



CU lineman Kaynor takes new approach

Senior hit with 'awakening' after last year's loss to Mizzou

By Kyle Ringo
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BOULDER, Colo. — Taj Kaynor grew up as "that guy," one who always led his teams to victory. It didn't matter the sport or the age. He scored the most points in basketball and made most of the plays in football from elementary school to high school.

He was blessed with more talent, size and strength than his friends. It earned him a football scholarship at Colorado, and it's going to allow him to earn a degree nearly free of charge in sociology next December.

But since joining the program in 2005 under former coach Gary Barnett -- yes, there are still a few Barnett guys left in Boulder -- Kaynor has never been "that guy" again.

Until this spring.

It's early and there are many more practices between now and the start of the 2009 season, but Kaynor has taken a new, more mature approach to what could be his final season of football.

Of course, he doesn't want this to be the final year he puts on pads and a helmet and knocks heads with his friends. And that might be part of what is motivating his turnaround from bit player to a possible leading man.

"That was something that always hurt my pride, too," Kaynor said about his lack of production as a Buff. "I would think about that a lot. No matter what sport I've played, I've always been the main contributor. I've always been that guy. Then I came here and I was like, 'OK, well my time is coming.' And then it's been taking longer than I've wanted."

Kaynor redshirted in 2005. Then over the course of the past three years he has played a total of 107 snaps, including a disappointing 20 plays in just seven games last season.

He's working harder and moving faster this spring than ever before in his CU career. He said he brought a long list of goals into spring ball, including wanting to be faster throughout practice than all his fellow defensive linemen.

He sets aside 10 minutes prior to each practice to focus on what he wants to accomplish, what instructions coaches have given and trying to go faster than the fastest person out there.

"I know that it's important that I do well, but I know there are question marks across the D-line. So I feel like everyone has the same mindset as far as that goes. We know how important the D-line is to any

team. I think we all think about that every day."

Kaynor, a product of Cherry Creek High School, had what he called "an awakening" late last season after a miserable 58-0 loss to Missouri. He said he made a mistake on a running play during the game and his misstep led to coaches moving him to the scout team.

"I had always been on the fence, but I was never on the scout team," Kaynor said. "Even my freshman year I didn't go to scout team. I was always with the older people. That was the first time in my career that I was on the scout team.

"It just really bothered me a lot. At first I was upset with it, and then, for the first time, I started looking back on myself and everything, and I knew that wasn't the type of player I was. I knew when the season was over that everything was going to be completely different and I wasn't going to accept anything like that from myself again."

The fact that Kaynor has played so sparingly in his career isn't completely his fault. There has been some pretty good competition for time on the roster the past three years in former defensive linemen such as George Hypolite, Brandon Nicolas and Maurice Lucas.

Those players had the majority of playing time, but there was more room for reserves than Kaynor's statistics reflect. He has never convinced coaches he deserved to be on the field. Over the past two years he has watched younger players such as Eugene Goree and Curtis Cunningham move ahead of him in the coaches' eyes and get on the field.

He's determined not to watch his senior season from the sidelines.

He has opened his mind and his heart to what defensive line coach Romeo Bandison has been preaching for three years now. Bandison asks his players to be coachable, meaning not just listening to what he says and responding with "Yes, coach." But actually giving the effort and taking the necessary steps to improve and fix problems.

Kaynor said he always listened to Bandison in the past, but the words never touched the right spot inside him until the Missouri mishap. He is also willing to admit falling into a trap that can snare many young players who are battling entrenched starters for playing time.

He said that while he competed with Hypolite each of the past three years, he assumed Hypolite would get the bulk of the playing time and he would have to wait for his opportunity.

"It's too bad that I thought that because my freshman year, I was rotating with the twos," Kaynor said. "I didn't think it was that far away, and then things changed. I don't know. It's been a crazy trip."



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Woelk: Buff RB Scott hungry to make up for lost season

By Neill Woelk
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BOULDER, Colo. — It's evident at first glance.

Darrell Scott is stronger, faster and slimmer. The difference between when he reported to Boulder as a freshman running back last summer and when he began his first session of spring ball a week ago is striking.

Simply, Scott now looks like a Big 12 running back. There are no soft edges, no hint of the few extra pounds he brought with him to Colorado. He's now a rugged 200-pounder who put up big numbers in the weight room in the offseason and still ran a 4.47-second 40-yard-dash.

"He was a little pudgy when he got here last year," admitted CU running backs coach Darian Hagan. "He was a little soft.

"But that's all gone. To his credit, he has totally invested in the spring. He's got a fire in his belly and he's putting everything he has out there every day."

And that, even more than the physical changes, might be the biggest difference of all for Scott.

The minute Scott signed his name to a CU letter of intent a year ago, the expectations began to grow at an exponential rate. When he showed up for fall camp in less than perfect condition, and almost immediately began to battle injuries -- something he'd never experienced before -- his freshman season turned out to be nothing like he could have imagined.

Not only did he not set the Big 12 on fire, there were games when there wasn't even a flame.

Meanwhile, as Scott simmered, fellow freshman Rodney Stewart exploded. Stewart finished as CU's top back, finishing with 622 yards, despite having his season cut short by a broken leg. Scott, meanwhile, totaled just 343 yards on the ground -- a number that represented a couple of good games for him in high school.

It was, he admits, "frustrating" at times.

Not that there weren't flashes of the talent that made him one of the nation's top-rated prep running backs. Twice during the season, he turned short runs into highlight-reel long gainers by hurdling opponents. He had a season-high 87 yards against Iowa State -- then didn't play the following week against Oklahoma State because he re-injured his ankle against the Cyclones.

"It was a long season -- like a lost season," Scott said earlier this week. "After I hurt my ankle, there

were times I just wanted to get the season over with and get healthy. It was just a long season."

But those long afternoons on the sidelines did provide Scott with some valuable insight, including the fact that the days of living on talent alone were long gone.

"It made me hungry to get on the field and make plays," he said. "It made me want to do whatever it took to get back out there."

That hunger led to him being singled out by strength coach Jeff Pitman as one of the players who had an outstanding offseason conditioning program. It led to more time studying the playbook, more time learning the offense, more time in virtually every facet of the game.

The results are showing.

"I have to prove to myself that I can actually do this," Scott said. "I can be a playmaker. I have the potential. I have the ability.

"I just have to do it."

Head coach Dan Hawkins said Scott's attitude throughout last year and into the spring never wavered.

"He came in with a lot of expectations heaped upon him, and then almost right away, he started battling the leg injuries," Hawkins said. "The thing about Darrell is that he handled it great. He always looked at things in a positive light. That's never changed.

"Right now we have four tailbacks that can play. He knows that, and he's out there competing. There's no doubt Darrell wants to play."



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