

Rocky Mountain News

CU report: Mental muscles

By **B.G. Brooks**, Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

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Tight end **Ryan Deehan** is challenged to measure just how much he has learned in his freshman season at CU.

"It's a great experience - I've learned a ton," he said. "Eight games here, and not even playing the whole game, have been more tiring mentally and physically than playing both ways in all 14 (in high school). It's really different."

Whether CU becomes bowl eligible, Deehan has an offseason goal in mind. He wants to get as physically and mentally prepared as possible for 2009 - with emphasis on the mental.

"Mentally is the most important part," he said. "You've got to be mentally tough here - a lot more than in high school. The mentally tough (players) are the ones that make it."

Through 11 games, Deehan, one of the 2008 signees never considered for a redshirt, has four catches for 39 yards and a touchdown.

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Buffs remain high on Simas

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Markques Simas came to Colorado in the fall of 2007 as its first all-American wide receiver recruit in five years. Coaches couldn't wait to see his potential fulfilled in an offense starving for playmakers.

Nearly two years later, those coaches are still waiting.

He redshirted in 2007, when he needed better conditioning and playbook knowledge, and then, last summer, he was deemed academically ineligible.

What's ensued in 2008, as the Buffaloes' field the Big 12's worst offense and their receivers struggle to make plays, isn't Simas' fault. He could have helped, especially Friday when CU goes to Nebraska (1:30 p.m., ABC) in search of its sixth win. But as he's done for every road game, he'll be following the game at home, wondering what difference he could make.

"It's extremely frustrating ... because I know that he's a guy that could help us," receivers coach Eric Kiesau said.

Said Simas: "We're not doing too bad this season, but I'm just saying that, as far as in these close games, I just feel like I can make a contribution or something, especially when the offense is getting a little slow. I just feel like I can give us that extra spark, or whatever we need."

The only question about Simas that really matters these days is whether he'll finally play in 2009. Simas said his grades have improved, and that he's taking school much more seriously. Asked if he'll be on the field in 2009, Simas is unequivocal.

"Yes sir," he answers.

Coaches don't take that for granted. It's reached the point where offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich, who might miss Simas more than anyone, doesn't even talk football with the receiver anymore. Helfrich only talks grades with him.

"It's not like the guy tore his ACL or something; it wasn't a fluke-type deal," Helfrich said. "It was something that's a preventable-type situation, so we need to prevent those things from happening."

Kiesau said he'll hear players talk about taking in a basketball game at the Coors Events Center. Simas says no, can't go, he has to study.

"I'm like, 'Whoa, where was that the first year?'" Kiesau said.

Kiesau said that, based on reports and Simas' grades, he has improved. But Kiesau adds that it's a day-to-day situation, and the emphasis is on teaching him good study habits that'll benefit him for life, not just one semester.

"When this thing did go down, we went, 'OK, there are two ways you can go with this,'" Kiesau said. "'You can be like a lot of other kids in America and be a statistic and flunk out and never be seen again and never know how life

would've turned out. Or, we turn this into a positive, and 15 years from now when you're graduated and done, you can look back and say, man, that was kind of a small bump in the road, but I fixed it and got better.'"

"I think, I think, he's on that right track, of making this a one-year mistake."

Simas' one-year mistake has made recruiting mistakes at wide receiver glare brighter. Prospects like Kendrick Celestine, Sherman Lang, James Lewis, Reggie Joseph, Charlie Sherman, Jarrell Yates and others signed with CU in recent years. All had potential. For varied reasons, none are on the team.

Of CU's top four receivers, two are former walk-ons. The offense needs more playmakers at the position.

Receiver is a position of great priority for the Buffs in this recruiting cycle. How many does Kiesau want to sign?

"Me, personally? Twelve," he joked.

Four is realistic, though more is possible. Per Rivals.com as of Saturday afternoon, CU has two known receiver commitments. There are others that have not yet been made public.

No matter how many new receivers show up this summer, the one everyone will want to see when the Buffs line up against Colorado State on the first Saturday of next September is Simas. Fixing his grades has been Simas' top priority. In practice, he works on the scout team, where Kiesau hopes he's using the techniques all CU's receivers are taught. The coach admits to peeking over at the scout offense every now and then, and watching Simas. He's making sure Simas is doing things right, and wondering what Simas will add to CU's offense if he ever gets the chance.

"Would he be helping us? Yes," Kiesau said. "Would it help us win more games? I don't know.

"But he'd definitely be giving us more production offensively. We'll just have to wait and see how he does next year."

Said Simas: "Has it been difficult? I guess kind of. So many days I'm like, 'Man, I'm not playing,' and I kind of get into a little slump. But between here and the practice field, I kind of find the energy just to get out there and work hard."