



# Expect another green herd of Buffs

## CU will still have plethora of young players on '09 roster

By Kyle Ringo

Sunday, November 30, 2008

Dan Hawkins will meet with media members for a final time this fall on Monday to recap his third consecutive losing season in Boulder, and chances are references will be made to the Buffs' youth and inexperience this season.

It's a refrain Hawkins doesn't enjoy -- and fans are tired of hearing -- but one the coach falls back to anyway in explaining the Buffs' shortcomings. And it's likely to be heard next year based on a look at the depth chart.

Freshman made a total of 42 starts this season and 95 over the course of the past two years. That experience will help in a lot of areas, but plenty of holes remain in the "experience, talent, depth model" Hawkins points to as critical in building a championship.

Start with the most important position on the roster.

Quarterback Cody Hawkins will be a junior with two years of experience under his belt, but he will face the toughest challenge of his career this offseason in trying to hold on to his job. More than a few fans seem to believe the team would be better off if Hawkins isn't the starter again in 2009, but whoever replaces him will have very little experience.

Freshman Tyler Hansen stole one start and playing time in several more games from Hawkins this season and figures to improve with a full offseason under his belt. Hansen's weak spot as a true freshman was the passing game, but winter study sessions, spring practices and a second training camp should go a long way toward his improvement. Matt Ballenger and talented 2009 recruit Clark Evans also figure to compete for the starting job.

If one of those players wrestles it away from Cody Hawkins, youthful mistakes and problems are bound to be a factor in that player's development.

There are plenty of more concrete areas in which the Buffs will be young and inexperienced once again.

The most obvious trouble spot is the defensive line where seniors George Hypolite, Brandon Nicolas, Maurice Lucas and linebacker Brad Jones ate the majority of playing time this season. The most experienced defensive linemen next season will be Marquez Herrod, Eugene Goree and Curtis Cunningham. The lack of experience behind those three is scary and could lead coaches to consider using a 3-4 scheme a much higher percentage of the time.

Fans might expect to see highly recruited linebackers such as Lynn Katoa, Jon Major and Doug Rippy

on the field next fall, especially if coaches choose to use more four-linebacker looks. But the one thing those linebackers have in common is that they haven't played a down of college football yet.

Safeties Anthony Perkins and Patrick Mahnke proved they have a bright future while playing the majority of the final two games this season and logging significant time throughout the rest of the year, but they will both be just sophomores and the depth behind them will be green.

The offensive line was a trouble spot this season, and figures to be deeper next season when injured players heal and return to action, but those injured players also were young when they were hurt.

Guard Mike Iltis, who might be the leading candidate to fill the vacancy at center, still hasn't played a down at the college level, true freshman guard Max Tuioti-Mariner split time in his three games this season before tearing an anterior cruciate ligament and even tackle Ryan Miller has only the equivalent of about one full season to his credit.

Tackle Sione Tau says he has refocused in the classroom and plans to be eligible in 2009 when other talented youngsters such as Bryce Givens and Ryan Dannewitz figure to compete for playing time as well. Again, none of them have any college experience.

The offense will also be breaking in new wide receivers next fall. Scotty McKnight and Josh Smith will be juniors with loads of playing time to their credit, but there is no experience behind them. Markques Simas, another academic casualty this season, will be in his third year in the program playing the first game of his career in September.

Another characteristic the roster will have very little of in 2009 is ties to former coach Gary Barnett. In his fourth season, nearly the entire team will be of Dan Hawkins' making, and it will be more difficult to blame the past for holes in the depth chart.

Hawkins was one of 11 coaches to take the reins of Football Bowl Subdivision teams in 2006. He has won 13 games and lost 24 in that time with one bowl trip to his credit.

His best win remains an upset of then-No. 3 Oklahoma in 2007. He has overseen several historic losses, including blowouts against Missouri and a disappointing loss to Montana State in his first game in Boulder.

Two of the other 10 coaches in the 2006 hiring class received far less patience from fans and administrators at their schools and already have been fired from their jobs after failing to turn around those programs quickly enough. A handful of other coaches hired that year led their teams into the national rankings and contention for conference championships.

Each program and school is different with a unique set of circumstances, but it's a safe bet expectations will be much higher for Hawkins and his team in 2009, regardless of any alibis with which the Buffs start the season or those that materialize during it.



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cu football

## Tough loss bitter finish

Setback to Nebraska ends CU's rough 5-7 season

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Updated: 11/29/2008 11:51:06 PM MST



Colorado's Josh Smith (1) and Demetrius Sumler (8) are downcast as they walk off the field Friday after a 40-31 loss to Nebraska. The loss left the Buffs with a 5-7 record and a win short of being bowl-eligible. ( Nati Harnik, The Associated Press )

Sophomore tailback Demetrius Sumler was asked about emotions in the Colorado locker room following the 40-31 loss at Nebraska on Friday.

"And agony," Sumler said, shaking his head.

Colorado (5-7, 2-6 Big 12) came about a yard shy of spending part of the holidays at a bowl game. Three feet was all the clearance that a 57-yard field goal by Nebraska's Alex Henery needed to spill over the crossbar with 1:43 remaining.

Just when Colorado players were ready to reach for a cooler of Gatorade to drench coach Dan Hawkins, CU's season ended in an instant.

The final result was much too familiar. The way the season had gone for the hard-luck Buffaloes, nobody should have been surprised.

Disappointment, anger, hugs for the seniors. Some screaming at the walls.

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(KO) FBCCU18\_KSO\_10\_18\_08141 - University of Colorado Buffaloes football take on the Kansas State Wildcats at Folsom Field in Boulder. CU's Rodney Stewart (43) fumbles the ball in the first cover and Kansas State recovers. Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post (THE DENVER POST | KATHRYN SCOTT OSLER)

Hawkins didn't seem to mind that his players took the loss in Lincoln hard. It's not a bad thing if players remember how they felt in the locker room.

"It's never fun sitting around watching everybody else play (in bowl games)," Hawkins said. "We were there (in 2007) and barely missed this year. It's interesting. You look at some teams around the country — Kansas didn't go to a bowl game a couple of years ago (2006) and then went 12-1 (2007).

"Colorado had a bad year in 2000 (3-8), and won the Big 12 in 2001. I think you can use that as a little fuel in the offseason."

The Buffs finally came up with big plays Friday on

both sides of scrimmage and finally reached 30 points in a conference game. CU's defense yielded 407 yards but was stout in the red zone. And Buffs defenders stayed strong, despite being on the field for more than 39 1/2 minutes.

"We're just kind of used to being on the field," said CU safety Patrick Mahnke, a true freshman from Mountain Vista who started in place of injured senior captain Ryan Walters.

This season, the Buffs trailed in time of possession seven times, including the final three games. Colorado's offense had seven more plays overall this season, but trailed by an average of 63.1 yards per game in total offense and was outscored by 109 points.

"With the schedule we played (in 2008), in the next few years I don't think our schedule can get much tougher," Sumler said. "We're not going to play as many good teams. When we do, we're going to be ready for it."

The stretch that hurt the Buffs most was losing five of six, being outscored 202-80 in that time; the lone win was a 14-13 victory against Kansas State.

The Buffs' two Big 12 wins were by a combined five points. CU was 0-3 against the South Division, including a 24-17 loss at Texas A&M, which finished tied for last in the South.

"We played some of the best teams in the country, week in and week out," senior defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "We didn't have too many cupcakes. . . . We improved in a lot of areas. We just couldn't put it together consistently."

For much of the fall, Colorado's roster was patchwork. Entering Friday's game, CU had lost 109 "man games" to injury or illness. All but nine of

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those missed games were accounted for by players who contributed on the two-deep or on special teams.

Colorado's two-deep roster included 32 freshmen or sophomores. That did not include the youngsters on the injury list.

"We were using so many young guys this season," quarterback Cody Hawkins said, "and when you have such a short time to prepare for a game, it's tough for guys to get into a flow."

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## Outlook for 2009

### OFFENSE Cody Hawkins, Tyler Hansen

#### Quarterback

#### Starters back:

**Starters gone:** None

**Comment:** A quick-footed Californian with a strong arm, Hansen will get every opportunity to win the starting job as a sophomore, but Hawkins found a groove in the final third of the season and won't drop in the depth chart without a battle.

### Running back Rodney Stewart, Demetrius Sumler, Jake Behrens

#### Starters back:

**Starter gone:** Maurice Cantrell

**Comment.** Banged up and perhaps still adjusting to the physical college game, Darrell Scott (343 yards) never had a breakthrough game as a

freshman. Stewart (622 yards) was among the nation's best diamond-in-the-rough stories before fracturing a fibula against Texas A&M. Brian Lockridge (injured in 2008) will contribute somewhere, and Ray Polk comes off a redshirt season. CU should have an advantage over most Big 12 teams on the ground.

### Receivers/Tight ends Josh Smith, Scotty McKnight, Riar Geer

#### Starters back:

**Starter gone:** Patrick Williams

**Comment:** Buffs desperately need another big-play threat who can join Smith to stretch the defense. Candidates include Markques Simas (academically ineligible in 2008), Chance Blackmon (redshirted as a freshman) or perhaps a 2009 signee. At tight end, Ryan Deehan looks like a star after getting his feet wet as a freshman. Patrick Devenny and Luke Walters (injured in 2008) supply depth.

### Offensive line Nate Solder (T), Ryan Miller (T), Devin Head (G), Blake Behrens (G), Matt Bahr (T), Max Tuioti-Mariner (G)

#### Starters back:

**Starters gone:** Daniel Sanders (C)

**Comment:** Early season-ending injuries to Miller and Tuioti-Mariner caused a patchwork but also gave youngsters some experience. Head will be the only senior. Keep an eye on former Mullen blue-chipper Bryce Givens (6-feet-6, 255), who redshirted this season and still needs to bulk up. Mike Iltis also could be a factor at guard after sitting out 2008 with an ACL tear. So could sophomore-to-be Ethan Adkins.

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## DEFENSE Marquez Herrod (DE)

### Line

#### Starters back:

**Starters gone:** George Hypolite (DT), Brandon Nicolas (NT), Maurice Lucas (DE)

**Comment:** A critical area of need, although end Jason Brace has starting experience and former Columbine standout Curtis Cunningham (DT) saw a lot of action. It's time for sophomores-to-be Conrad Obi (DE), Lagrone Shields (DE) and Eugene Goree (NT) to step up, but don't be surprised if 2009 recruits don't factor in. Boulder High School product Will Pericak could get a long look at end.

**Linebacker Jeff Smart (Mike/inside position), Shaun Mohler (Will/inside)**

#### Starters back:

**Starters gone:** Brad Jones (Sam/outside)

**Comment:** Late-bloomer B.J. Beatty came on late in his sophomore year and should be a capable replacement for Jones. Freshman redshirts Jon Major (ACL), Lynn Katoa (suspension) and Doug Rippy should figure prominently. Also back is veteran Michael Sipili, making this a deep and talented area.

**Cha'pelle Brown (CB), Jimmy Smith (CB), Benjamin Burney (CB, 2007 season)**

#### Defensive backs

#### Starters back:

**Starters gone:** Ryan Walters (FS), D.J. Dykes (SS), Gardner McKay (CB)

**Comment:** Fears were eased late in the season when freshman safeties Anthony Perkins and Patrick Mahnke filled in admirably while Walters and Dykes missed most or all of the last two games. Cha'pelle Brown, though just 5-7, could be an all-conference candidate in 2009. Burney, a solid starter in 2007, returns from multiple surgeries that caused him to redshirt this season, and corners Jalil Brown and Anthony Wright add depth. But coaches are always on the lookout for "shutdown" cover guys during recruiting.

## SPECIAL TEAMS Aric Goodman, Jameson Davis

### Place-kickers

#### Starters back:

**Starters gone:** None

**Comment:** A major disappointment, with the duo combining for 6-for-17 on field goals. But Goodman made his last two, and Davis will have offseason knee surgery on his plant leg. Davis showed a strong leg while handling kickoffs.

### Punting Tom Suazo

#### Starter lost:

**Starter returning:** Matt DiLallo

**Comment:** DiLallo, a starter as a freshman and sophomore, lost his starting job late in the season to Suazo. Coaches said Suazo was better at directional punting and allowed fewer returns. Darrell Scott continued to be listed on the depth chart during the season, but coaches probably didn't want to tire out his legs with extra duty.

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nebraska 40, cu 31

## Huskers rally to beat CU

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Updated: 11/29/2008 12:51:17 AM MST



Colorado's Riar Geer, left, runs for a touchdown against Nebraska's Larry Asante in the first half in Lincoln, Neb., Friday, Nov. 28, 2008. (AP | Nati Harnik)

LINCOLN, Neb. — Colorado sophomore tailback Demetrius Sumler and his teammates couldn't bear to watch the pivotal play.

They huddled on the sideline before Nebraska place-kicker Alex Henery lined up for a do-or-die, 57-yard field goal with 1:43 remaining, on fourth-

and-25.

"I was just praying and hoping that he wouldn't make it," Sumler said. "There wasn't anything else I could do."

Henery answered with a school record a record-setting field goal that gave Nebraska the go-ahead points in a 40-31 victory Friday before 85,319 fans, almost all of whom wore red - and probably were holding their breath. Henery, who had already made three field goals, was dead-center and cleared the crossbar by about a yard.

Prior to

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Friday, Henery's previous career-long had been a 48-yarder against Virginia Tech on Sept. 27.

"I didn't think he was going to kick something that long," said CU senior tackle George Hypolite. "I

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thought something funny was up."

The school record had been a 55-yarder.

Henery recalled the discussions during a Nebraska timeout just before the kick. "We were talking to see the yardage and the likelihood of making it," he said. "I hadn't been hitting it that far in pregame. We have our distances set, and I didn't hit one (from that far) in pregame.

"We were either going to celebrate or not. The crowd was crazy. I couldn't even hear myself."

Said Nebraska coach Bo Pelini: "I just wanted (Henery) to look me in the face and tell me he felt he had it in him. He kind of looked it."

Defensive lineman Ndamukong Suh tacked on insurance points with a 30-yard interception return with 55 seconds to go. Defensive end Zach Potter, a 6-foot-7 senior, got a hand on a throw by Colorado's 5-11 quarterback, Cody Hawkins, and batted it high enough for Suh to snare it in the air. En route to the end zone, Suh ran over Hawkins, who tried to get in the lineman's way at the 5-yard line.

Colorado (5-7, 2-6 Big 12) will be staying home for the holidays, but the Buffaloes can take some consolation in knowing they played perhaps their best game of the season on one of the Big 12's biggest stages. Colorado needed the victory to become bowl eligible. Nebraska (8-4, 5-3) likely is headed to the Gator Bowl in Pelini's first full season as head coach.



Colorado quarterback Cody Hawkins is sacked by Nebraska's Zach Potter and Ty Steinkuhler in Lincoln, Neb., on Friday, Nov. 28, 2008. (AP | Dave Weaver)

"Seniors were in the locker room crying, knowing that was their last game," CU sophomore cornerback Jimmy Smith said. "Some might go to the pros, but for most of the guys, it was their last snap of football.

"It hurts to not go to a bowl game. I felt we should have won. But things happen."

Cody Hawkins completed 14-for-24 passes for 249 yards, but was intercepted three times, including twice when passes were tipped by defensive linemen. Nebraska senior Joe Ganz went 19-for-29 for 229 yards and became Nebraska's career leader for passing yardage (3,332).

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Colorado's Brad Jones tackles Nebraska quarterback Joe Ganz in Lincoln, Neb., on Friday, Nov. 28, 2008. (AP | Dave Weaver)

"I'm so glad we can go out winners, especially the way last year ended," said Ganz, who had talked during the week about the sickening feeling he felt 12 months ago when Colorado's 65-51 win in Boulder prevented Nebraska from going to a bowl. Bill Callahan was fired as head coach shortly thereafter.

An 18-point underdog, Colorado went ahead in the third quarter when Sumler scored his second touchdown of the game, this time off left guard on fourth-and-goal from the 4. That put the Buffs up 31-27 and completed a nine-play, 65-yard march.

But Henery pulled Nebraska to within a point with a 37-yard field goal, and then the Cornhuskers defense did its part by limiting Colorado to one first

down and forcing a punt.

Nebraska moved 34 yards in seven plays to set up Henery's record-setter.

"I don't think I've ever been more proud of one of our teams," CU coach Dan Hawkins said. "The guys battled and scrapped. It was nothing but guts. They left it out there."

Colorado jumped on Nebraska for two quick touchdowns on big plays. Cody Hawkins hit tight end Riar Geer for a 68-yard touchdown pass on CU's second play from scrimmage. Then, after a Nebraska punt, the Buffs needed only two plays to consume 80 yards. Sumler did the honors with a 36-yard run, the longest of his career.

"Coach Hawk stresses that we get off to a fast start, and we hadn't been doing that," Sumler said. "To do that here was huge. But we have to just hold on."

Thanks to a 58-yard return of a lateral for a touchdown by CU's Smith off a botched kick fake, Colorado went into the break even, at 24-24.

In just the first 30 minutes, Colorado registered five of its 12 longest plays (offensive or defense) of the year. That included the crowd-quieting touchdown pass to Geer and a 44-yard Hawkins pass to sophomore wideout Josh Smith on a fly pattern that up Sumler's 36-yard gallop.

Perhaps as stunned as its fans, Nebraska woke up on its third possession. The Huskers moved 64 yards on nine plays, with Ganz doing the honors by flipping a 2-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver Nate Swift.

After rallying from a two-touchdown deficit, Nebraska took the lead twice in the first half but could not hold it. Up 24-17, the Huskers lined up

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for an apparent 50-yard field-goal attempt when they tried some trickery that blew up like an exploding cigar.

Rather than place the ball down, holder Jake Wesch tried to lateral the ball to the kicker, Henery, by flipping the ball blindly over his shoulder. CU's Smith smelled it. He caught the lateral in the air and easily outraced the holder 58 yards in the other direction.

That was Smith's second career touchdown. The other came on an interception return last year in the victory over Nebraska.

Nebraska had successfully executed the fake kick on Nov. 8 against Kansas. Colorado spotted that on film and was ready.

"We practiced that over and over," Smith said. "We knew they would try to get easy points."

Pelini said afterward that, "You take them any way you can get them."

"I give Colorado a lot of credit," Pelini added. "They played hard, they made plays. It was a hard-fought football game. It was a wild game."

Unfortunately for Colorado, with a final result that was much too familiar.

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Longmont, Colorado  
 Tuesday, December 02,  
 2008

Publish Date: 11/30/2008

## Buffs look to 2009

*By Patrick Ridgell*

*Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Colorado Buffaloes emerged from their season-ending defeat at Nebraska on Friday talking about what they learned in 2008. The coaches might have learned the most.

Last week, head coach Dan Hawkins lauded his staff for its resourcefulness and creativity during a year in which the program lost more player games to injury/illness than ever, and used a freshman starter 42 times. The bulk of those problems struck CU's offense.

The man most responsible for mixing and matching offensive parts was coordinator Mark Helfrich, whose game plans were frequently at the mercy of who was healthy and which freshman could handle what. When asked what he learned about himself in 2008, Helfrich let out a little laugh.

"I think, collectively, we have been in search mode a lot, trying to match a lot of moving parts, interchangeable parts, guys with varying levels of experience and varying talents," he said.

The results were 242 total points — about 20 a game — and 3,822 yards — or 318.5 a game. The Buffs in 2008 suffered their first shutout since 1988. They finished last in the Big 12 in points and yards. The last time that happened was 2006, when they averaged 16.3 points and 291.4 yards a game.

Helfrich spoke about being able to pluck plays and schemes CU's patchwork offense used in 2008 into its plans in 2009 on more of an as-needed basis, not as the "theme." In short, for CU improve in 2009, Helfrich knows improvement on offense is mandatory.

"I think we need to find better solutions," Helfrich said. "We need to score more points. It's been an ongoing process, that's for sure."

The process continues in spring. Starting at quarterback, the Buffs expect a battle for the starting job. Junior-to-be Cody Hawkins returns with the most experience and is among the program's top five passers in touchdowns, attempts and completions.

Hawkins has also thrown 25 interceptions in two seasons, including 11 that were batted at the line of scrimmage. Two came Friday at Nebraska, and both led to Huskers' touchdowns.

Helfrich called more plays designed to use Hawkins' mobility as the season passed. But Hawkins' mobility is not that of Tyler Hansen, who burned his redshirt midway through 2008 and participated in only one series over the final two games.



Quarterback Cody Hawkins is one of several key players returning for Colorado next season. **Lewis**

**Geyer/Times-Call file**

### 2008 Leaders

The offensive leaders for the University of Colorado football team this season:

**Passing:** Cody Hawkins — 183-for-320, 1,892 yards 9 Interceptions, 17 touchdowns.

**Rushing:** Rodney Stewart — 132 att. 622 yards 4.7 per carry. 2 touchdowns.

**Receiving:** Scotty McKnight — 46 catches 519 yards 11.3 per catch 5 touchdowns.

### 2009 CU Schedule

(Dates subject to change)

Sept. 5, vs. Colorado State

Sept. 12, at Miami (Ohio)

Sept. 19, vs. Wyoming

Sept. 26, at West Virginia

Oct. 10, at Texas

Oct. 17, vs. Kansas

Oct. 24, at Kansas State

Oct. 31, vs. Missouri

Nov. 7, vs. Texas A&M

Nov. 14, at Iowa State

Nov. 21, at Oklahoma State

Nov. 27, vs. Nebraska



The offensive line will return four of Friday's starters. CU can't wait to get tackle Ryan Miller, plus guards Max Tuioti-Mariner and Mike Iltis, back from season-ending injuries. The Buffs must replace captain and center Daniel Sanders, but will return left tackle Nate Solder, who showed promise in his first season as a starter.

Others returning include right tackle Matt Bahr, plus guards Devin Head and Blake Behrens, who played Friday through injuries that left him barely able to move, coach Dan Hawkins said.

The offensive line should also see some strong competition in spring. It may also benefit from some extra work it missed in 2008.

"If you look at our guys in the games, sometimes they're dragging themselves around, but they keep going, they keep playing hard," offensive line coach Jeff Grimes said. "I've had to be careful in practice to not give those guys too many reps or get them beat up so that they're not totally done by the time they get to the game."

The Buffs will return all of their top rushers, including Rodney Stewart. He became the first freshman to lead the team in rushing since 1991 despite missing the final three games and most of a fourth with a broken fibula. Stewart ran for 622 yards at an average of 4.7 a try.

Demetrius Sumler ran for 151 yards and three touchdowns in the final two games. Darrell Scott's health problems limited him through most of 2008. He'll enter spring eager to show coaches he can stay in the lineup and produce.

CU loses two of its top three receivers in Patrick Williams and Cody Crawford. Returning is Scotty McKnight, a former walk-on who has led the team in receiving two years in a row. The last Buff to do that was Javon Green in 1999 and 2000. Receiver is a position coaches are stressing in recruiting.

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