



# Hawkins favors early signing day

## CU has commitments from at least eight

By Kyle Ringo

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If Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins had his way, half of the 2009 recruiting class would already have signed binding national letters of intent and other recruits would have a second opportunity to do so this month.

Hawkins is a proponent of at least one early signing day for high school football recruits. He wouldn't mind a total of three over the course of the year, and he also likes the idea of players being able to make official visits to campuses during their junior year in high school.

The current system allows just one signing day, always on the first Wednesday in February (Feb. 4, 2009, in this cycle). It also allows for a three-day period in December for junior college players to sign scholarship paperwork (Dec. 15-17 this year).

Hawkins and his assistant coaches will spend the majority of the next 10 days on the road recruiting a class they believe will consist of 20-22 players.

Hawkins said the biggest area of need at this point is wide receiver, though he emphasizes recruiting offensive and defensive linemen in every class. Defensive line and defensive backs also seem to be high on Hawkins' list based on the number of players at those positions, who have told recruiting services they have received CU offers.

Colorado has eight known oral commitments, along with several other prospects who are believed to be committed but haven't made official announcements yet.

Those situations are partly why Hawkins favors an early signing period.

"I think it would clarify things for kids," Hawkins said earlier this year. "A guy who says he is committed to school X and he doesn't sign at the end of June, well, maybe he's not exactly committed."

An early signing period could help with other situations as well.

Willie Kennedy, a safety prospect from Gastonia, N.C., committed to CU earlier this fall, but is unlikely to be academically qualified to get into CU after a misunderstanding was discovered with his transcripts.

The idea of multiple signing days has been floated in recent years with some coaches supporting it and others fighting against it.

Those in favor, including coaches from the Big 12, Atlantic Coast and Big East, like the idea because it

allows players who want to sign to get the process over with and prevents other programs from poaching recruits who have given oral commitments to programs.

Coaches in the Southeastern Conference voted 9-3 in favor of an early signing period last spring. SEC presidents and athletic directors voted against the idea, which met lukewarm response in other conferences around the nation.

Some believe establishing an early signing date will simply mean that date eventually becomes the main signing date, which has happened in basketball with its fall and spring signing periods.

Hawkins believes recruiting works different ways for different athletes and their families. He said that is as good a reason as any to make a more flexible system for choosing a college.

Hawkins said typical students looking ahead to college begin investigating schools and making visits during their junior years. He said student-athletes shouldn't be prohibited from doing so. The current system doesn't allow that and many prospects don't have the financial means to pay for earlier visits themselves.

"I'm sort of as guy from the dirt. My dad was a logger. I don't know a lot about politics and policies. I just kind of look at common sense things," Hawkins said earlier this year. "If I was the Czar of recruiting, which I'm not, and hopefully I'm around here long enough that I can make some impact. I think what's going on right now is if you've got money, you can go around and take all these unofficial trips. You can go to these camps. You can go to these combines. You can go to these elite one-day deals on people's campuses.

"And so guys are committing in June of their junior years. The only problem with that is you have a whole bunch of kids who have no money and cannot do that. So they in a sense are forced to wait. If you look at a lot of teams right now, they're done with recruiting as long as their commitments hold up. If I was the Czar of recruiting I would say you can take two trips in May and June of your junior year."



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