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terry frei

Hypolite a reason to cheer

By Terry Frei
The Denver Post

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BOULDER — Colorado defensive tackle George Hypolite is the type of college football story that we — and I include myself in this — don't give sufficient attention to as we fixate on coaches, handicap the Heisman race, and leave the impression that implementing a national playoff system would be a more important step for the country than solving the financial crisis.

The senior from Los Angeles played his final home game for CU on Saturday, when 11th-ranked Oklahoma State beat the Buffaloes 30-17 and left them needing to beat Nebraska on Nov. 28 to become bowl-eligible.

"I got a little misty when I saw the band after the end of the game," Hypolite, 21, said in the Dal Ward Center.

On track to graduate in three years before slowing down his pace slightly and adding a second major, Hypolite will graduate from the Honors Program and receive bachelor's degrees in women's studies and ethnic studies.

Although his family home is near the University of Southern California and his mother, Mary, works there as a librarian, he is adamant that leaving L.A.

for college was important for his development — and that Boulder was the right place for him.

The fact that he likely will be a high NFL draft choice in April isn't irrelevant but is secondary. He still is pondering going to law school at some point, and he would be a college football success story even if the upcoming game on the day after Thanksgiving is the final time he ever puts on pads.

One of the reasons Hypolite heeded the recruiting pitches of Gary Barnett and the previous CU staff was that he didn't want to redshirt and spend five years, or at least five falls, in college before getting on with his life.

He came to feel about CU the way he felt about Loyola High School, the renowned 143-year-old school to the west of downtown L.A. he commuted to for four years. Loyola, which draws students from the entire L.A. region, requires 155 hours of community service for graduation, and Hypolite dived in on various fronts, including at a women's shelter.

"It was just like Colorado," said Hypolite, who was an altar boy as a young man and still wears a blue Loyola T-shirt under his pads. "Some things you're born to do. I was born to be a Loyola Cub. If there was another Loyola guy in this room, you'd just know him, you'd spot him. There are certain things about you that you can't explain. Just like how I was born to be a Buffalo. I tell people that I'm blue in my heart, and in my soul I'm black and gold."

He arrived in Boulder in the fall of 2005 as a highly touted high school fullback who also played on the defensive line at Loyola. The CU staff quickly pegged him as a defensive lineman, and he got considerable playing time at both tackle and end in Barnett's final season. In the three seasons since, he has been a cornerstone in the transition to Dan Hawkins.

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"I have no regrets at all about coming here," Hypolite said. "During the entire recruiting process, someone was pushing my hand. Someone wanted me to be here. Looking back, there are a lot of places I could have been. I could have gone into my third year not playing a snap and not knowing if I was good or not, but I was blessed to be in the right place. The coaches gave me a chance when I first got here. When the new coaching staff came in, they gave me another chance, and I've been opportunistic with the opportunities.

"The community of Boulder and the state of Colorado

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have really accepted me and allowed me to be an ambassador for them. I really have had a lot of fun here and been allowed to develop and come into my own. . . . If you're doing college right, most of what you learn isn't inside the classroom or a lecture hall. Most of what you learn is on your own, reading, working, researching, hanging out, having talks with friends — all of it."

I did have a question about his honors thesis, which has had an evolving title, but at one point was: "An Interrogation in African-American Masculinity Through a Social Constructionist Decolonial and Feminist Gaze."

What the heck does that mean?

"At the end of the day, it's just an exploration of myself," he said. "I'm trying to explain how a person like myself exists in times like these. . . . The short

answer is that you walk on eggshells. There's no solid place for you to stand because the world is ever-changing."

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mark kiszla

Bufs need to step up and take heat off Hawk

By Mark Kiszla
The Denver Post

Updated: 11/16/2008 12:30:18 AM MST

BOULDER — Everybody raves about CU football coach Dan Hawkins.

Give us something to love, Hawk.

After losing 30-17 to Oklahoma State on a Saturday night, Hawkins has two choices.

His team must grow up.

Or the honeymoon will be over.

"I've always said we'll sit down when the season is over and figure out what kind of year it was," said Hawkins, the trademark emotion drained from his voice.

For maybe the first time since he took this job, Hawkins sounded like a man who did not have all the answers.

At a time when his career record at CU was 11-19, Hawkins was given a two-year contract extension in October.

I would argue it will eventually prove to be money

well spent by athletic director Mike Bohn.

But it is confidence that has yet to be earned by Hawkins.

With nearly three years at CU in the books, let's do a little accounting.

Hawkins' record against winning teams is now 4-17. Successful seasons are built at the expense of the Bufs. Against better-than-average competition, Colorado is not yet ready to compete with any consistency.

The CU offense is the most inept in the Big 12 Conference, having scored more than 20 points only one time in seven league games.

Darrell Scott, the much-ballyhooed recruit from California, had such a lost freshman season, full of achy joints and bruised confidence that, in retrospect, you wonder if he would have been better off watching as a redshirt.

Hawk has teased us with potential, but anything that has appeared to be a signature victory has not provided anything more than fleeting dreams of a return to glory.

There was hope the shocking upset of Oklahoma a year ago might ignite the renaissance of CU football.

Those hopes were dashed.

When the Bufs beat West Virginia earlier this season, it felt like a coming-out party, and a return to the top 25 seemed to be within grasp.

Instead, it all quickly slipped away and turned into a pity party, with too much bummed-out talk about killer injuries and youthful mistakes.

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The red-letter game remains on the schedule, and a victory against Nebraska would even CU's record at 6-6 and send the Buffaloes to a bowl game that beats sitting at home alone for the holidays.

Hawkins, however, would be better served to concentrate more on recruiting than defeating the Cornhuskers.

Why? The Buffaloes do not yet have the talent to compete in a league where there seems to be a Heisman Trophy candidate on every campus and scoreboard lights are constantly taxed to the max. The CU coach knows: In the Big 12, punting the football is no longer a viable option.

"The margin for error is very, very small," Hawkins said. "You have got to make every play."

At the final home game of the autumn, the crowd in Folsom Field was given one of its best reasons to cheer when former CU hoops star and new Nuggets guard Chauncey Billups was introduced.

Scott is supposed to be the player who will put the football team back on the map the way Billups once made headlines.

But Scott was too gimpy to go against the Cowboys, and he has rushed for a very unspectacular 344 yards and scored only a single touchdown. Has he ever been completely healthy and confident all year?

"No," Hawkins replied.

Nobody in college football gives his players love like Hawk.

What Hawk needs now? More players we can love.

Months ago, I predicted this team would go bowling despite a wickedly tough

schedule and was on its way back to national prominence, but those Buffaloes had Rodney Stewart emerging at tailback and Ryan Miller anchoring the offensive line.

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Post

sports columnist Mark Kiszla fields your feedback. Look for it in Kickin' It With Kiz every Saturday.

They got hurt and took the team's margin of error with them.

"We have a lot of guys on crutches," Hawkins said.

I still believe Hawkins will win big at CU.

But enough with the baby steps already.

Either his Buffs will mature into winners next year, or the doubts in Hawkins will begin to grow.

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Future of secondary debuts

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Those wondering what Colorado's secondary might look like in 2009 got a sneak peak Saturday night.

Senior strong safety D.J. Dykes (illness) missed the loss to Oklahoma State, and senior free safety Ryan Walters (knee and ankle sprains) was hurt in the first quarter and didn't return. There was no word on their availability for the regular season finale, Nov. 28 at Nebraska (1:30 p.m., ABC).

Freshmen Patrick Mahnke and Anthony Perkins filled in, each totaling five tackles. Both drew praise from teammates.

"I tip my hat to Anthony Perkins and Patrick Mahnke," defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "They stepped right in and really didn't miss a beat. They really didn't make any mistakes."

CU's next opponent will test them.

Shawn Watson, Nebraska's offensive coordinator and CU's former offensive coordinator, might be licking his chops at the possibility of facing a Buffaloes secondary missing its senior safeties. If both are out, or limited, Watson and Nebraska's surging offense could find more holes in a CU defense that's using inexperienced safeties.

It might not matter, though. The Cornhuskers will probably try to exploit CU in any way they can, regardless of who's manning its secondary. Perkins knows that.

"I don't know what they'll be thinking, but I do know we're going to have to prepare harder than we have been, and just be ready to play," Perkins said. "There are no excuses, so whether they do come after us or not, we're going to have to come out prepared and ready to go."

The Nebraska game will be the fourth time since 1997 CU (5-6, 2-5 Big 12) has needed to beat the Huskers in order to reach bowl eligibility. In '97 and 2003, CU lost at home and was forced to spend the holidays at home. The Buffs beat Nebraska, 65-51, last year to win their sixth.

The Huskers' offense might be 19th in scoring and 10th in yards nationally, but their points and yards gained rank sixth in the Big 12, where offenses post video-game-like figures.

Indications are the Huskers are getting better. They've won four of their past five and haven't scored fewer than 28 points since their conference opener Oct. 4 against Missouri.

What they did Saturday to Kansas State in their 56-28 win ought to pique CU's interest. They outgained the Wildcats,

First look

A quick glimpse at CU's next opponent:

Who: Nebraska (7-4, 4-3 Big 12)

When: Friday, Nov. 28, 1:30 p.m., Ch. 7

Where: Lincoln, Neb., Memorial Stadium/Tom Osborne Field

Notes: Linebacker Cody Glenn was suspended indefinitely last week for violating team rules. He was Nebraska's third-leading tackler entering Saturday with 51 stops, including six for a loss. ... CU is 0-4 away from Colorado in 2008, and 2-13 during coach Dan Hawkins' three-year tenure. ... Nebraska is 5-2 at home this year. The Buffs won in Lincoln in 2002 and 2004. ... Nebraska's minus-1.09 turnover margin is the Big 12's worst.

-Patrick Ridgell

610 yards to 247. They rushed for 340.

The Buffs continue to allow fewer passing yards, 214.1 a game, than any other Big 12 defense.

“We got two weeks to get ready, two weeks to prepare and two weeks to get our minds right to learn from this game and get ready for Nebraska,” Perkins said Saturday. “We’re going to make sure we come out with our horns out; we’re going to make sure we come out ready to play.”

Said linebacker Brad Jones: “I think this team understands that it is playoff football. We have to win this game, and there is no option.”

RECRUITING UPDATE: According to Rivals.com, CU received two commitments over the weekend, but also lost one. Wheat Ridge High School standout Parker Orms — a 6-foot, 185-pound defensive back — and Andre Simmons — a 6-foot-3, 201-pound receiver from Independence (Kan.) Community College — said they’ll sign with CU. Simmons, however, has said he’ll continue to take visits, according to the site.

Quarterback Jordan Wynn, who committed to CU in June, has changed his pledge to Utah.

CU has eight known commitments.

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CU could have used Robinson

By Justin Williams

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — There were plenty of fans at Folsom Field on Saturday who were just happy to see Zac Robinson play.

The Colorado native said he had 30-plus ticket requests, and he couldn't put a number on exactly how many friends and family members were in the stands for his Oklahoma State Cowboys' 30-17 win over Colorado, but it certainly was in the hundreds.

But there were far more of the 46,092 in attendance who just couldn't help but wonder how this kid got away.

Robinson played high school ball just down the road at Chatfield High School in Littleton. The Buffs — then coached by Gary Barnett, who was neck-deep in controversy surrounding the program — recruited Robinson, who graduated in 2004. But Robinson said he chose Oklahoma State because of family ties. His mother attended OSU, but the family moved out west after Robinson was born.

"It was great to obviously play in front of a lot of family and friends and to play in this stadium that I grew up watching so many games in," said Robinson, who donned an eye black strip inscribed with "303" during the game.

The 6-foot-3, dual-threat quarterback entered Saturday's game with a 181.01 QB rating, which ranked him third in the nation. He threw for 217 yards and one touchdown Saturday and picked up a big first down on a 13-yard run on 3rd-and-9 in the fourth quarter.

"He was a real key to what they do," Colorado coach Dan Hawkins said. "When they would get in a pickle, he would make a great play. Obviously, he can really run and he has good command of their offense. He's probably a little overshadowed a bit by some of the guys in the league, but he's a pretty good player."

Robinson represents the athleticism Colorado desperately needs, and the Cowboys have plenty of it to go around. Wide receiver Dez Bryant exhibited it on his one-handed touchdown reception in the first half. Running back Kendall Hunter showed why he's one of the top runners in the country.

Those kind of athletes are the main difference between the Cowboys of now and the Cowboys of 2005, when Colorado traveled into Stillwater, Okla., and dominated in a 34-0 victory.

"We've got some skill guys now that make some plays with the ball," Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy said. "It does make a difference. Coaching can only go so far."

But coaching is supposed to be the big difference maker, particularly in the Big 12, where a team's success — or failure — is often correlated to a coach's tenure. Texas' Mack Brown is in his 11th season with the Longhorns. This is Bob Stoops' 10th year at Oklahoma.

Gundy is only in his fourth season as head coach, but his Cowboys were ranked in the top five just a couple of weeks ago. It certainly hasn't taken Gundy that long to turn around a program that went 4-7 in 2005, his first season as head coach.

Of course, Hawkins and the Buffs don't have a

T. Boone Pickens, who has made multiple large financial donations to Oklahoma State in recent years. But can a similar kind of CU jump be expected next season, in Hawkins' fourth year?

Playing for a national championship, or even a Big 12 title, isn't a likely scenario. But maybe Darrell Scott, Rodney Stewart, Josh Smith and Tyler Hansen are the athletes Colorado has been craving for years, and maybe that leap will be evident on the field in 2009.

Robinson, however, won't be in Boulder to see it happen, and the junior hasn't had too many sleepless nights since choosing the Cowboys over the Buffs four years ago.

"That (decision) was solidified from the moment I stepped on campus," he said.

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