



# Ex-Buff coach McCartney issues another spring game challenge

## Ex-coach wants Folsom full

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, February 5, 2009

No one would ever mistake former Colorado football coach Bill McCartney as a quitter, so it should be no surprise he is renewing his challenge to Buffs fans to fill Folsom Field for the April 25 spring game this year.

McCartney first issued the challenge at the annual recruiting luncheon in Denver a year ago, and fans responded by setting a record attendance number at the 2008 spring game of nearly 18,000, well short of the 50,000 McCartney sought.

During his remarks at this year's luncheon Thursday before introducing coach Dan Hawkins, he called out CUfans once again.

"I believe we need to rally again in the spring game," McCartney said during a passionate 9-minute pep talk before about 1,000 fans at the luncheon. "That means a lot. That's encouraging.

"You know what happens when you put a lot of people in there for the spring game? A spirit of anticipation comes over the place. Do you know that when a football team gets an air of confidence and a spirit of anticipation, you know what? All bets are off."

### Pitman pleased

CU strength and conditioning coach Jeff Pitman did a little public speaking Thursday at the luncheon. He was called on stage by radio play-by-play man Mark Johnson who asked for updates on the team's progress in the off-season program.

"The last two weeks have been the best two weeks I've had here by far," Pitman said. "I'm definitely excited. I think we're going to road-grade some people next year."

### Back to work

The morning after signing 19 recruits on signing day, CU coaches and staffers were right back at it Thursday morning with a recruiting meeting focused on players who are currently juniors in high school and will be seniors in the fall.

"There is high tide and low tide," Hawkins said. "There is never no tide."

## Linemen cleared

Hawkins said offensive linemen Ryan Miller and Max Tuioti-Mariner both received a year of eligibility back from the NCAA in the form of a medical redshirt. Both players suffered season-ending injuries during the fourth week of the season last year.

## Notable

One priority for the athletic department in the next six months is having new lights installed in Folsom Field on the west side of the stadium. The school has used portable lights on that side of the field for night games for years, but the Big 12 Conference is phasing out its subsidy to schools for lighting. ... The football team produced a 2.545 grade point average in the fall and will report a 70 percent graduation rate for football on its next report to the Department of Education. The NCAA allows schools to include transfers in and out of programs. So the graduation rate reported to the NCAA will be 75 percent. Hawkins said 14 members of the recruiting class have 3.0 GPAs or better in high school.



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## Next task for Hawkins: win

### Coach: Buffs must improve on field to compete for recruits

By Kyle Ringo  
Thursday, February 5, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Taking the next step in Boulder requires winning.

The Colorado football program has probably gone as far as it's going to go in recruiting -- it actually took a step back this year -- on the back of Dan Hawkins' hard work and gregarious personality. Even the coach acknowledged Wednesday during his press conference announcing the 2009 recruiting class that to attract the next level of recruit on a more consistent basis, the Buffs must produce better results on the field beginning next fall.

"Definitely a little bit. No question about that," Hawkins said when asked how three consecutive losing seasons impact the job of adding talent to the program. "I really think we're poised to have a breakout year. I'm really excited when we do break that plane and we kind of get going, then I think you're going to see it, you know, it gets easier in a sense."

National signing day came and went with CU landing a decent number of three and four-star recruits among its 19-member class, especially if one first considers the past three seasons have ended with 2-10, 6-7 and 5-7 records. CU even landed a five-star player for the third year in a row in Legacy High School defensive end Nick Kasa.

Hawkins and his staff are consistently mentioned among the favorites of plenty of highly ranked players these days. Last year coming off a loss in a bowl game, enough of those players stuck with the Buffs because the perception was that the program was heading in the right direction after the debacle of 2006.

CU went 5-7 this season and it played a part in fewer star players choosing black and gold this time around. Those choices were reflected in overall class rankings Wednesday night by the two major recruiting services. Scout.com ranked the 2009 class No. 59 nationally. Rivals.com ranked it No. 48 falling from No. 15 in 2008.

Hawkins doesn't care much what the recruiting services have to say. He loves the players he is bringing to Boulder beginning in June when freshmen arrive and enroll in summer classes to get a head start on academics and accustomed to campus. Fourteen of those players will come from nine other states. Five are in-state prospects.

"I probably had more great times and great interaction and great fellowship in the homes of some of these kids than I've had in a long time," Hawkins said.

Hawkins said some members of this class will definitely make an immediate impact. He refrained from naming names in an effort to not heap pressure on the young men, but some candidates are obvious

because they're joining a program in need of help at their positions.

The most likely recruits to earn playing time in 2009 are four defensive linemen led by Kasa, who was ranked the No. 4 defensive end in the country. Defensive tackles Edward Nuckols and Nate Bonsu and defensive end Forrest West complete a foursome that could wreak havoc in the Big 12 in the future.

Three wide receivers also joined the program Wednesday and all three could earn playing time quickly. Junior college transfer Andre Simmons will be expected to play if he qualifies academically. Freshmen Jarrod Darden and Terdema Ussery each possess the size and athleticism to compete right away.

Hawkins said he and his assistants worked hard to find the right type of players and personalities to add to the roster while filling needs. They found players from winning programs who were leaders and team captains and also performed well in the classroom.

It's clear CU coaches also sought to give themselves options while working with a small class size for the second year in a row. Hawkins said he has two scholarships remaining that he could choose to use before training camp in August. "I think it's a very athletic class," Hawkins said. "A lot of guys in here could play a number of positions, can run, jump, catch, throw, offense, defense. And I think that's really awesome."

**For complete bios of all 19 signees [click here](#).**



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## Woelk: 2008 class is the one to focus on right now

By Neill Woelk  
Thursday, February 5, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — The letters are signed, the rankings -- however subjective/ridiculous they might be -- are in, and now folks want to know:

What about Colorado's recruiting class?

Good question. Recruiting is the lifeblood of any college football program.

But the most important queries concerning Colorado recruiting have absolutely nothing to do with the 19 players who signed CU letters of intent on Thursday.

The biggest unanswered questions concerning Buff recruiting today are these: can Darrell Scott and Ray Polk become productive members of Colorado's offense next fall? Can Tyler Hansen take the next step in his development as a quarterback? Can Jon Major return from a knee injury and become a force at linebacker? Can Max Tuioti-Mariner return from his knee injury and pick up where he left off in 2008?

Those are the issues that will matter in 2009, a season Dan Hawkins is pointing to as a "breakout" year. They concern players who signed letters a year ago, players who have had a year to adjust to the college game, learn the system and possibly become significant contributors next fall.

As for this year's class, here's a hint: don't sweat the rankings. Back away from the ledge, quit worrying that the sky is falling and take a deep breath.

Then remember that anyone who claims to know exactly how good this class might be a year or two from now is either a liar or a fool — or both.

Fact: nobody knows. You might make an educated guess, but you'd likely be just as accurate with a coin and calling heads or tails on every player in the group. When scouts and general managers who make a living in the NFL Draft miss as often as they hit, it's ludicrous to believe that recruiting Web sites can be more accurate when judging infinitely more players with infinitely less resources at hand.

That being said, there are no doubt some things we can already glean from this class.

Hawkins clearly aimed to address some roster shortages with this group.

Start with wide receiver, where he added three. That leaves him a couple wide receivers short of the 10 he'd like to have in camp next fall, but it moves him much closer to his goal.

Ditto with D-linemen. There are four in the latest class, bringing some much-needed depth at the position. One of those players is Legacy High's Nick Kasa, a player the experts tab as one of the best in the nation at his position. Let's hope they're right.

Like any smart coach, Hawkins also made sure to include a handful of offensive linemen in the group. Thus, next summer, he'll have at least 15 O-linemen on the roster instead of the six that greeted him in the spring of 2007.

There's also a quarterback who has the build of a linebacker (6-5, 230), a couple of bona fide linebackers (always a smart move when you have the best linebackers coach in the nation on your staff), a kicker (no explanation necessary), three defensive backs and an "athlete."

Trends worth noting? Each of the receivers is at least 6-3 and 205 pounds. That means a big target for whoever is throwing the pass.

There's also some beef up front. At least six of the recruits check in at 270 or better, meaning they'll likely be 300 pounders in a year or two.

And, there's some speed.

Good class? Great class? Bad class? The scouting "services" say mediocre.

We say wait a couple of years. We're much more interested in seeing how the 2008 class — the one that was supposed to be one of CU's best in years — pays off in 2009.



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## D-linemen could make quick impact for Buffs in 2009

By Kyle Ringo  
Wednesday, February 4, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Playing time will be up for grabs in a big way on the Colorado defensive line next fall and coaches added four players to the mix Wednesday who all will have an opportunity to grab some immediate attention.

The program lost what amounted to its entire starting four on the line last season when linebacker Brad Jones is factored in. Jones played rush end much of the time as a senior.

Coach Dan Hawkins said he believes some of the younger defensive linemen who have been in the program will be ready to step in. He said he likes what he has seen from them in terms of adding strength and size in the weight room so far this off-season.

But it's likely one or more of the freshmen will be needed.

"We'll see who is mentally ready, physically ready, emotionally ready," Hawkins said. "We'll see where we go. Probably just numbers-wise, you're probably right. There are probably a better chance for one or two of those guys, but we'll see."

The most likely to play might be five-star defensive end Nick Kasa, but Hawkins raved about the other three as well.

"He's extremely explosive," Hawkins said about defensive tackle Edward Nuckols from California. "He just knocks people off the ball."

Hawkins said defensive end Forrest West reminds Hawkins of former Buff Abraham Wright, who led the Big 12 in sacks in 2006. West is the first recruit from Connecticut to join the program since records began being kept in 1973.

Hawkins said Nate Bonsu, a defensive tackle from Allen, Texas, served as a captain on the Class 5A state champion team in Texas. He said Bonsu's smile and personality reminds him of former Buff George Hypolite.

"Nate has got a big time motor, too," Hawkins said.

**Hawkins aims to hire**

**line coach soon**

Hawkins said he hopes to have a new offensive line coach named in the next 10 days. The leading candidate might be former Illinois State head coach Denver Johnson, who interviewed late last month and was introduced to players.

Hawkins said former Buff lineman and current offensive technical intern Brad Bedell probably won't be hired because he lacks a degree and has little coaching experience.

### **Sign from God**

Hawkins said one of his favorite recruits from an attitude and spirit standpoint is Wheat Ridge High School standout Parker Orms. Hawkins said he had an epiphany about Orms while attending a banquet for high school football players last winter with his youngest son, Drew.

"They were talking about one of the awards that went to a former Wheat Ridge player who went to Texas because Colorado told him he was too small, and all he did was dominate them," Hawkins said. "I kept going, 'That's a sign from God right there. I need to get Parker Orms.' "

### **Moten will play QB**

Josh Moten, a recruit from Harbor City, Calif., who was signed as an athlete, will be given every opportunity to play quarterback, Hawkins said.

Moten played quarterback for his high school team and has said in published reports that he hopes to continue at the position in college. Hawkins said he does not believe in forcing players to change positions.

Hawkins said he is unsure how the presence of his son, Cody, as the incumbent starter at quarterback has affected the view of the program in the eyes of quarterback recruits. He noted it didn't stop Moten or Clark Evans from joining the Buffs this year.

"It's hard really to totally judge," Hawkins said. "You would like to say no, but everybody is going to use any ounce of negative recruiting against you anyway. So you know that people are throwing that stuff out there."

### **Notable**

CU will play two road games on Thursday nights next season on ESPN. The Buffs play at West Virginia on Oct. 1 and at Oklahoma State on Nov. 19. ... Hawkins had this to say about the possibility of using one or both of his remaining scholarships this spring. "Maybe. I always love just having a little bit of fudge room in there. You never know. There is always the guy that crops up." ... Offensive lineman Ryan Miller is trying out for the track team in the shot put. Miller has been fully cleared after suffering a broken leg last season. ... Hawkins said he knows who will be invited to walk-on but he is not allowed to discuss them until they are enrolled in classes. ... CU coaches will have 62 official visits to use in building the 2010 class. They used 53 in this cycle. ... Lamont Smith, a defensive back and member of the 2007 class, is no longer with the program. He was academically ineligible last season.



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## Kasa keeps Hawkins' in-state streak alive

### Bufs coach has nabbed Colorado's top prospect for three years in row

By Elwood Shelton  
Wednesday, February 4, 2009

BROOMFIELD, Colo. — BROOMFIELD -- University of Colorado football fans can exhale now. You got your top-ranked in-state player.

On Wednesday's National signing day, defensive end Nick Kasa made his decision to become a Buffalo official. In turn, the 6-foot-7, 245-pound pass-rush specialist kept CU coach Dan Hawkins' run at nabbing Colorado's top player a perfect 3-for-3.

Kasa's commitment also ended one of the most twisting roads a local athlete has recently traveled to the next level. In December, Kasa was all but certain he was heading to the University of Florida. But he changed his mind in January, reneging on his verbal commitment to the national champs in favor of Colorado.

"I think CU is it," Kasa said. "Having the feeling that I had today when I signed my letter just confirms it for me."

Hawkins has no doubt Kasa is a good fit for Colorado.

"One of the things I loved, and I loved this about Jon Major (in 2008) is all the adulation and all the attention that he gets is really kind of embarrassing to him," Hawkins said. "It really is. He would just as soon be a kid and do his deal and finish up at Legacy High School and be a Buff. I love that about him. That's kind of our whole salt-of-the-earth approach, too. He can be as great as he wants to be."

There has been all sorts of speculation as to why Kasa changed his mind from Florida to CU. Most revolve around what the defensive end said was speculation that he would play on the offensive line for the Gators.

He said he was swayed to Colorado for a number of reasons, in particular, he cited the atmosphere around the Buffs and the program being a raising star. And the talk about the end, who had 31.5 career sacks at Legacy, not being defensive material according to the Gators?

"There were rumors that I didn't think I could play defense at Florida, but I think I could have," he said. "We would have seen when I got there. I just like what CU is doing with their defense, I think I could benefit it more and see more playing time."



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## Class described as one step forward

Hawkins says recruits fit culture of CU

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

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Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins discusses the Buffs' recruiting class Wednesday. (Joe Amon | The Denver Post)

BOULDER — On the surface, Colorado's 2009 recruiting haul lacks the flash and sizzle of last year's group, with no Darrell Scott to get everybody giddy. But while this 19-player class may not rank highly with the so-called recruiting

gurus, it's teeming with character and potential, CU coach Dan Hawkins said Wednesday during his annual national signing day news conference.

It's more important to become a star on the field than it is to carry stars from Internet recruiting sites. And that can happen, Hawkins said. [Rivals.com](#) ranks Colorado's class ninth best among Big 12 Conference teams and No. 48 nationally. Last year's CU class, featuring Scott as the nation's top-ranked tailback, was rated

### National Signing Day

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When asked what he would tell boosters who are disappointed in Colorado not getting a top-20 class, Hawkins said: "I'm not worried about that. To me, this has top-20 people, top-20 players. We're trying to build on a culture, getting guys that fit the profile. These guys come from a lot of really awesome families . . . strong values, principles. I've been very fired up (recruiting them)."

CU's most highly regarded recruits are in-state players. Legacy defensive end Nick Kasa (6-feet-7, 245 pounds) made national top-50 lists for all positions. Kasa appeared headed to national champion Florida before switching an oral commitment to Colorado on Jan. 11. Chaparral offensive tackle Jack Harris made top-250 lists.

Hawkins said he did not try to convince Kasa to change his mind and switch to the Buffs. But he is glad the towering pass rusher decided to stay home.

"I know how much pressure they're under. I know how many 'spitballs' are thrown at them every day," Hawkins said of blue-chippers.

## Staying home

The signing of Kasa means CU has signed the top-rated in-state player for three consecutive years, with Kasa joining Columbine offensive lineman Ryan Miller (2007) and Ponderosa linebacker Jon Major (2008).

"The first rule in recruiting is to get the best players in your state," [CBSSports.com](#) recruiting

analyst Tom Lemming said. "Then you expand from there. Colorado did well in both areas this year."

It's a fill-the-needs class, and sometimes that works. Hawkins signed three wide receivers, four defensive linemen and four offensive linemen.

"We're building across the base, getting close to the numbers (for each position)," Hawkins said, pointing out that injuries last fall left the Buffaloes with just 49 available scholarship players.

CU recruiters concentrated on Colorado (five players), California (four) and Texas (three), but also plucked players from seven other states, reaching as far east as Connecticut.

"I think it will go down as one of the most diverse groups in the Big 12 this year," [Rivals.com](#) analyst Jeremy Crabtree said. "I definitely think this is a very solid group. While it may not register near the top of the Big 12, it's another solid step forward for the Buffs. This will be one of the more underappreciated groups in the conference."

## Bufs fill needs

Finding athletic wide receivers was a major priority, and Hawkins said he would have signed as many as five. He praised the three he did get, calling them "long and lean guys that can body people up."

The most highly rated of the trio, 6-3, 210-

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pound Andre Simmons of Independence (Kan.) Community College, made CU coaches sweat. After having committed to CU, Simmons

**Longhorns rate as best in Big 12**

Fortifying the numbers on the defensive side of the ball was the focal point of some of the Big 12's strongest programs. Texas, Oklahoma, Texas A&M, Oklahoma State, Texas Tech and Missouri each signed more defensive players than offensive players. Here's a rundown of Big 12 teams in order of recruiting class ranking by Rivals.com.

School	Recruits	National rank
1. Texas	20 HS players, 0 JC players	5
DE Alex Okafor of Pflugerville, Texas, could be the scary one, rather to replace departing All-American Brian Ortogo. Okafor is ranked No. 14 (all positions) by Rivals.com.		
2. Oklahoma	20 HS, 0 JC	19
Top 100 recruits DT Jameson Motenland of Lubbock, Texas; DE Gabe Lynn of Jenks, Okla.; LB Ronald Lewis of Dewar, Okla.; and CB Kevin Brent of Dallas are among 14 defensive signees.		
3. Texas A&M	27 HS, 1 JC	21
Running back Christine Michael of Beaumont, Texas, ranks No. 22 (all positions) by Rivals.com and was a huge get for Aggies, who also took 15 defensive players.		
4. Nebraska	18 HS, 2 JC	28
Not a particularly flashy class except for a much-needed QB in Cody Green (6-4, 230) of Dayton, Texas, who is rated No. 55 (all positions) by Scout.com.		
5. Kansas	21 HS, 0 JC	34
DE Kevin Young, a four-star prospect from Okaloosa (Fla.), North, fills a big need. LB Deshaun Sands of Sarasota, Fla., is the brother of former Jayhawks great Tony Sands.		
6. Texas Tech	24 HS, 2 JC	34
Is no surprise for power-happy Red Raiders, their best prospects are a QB (Jacob Ekanem, a 6'6 1/2" 200-pounder) and an OL (Drew Gray).		
7. Oklahoma State	19 HS, 4 JC	35
QB Jeremy Smith from state-champion Tulsa Union HS was an important four-star get for school that produced Barry Sanders and Thurman Thomas.		
8. Missouri	22 HS, 0 JC	41
Ranking of overall class was a bit disappointing for the two-time Big 12 North champ, but Rivals' top-rated defensive lineman, DT Sheldon Richardson (6-foot-6, 232 pounds) of St. Louis, is headed to Columbia.		
9. Colorado	18 HS, 1 JC	48
A fit the needs class for the Buffaloes, who supplied the roster with wide receivers and offensive and defensive linemen, including top-10 Nick Kasa at DE. Recruiting analysts think QB Clark Evans (6-5, 230) is an underrated 3 star.		
10. Baylor	24 HS, 4 JC	50
Three-star QB Bryce Petty of McAllen (Texas) HS also had offers from New Mexico, Virginia Tech and Nebraska, according to Rivals.com.		
11. Iowa State	18 HS, 0 JC	72
Coaching change hurt, but Cyclones did nab four-star (Darius Reynolds) of Roskilde (Iowa) JC, who was a QB but could play any of several positions for ISU.		
12. Kansas State	23 HS, 4 JC	95
Is back-to-the future coach Bill Snyder building a football team or a basketball program? Snyder landed two 6'6 offensive linemen, plus tight ends that stand 6-6 and 6-6.		

Tom Kensler, The Denver Post

Big 12 rankings (Click image to enlarge)

made a recent visit to Kansas State and was quoted as saying he might be favoring the Wildcats. Simmons was ranked No. 35 among all junior college players by [Rivals.com](http://Rivals.com).

"Andre knows how to use his body and is a guy that's hard to tackle," Hawkins said.

Also joining the receiving ranks is a pair from

Texas: 6-5 Jarrod Darden of Keller and 6-4 Terdema Ussery of Dallas. Ussery has competed in Junior Olympics competition in the decathlon. And it's no surprise that he also played high school basketball. His father, of the same name, is president and CEO of the Dallas Mavericks.

Another critical need, the defensive line, was fortified with the additions of Kasa, fellow defensive end Forrest West of Connecticut and two burly defensive tackles, Edward Nuckols (6-3, 295) of San Marcos, Calif., and Nate Bonsu (6-2, 280) of Allen, Texas.

"(Nuckols) is extremely explosive," Hawkins said. "He just knocks people off the ball . . . a Warren Sapp-type player."

Colorado got a combination kicker-punter from Denver East, Zach Grossnickle, who might immediately compete for one job or both. And everybody wants to know about quarterbacks. CU signed two from California, with 6-5, 230-pound Clark Evans being the most highly regarded.

"We saw him as a junior," Hawkins said of Clark, "and thought, 'This guy is going to be something.'"

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## Angels return to limelight

**Two East players sign with CU**

**By John Henderson**  
*Denver Post Staff Writer*

Posted: 02/05/2009 12:30:00 AM MST

Updated: 02/05/2009 12:57:00 AM MST



East High School football players, from left to right, Matt Judish (CSU-Pueblo), Jeff Hampton (CSU-Pueblo), Jace Davis (Northern Colorado) and DaVaughn Thornton (Colorado) pose for a photo after signing their letters-of-intent Wednesday. (John Leyba, The Denver Post)

The last East High School football player who signed with Colorado was part of Eddie Crowder's second recruiting class. Navy's Roger Staubach had just won the Heisman Trophy and "My Fair Lady" was about to win the Oscar for best picture.

Forty-five years is a long time for the biggest high school in Denver to send a football player to the local university. Finally, on Wednesday afternoon, tight end DaVaughn Thornton and kicker-punter Zach Grossnickle signed letters-of-intent to become the first Angels to join CU since 1964.

"It's a big deal," Thornton said after a crowded

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signing ceremony at East complete with cake, punch and a posse of photographers. "East is really known as a basketball program. Now, it's a football program."

## National Signing Day

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- Jim Armstrong: Hawkins era off to good start

A big reason for the drought's end is a guy who knows a little about CU and inner-city prep football, East coach Ron Woolfork, who played at Henry Ford High School in Detroit before starring for Colorado from 1991-93. He later played in the NFL with Kansas City and Arizona.

Woolfork was promoted from assistant to head coach in 2006 and has led East to the second

round of state the past two years.

"He improved it by making it more of a college practice," Thornton said. "You do this, then go straight to another drill. It's in and out. We got more into conditioning for the fourth quarter."

Added Grossnickle: "He improved it every year. He made all of us go to study hall. It wasn't just football."

The first day of East's last fall camp attracted more than 100 players. The first thing Woolfork did, similar to what Urban Meyer did at Florida, was re-emphasize tradition.

"There was some tradition here at East," Woolfork said. "What I wanted to do was bring a little bit of that and, with my experiences up at CU playing for coach Bill McCartney, change the culture."

While East doesn't even have the best tradition in the city, it does have some. That last Angels who signed with Colorado in February 1964 were defensive tackle Dave Sidwell, who coached East in 2004-05, and single-wing quarterback Dave Babbs. The winningest football coach in Colorado prep history is Pat Panek, who won 306 games for East and Bishop Machebeuf.

CU hasn't just ignored East. It has ignored the entire Denver Prep League. Before Wednesday, since 2000 the only DPL players Colorado signed were Thomas Jefferson tailback Marcus Houston in 2000 and Montbello wide receiver Jarrell Yates in 2005.

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"I think everything is cyclical," said Colorado coach Dan Hawkins, entering his fourth season in Boulder.

Yet in 2005 alone, five DPL players dotted rosters for Bowl Championship Series teams: Georgia Tech guard Salih Besirevic from South, Nebraska tailback Cory Ross from Thomas Jefferson, Miami defensive end Calais Campbell from South, Iowa State defensive back Stephen Johnson from Montbello and Texas tailback Michael Houston from Montbello.

"It's not a question of athletic talent in Denver or DPL," Woolfork said. "Sometimes they take the kids for granted, maybe, thinking they grow up being a CU Buff fan and maybe felt as though, 'Well, he's going to come to CU. We don't have to put that much effort.'

"Whether you're CSU, CU or Wyoming, you've got to get into Denver."

Woolfork said Hawkins agrees.

"I'd like to think that Hawk is a little bit like Mac," Woolfork said. "That energy, that buying into the program, getting people to buy in, wanting to get into the city, Hawk is doing that and made it different from his two predecessors.



Since being named East's head football coach in 2006, Ron Woolfork has led the Angels into the second round of the playoffs twice. (Andy Cross, Denver Post file photo )

"And that's important."

Part of the problem is DPL teams have had little success. The last DPL team to win a state title was Thomas Jefferson in 1989. The suburban schools have more money, more tradition and a more consistent system starting in youth leagues.

"I believe it's a factor," Woolfork said. "We need to get on the same level as the suburban schools. The community support has been tremendous. The faculty, the administration has been outstanding. But collectively, we've got to get better at it."

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*Colorado's five to thrive, top juniors from the past season who should lead next year's recruiting class:*

## **Kain Colter**

Cherry Creek, QB, 6-0, 170

Ran and passed for more than 2,800 yards and 30 touchdowns a year after transferring from Boulder. . . . Threw for 257 yards in loss in Class 5A title game. . . . Colorado has offered.

## **Austin Hinder**

Steamboat Springs, QB, 6-5, 180

Threw for 17 touchdowns and impressed at the U.S. Army All-American bowl skills challenge. . . . California, CU, Colorado State, Stanford, Kansas State and Missouri are interested.

## **Nduka Onyeali**

Mullen, DE, 6-1, 225

V-8 motor, strong weight-room performer. . . . Also a sprinter in track. . . . Fast enough to play linebacker, but top performer on Mustangs' defense coming off the edge.

## **Danny Spond**

Columbine, QB, 6-3, 225

Emerging thrower itching to pass in run-oriented offense; state's top rushing QB. . . . Injured in

regular season, but led Rebels to within three points of 5A final. . . . CU, Duke and Stanford on his radar.

## **Daijon Tyler**

Pomona, LB, 6-0, 210

One of two juniors on The Denver Post All-Colorado defense. . . . Good speed, nice hitter. . . . Helped Panthers to tie for Big 8 League title and 5A quarterfinals.

*Neil H. Devlin, The Denver Post*

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terry frei

## Recruiting dot-coms a scourge

By Terry Frei  
The Denver Post

Posted: 02/05/2009 12:30:00 AM MST

BOULDER — Because Dan Hawkins often uses the strength-in-numbers approach in taking a handful of assistant coaches with him for the crucial in-home visits with high school football prospects, it's probably inaccurate to portray him as a better "closer" than either Bobby Bowden in his prime or Kyra Sedgwick on cable.

Yet even as he still has to prove that his often quirky coaching approach can work in a BCS conference, this is apparent: The guy can recruit.

No, the Buffs' 2009 prospect class, the fourth of Hawkins' tenure, won't be ranked in any dot-coms' top 25 and won't make Charlie Weis jealous. But with Legacy defensive end Nick Kasa as the headliner in the group announced on Wednesday's national letter of intent signing date, it appears to be solid and at least a step forward.

It shows just how ridiculous the dot-com, pony and cable show of recruiting has gotten when a

coach known to be good at the process is shaking his head at the end of it.

"The whole recruiting thing is just . . . It's out of control, it really is," Hawkins said at the Dal Ward Center. "It's bizarre beyond means. We just try to be as matter-of-fact as we can with these guys. We understand their heads are spinning.

"I don't try to get into, 'I'm better than another coach, and we're better than another . . . There are great things about every place, and you have to decide what's great for you.' "

It used to be that when coaches said they detested recruiting, they meant the physical and mental grind of travel and salesmanship, or their loathing of the ethical dilemmas they faced in trying to land the elite of the elite.

Today?

The worst of the cheating in recruiting — including the promises of outright payments — is largely gone, not so much because coaches (and boosters) suddenly have sprouted angels' wings, but because you can't get away with it any more.

The worst part is the unfortunate overexposure of the entire process, in everything from filling cable time, to print, to the cottage industry of dot-com "prospect" immersion coverage from the time these guys are, what, 12? Some players revel in it. Many don't. Either way, it's gotten ridiculous.

I just wish recruiting hadn't become such a

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circus, that young men (and women) could make their choices in a lower-key atmosphere; and that the dot-com enthusiast sites weren't given so much credence, both as evaluators of talent and chroniclers of the "orally commit," "decommit," "recommit," "sign-on-the-bottom-line" world.

As in any business, the credibility and ethics of the dot-com recruiting sites run the gamut. At least nowadays, some of the men making the judgments have been in the game and know the difference between a drop-step and a polka; only a few years ago, much of the loudest charting came from information-gatherers who, despite their claims, were little more than glorified hobbyists. (Coverage of the NFL draft has evolved similarly.) But it's still in transition. As the legitimization of the "gurus" continues, there are potential hazards as they — whether honorable or otherwise — annually influence and not just cover the process.

"What's sort of interesting is they've kind of continued to take the head coach out of the loop," Hawkins said. "You can't go out in the spring. They won't let coaches text (prospects). But all these guys who work for these websites and all these Internet sites, they call 'em and text 'em and they badger the heck out of 'em. . . . I always (ask), 'What would be the one thing you'd change,' and they always say, 'I wish those (dot-com) guys wouldn't call me anymore.'"

## Blog: Terry Frei



The Post's Terry Frei posts analysis, notes and minutiae on this blog devoted to the NHL and more.

"I've had guys on trips, they'll be here, and guys from whatever, such-and-such website will be texting them every 15 minutes, going, 'Don't commit, don't commit, don't commit.' Well, they're not coaching for X-Y-Z school, but they're certainly recruiting for X-Y-Z school, right? You say get the coaches back, but then you have a whole bevy of other people who are making money and making a living off this stuff and they're just hammering 'em. That's hard. That's hard for those kids. That's one thing I'd change, for sure."

I say we should just decommit and start all over.

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## Hawk: MBA in recruiting

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 02/05/2009 12:30:00 AM MST



University of Colorado coach Dan Hawkins keeps finding novel ways to recruit. (Joe Amon, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — When it comes to recruiting, Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins is always looking for the next big idea.

"Business is business," said Hawkins, who solicits the help of students in CU's Leeds School of Business to try to convince high school football stars to sign with the Buffaloes.

Hawkins enlists help from a small group of students from a project management course each fall and spring semester to work on an internship basis with the football program. Other business students, mostly seniors or graduate students, work each semester at the Dal Ward Athletic Center as a project team. The students work closely with Mark Nolan, CU's assistant director of football operations.

"What we do in the class is go out and

### National Signing Day

**Watch** video of CU coach Dan Hawkins commenting on

- recruits
- **CU:** Buffs' football commitments
- **CSU:** Rams' football commitments
- **AFA:** Falcons' football players-of-interest
- **WYO:** Cowboys' football commitments
- **UNC:** Bears' football commitments
- **RMAC:** A list of D-II football commitments
- **Preps:** In-state football recruits
- Tom Kensler: All Things Buffs blog
- Natalie Meisler: All Things Rams blog
- Jim Armstrong: Hawkins era off to good start

plan and execute on a project," said CU senior instructor Jim Marlatt, who teaches the class.

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"That always includes a real client."

In addition to the Colorado football program, students in Marlatt's classes have worked on projects with Janus, Vail Resorts, CH2M Hill, Target and other large companies.

"Dan Hawkins is always very creative and innovative when it comes to (recruiting)," Marlatt said.

Because Hawkins does not want other football programs to find out about his recruiting techniques, a code of confidentiality is strictly enforced among all parties involved in a project. But Hawkins and Marlatt are able to talk freely about one innovative project tried last year because it has since been banned.

A year ago CU mailed cartons shaped like pizza boxes to recruits, rather than send standard recruiting letters. Each box contained hundreds of business cards that resembled \$100 and \$500 bills. An accompanying letter explained that the sum of the fake currency would add up to the value of a University of Colorado education.

Colorado's compliance department had cleared the "box project" with the NCAA and Big 12 Conference.

"That was a pretty ingenious move," Hawkins said. "It was a fun little deal dreamed up by our staff, operations and the business school. It was a good marketing project for business students and it was good for us."

However, the Big 12 had second thoughts after other football programs were apparently told by recruits about the CU box of "money" and questioned the legality of the tactic. Later, the NCAA ruled that no more than one business card per coach could be sent to a recruit.

"We'll always play by the rules," Hawkins said. "We don't want to do anything illegal, unethical or immoral."

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**BREAKING NEWS:** [Sweep nets 3 teen prostitutes, 2 pimps in metro Denver](#)

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

Published February 4, 2009 at 9:45 p.m.

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After Legacy High School's Nick Kasa signs a national letter of intent with the University of Colorado, his mother, Maureen, gives him a shoulder rub. Kasa sits with teammate Ryan Paulson (Naval Academy) and Travis Sears (CSU-Pueblo) on Wednesday.

**Eric Kiesau** isn't dwelling on the ones that got away. Then again, after the 19 faxed national letters of intent were received Wednesday, it might have been difficult to not think, "What if?" . . .

"We were very, very close on some very, very good players, (but) you can't sit here and second-guess yourself," said Kiesau, the University of Colorado receivers coach/passing game coordinator.

Kiesau's "close calls" at a position that bore the highest priority tag for CU in this recruiting cycle were **Diante Jackson** (Oregon) and **Emory Blake** (Auburn).

Still, Kiesau was able to close the deal on **Jarrod Darden**, **Terdema Ussery** and **Andre Simmons** and, "If you look back at the beginning of recruiting and say, 'Hey, we're going to get these three guys . . . ' you think, 'OK, that's a pretty good class,' " Kiesau said.

But with eight scholarship receivers accounted for, the Buffaloes remain two short of coach **Dan Hawkins'** preferred total. Hawkins wasn't sure if another two could be added before preseason camp.

In Darden, Ussery and Simmons, CU landed something it lacked - big targets who should play up to Big 12 Conference standards.

"You've got some guys who can play; they're bigger, Big 12-type guys, which is good," Kiesau said, adding the three who signed "are guys who want to be here and be a part of this. With the guys we've got returning and the guys we've got coming in, we'll be just fine."

Among the returning wideouts who didn't play last season are 6-foot-2 sophomore Markques Simas, another big body who was academically ineligible in 2008; and 6-1 redshirt freshman Chance Blackmon, who arrived in the summer weighing 168 pounds and is pushing 195.

Kiesau said Simmons "has some work to do" to qualify but added Simmons' desire to be admitted gives him "a great chance to get it done."

"We understand the difficulty of getting JC kids in; he could have easily taken the easy road and gone somewhere else, particularly within our conference. He chose to stick it out and wanted to be a part of this. That intrigued and actually excited me.

"He took some other visits and still was determined and kept pursuing us, saying, 'This is the place I want to be,' and that's a huge personal trait of character."

**Immediate impact**

Aside from the receivers, particularly Simmons if he gets in school, kicker/punter **Zach Grossnickle** could be called on to improve a kicking game that accounted for only six field goals in 17 attempts last season.

Grossnickle made 12-of-13 field goals in 2008 for Denver East, the miss coming from 58 yards. Also, with two starting defensive tackles graduated, **Edward Nuckols** (6-3, 295) and **Nate Bonsu** (6-2, 280) might offer help upon arrival.

Hawkins called Nuckols "very explosive . . . he knocks people off the ball; he's a Warren Sapp type."

#### Sleeper

A signing day FYI: Coaches believe they sign only prospective starters, not sleepers. Pressed to identify an "under-the-radar" guy, Hawkins pondered the question and finally settled on linebacker **Derrick Webb** - but only because Webb might be a geographic (Memphis, Tenn.) unknown west of the Mississippi.

"He can run and hit - and he's a pretty good rapper," Hawkins said of the 6-foot, 230-pounder.

Another linebacker who might fit the category is **Liloe Nobriga**, of Summerlin, Nev.

Said Hawkins: "He's really something. (Linebackers coach **Brian Cabral** and I watched him play basketball. He's 235 pounds and brings the ball up against the press . . . he's a smooth athlete."

#### One who got away

Safety **Byron Moore** chose Southern California over CU and Notre Dame, but Hawkins didn't know Moore's choice until the recruit put on a USC cap on ESPN's signing day show.

Don't get Hawkins started on the whole televised signing day extravaganza. On second thought, do get him started: He doesn't like 17- and 18-year-olds being "goaded into signing acts for the sake of drama and all that. . . . They treat them like **Elvis**, and that didn't work out so good for Elvis."

#### Did you know

Ussery's father, Terdema II, is the president and chief executive officer of the Dallas Mavericks, a former commissioner of the Continental Basketball Association as well as the former president of Nike Sports Management.

#### Etc.

\* Top in-state recruit **Nick Kasa** (Legacy) initially committed to Florida, then switched his pledge to CU. Hawkins said he didn't "grind" on Kasa, a defensive end: "I know how many spitballs are thrown at (recruits) every single day . . . there's a certain sort of natural bliss there that's awesome when a guy comes to a decision."

\* Hawkins said the departure of offensive line coach/running game coordinator **Jeff Grimes** about three weeks before signing day didn't impact recruiting. Hawkins doesn't think he'll lose any more assistants and hopes to have a replacement for Grimes hired within two weeks. **Brad Bedell** is not a candidate but will return as an offensive technical intern. CU signed four offensive linemen.

\* Athlete **Josh Moten** will get a first look at quarterback, according to Hawkins. Moten chose CU over Washington, which was recruiting him as a quarterback. The Buffs believe he can be a defensive back or perhaps a receiver. But Moten believes he can be a quarterback - thus the look at that position.

\* Defensive end **Forrest West** reminds Hawkins of **Abe Wright**, CU's best pass rusher in recent years. "He can run and is explosive," Hawkins said of Forrest.

\* CU will have 83 players on scholarship - two short of the NCAA ceiling - if all members of this class qualify and are admitted. Because of injuries and other attrition, the Buffs were using 49 scholarship players when last season ended, Hawkins said.

\* CU will play two Thursday night away games this season, and both will be televised by ESPN: Oct. 1 at West Virginia and Nov. 19 at Oklahoma State. Both kick off at 5:30 p.m. Mountain.

\* Spring practice begins March 31 and concludes with the spring game April 25. There are 15 practices over 29 days, with most of the practices on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

#### How did you do?

"I like the pedigrees, the whole balance of life (in this class). . . . I want the kid who wants what we have. We're building a foundation, we're seeing that two-class gap close up, we're seeing more layers of classes in there."

Hawkins

#### CU signees

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (school)
David Bakhtiari	OL	6-4	266	San Mateo, Calif. (Juniper Serro)
Nate Bonsu	DT	6-2	265	Allen, Texas (Allen)
Jarrod Darden	WR	6-4	211	Keller, Texas (Central)
Clark Evans	QB	6-5	225	Los Alamitos, Calif. (Los Alamitos)
Zach Grossnickle	P-PK	6-3	175	Denver (East)
Gus Handler	OL	6-4	265	Barrington, Ill. (Barrington)
Jack Harris	OL	6-6	270	Parker (Chaparral)
Nick Kasa	DE	6-7	245	Broomfield (Legacy)
Josh Moten	ATH	6-0	177	Harbor City, Calif. (Narbonne)
Liloe Nobriga	LB	6-2	235	Las Vegas (Palo Verde)
Edward Nuckols	DL	6-2	290	San Marcos, Calif. (Mission Hills)
Deji Olatoye	DB	6-2	180	Dublin, Ohio (Scioto)
Parker Orms	DB	6-0	185	Wheat Ridge (Wheat Ridge)
Shawn Simon	OL	6-2	305	Tulsa, Okla. (Union)

Chad Simon	OL	6-2 300 Tulsa, Okla. (Simon)
Andre Simmons	WR	6-3 201 Blackville, S.C. (Independence, Kan. CC)
Da Vaughn Thornton	TE	6-5 217 Denver (East)
Terdema Ussery	WR	6-4 205 Dallas (St. Mark's School of Texas)
Derrick Webb	LB	6-0 214 Memphis, Tenn. (Whitehaven)
J. Forrest West	DE	6-2 230 Salisbury, Conn. (Salisbury School)

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