’re Colorado football and we play one way.”

Said Walters: “You expect to win every game. You just can’t come out thinking they’re going to lay down for you, or just because we’re the bigger program we have the right to win that game.

“We have to come out and prepare like we’re playing an NFL team this weekend. I think if we do that, we’ll be fine.”

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