

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

terry frei

## Frei: Hawkins believes in family time

By Terry Frei  
The Denver Post

Posted: 07/06/2009 01:00:00 AM MDT

When I recently profiled new University of Colorado offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau, I asked him why he had made what seemed to be a lateral move when he left Jeff Tedford's California staff to join the Buffaloes as Dan Hawkins' receivers coach in 2005.

"One hundred percent because of the type of person Dan Hawkins is," Kiesau said. "It was not a football decision. . . . When I was at Cal, I never saw my family, never saw my kid. We would grind all night. I'm not saying that's wrong. Different guys have different philosophies about how they work and how they operate."

In a visit with Hawkins, I brought up Kiesau's remarks. When I joined him in a conference room at Dal Ward Athletic Center, Hawkins was alone, watching digital video projected from his laptop computer.

"I'm sitting here watching everybody's red-zone plays," Hawkins said. "Back in the old days, to put that together, all the man-hours involved? Now you've got 10 full-time coaches and 10 graduate assistants, and you've got all this computer stuff. Do you work hard? Of course you do. But you can go overboard, I think. I've always tried to be family- friendly from the standpoint of you need to get your work done. But that doesn't necessarily mean you have to sit down in your office and play solitaire until the head coach leaves or you're going to get fired. I've never been into that.

"So we've always tried to work it out so that guys can see their kids. Now, what our staff has usually opted to do is come in at 5 or 6 in the morning, get everything done and go home after practice. So they get home at 7 or whatever, and they can see their kids and help with homework and put them to bed. Sometimes it's just impractical and we can't do it. But there's nothing worse than getting all your work done and knowing that your kid's in a school play and you can't go to it because it's not socially acceptable. So I'm telling them, 'Just go!' I trust my guys. Sometimes we're just really busy and you can't go. That's the fact of the matter.

Advertisement



**Florida Tech**  
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

## Bring the Classroom to Your Home

### With a Degree Online From Florida Tech





**APPLY TODAY!**  
[FloridaTechOnline.com/FD](http://FloridaTechOnline.com/FD) | 1-888-253-5946

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

# denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

Blog: Terry Frei



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

"But I just became a grandpa. My youngest kid is 19 years old, and the years went just like that. You don't want to have regrets."

Ah, but the sticklers will say: What if the opposing staffs are working 20 hours a day? The fact is, those who have the nerve to say it's not necessary or counterproductive aren't thumbing their nose at convention. They're being honest. And they're right. Bob Stoops at Oklahoma is among those who insist on his staff having family time and doesn't get into the silly gamesmanship.

Terry Frei: 303-954-1895 or [tfrei@denverpost.com](mailto:tfrei@denverpost.com)

Advertisement

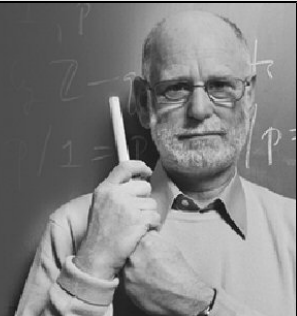


**Florida Tech**  
UNIVERSITY ONLINE



**APPLY TODAY!**

[FloridaTechOnline.com/FD](http://FloridaTechOnline.com/FD) | 1-888-253-5946



Print Powered By  **FormatDynamics™**

Recent Visitors  
[Click to get FEEDJIT](#)

More from Dan Hawkins  
 by Terry Frei on July 5, 2009

---

This is designed to be a companion piece to my page 2 Monday piece ([click here](#)) on CU football coach Dan Hawkins and his approach to staff work hours, and also to my recent feature ([here](#)) on CU offensive coordinator Eric Kiesau.

Before my just-concluded vacation, I met with Hawkins at the Dal Ward Center while working on story on the new offensive coordinator. Kiesau was promoted from receivers coach after Mark Helfrich returned to his native state and joined the Oregon staff in the shuffling that followed Mike Bellotti's switch from head coach to athletic director.

Hawkins is approaching his fourth season at CU. It's not out of line to wonder if he's the "right" man for the job. The jury's still out. I've long been on the record that any new coach deserves five years, taking him through one complete cycle of a player's redshirt year and four years of eligibility — and also recognizing that the first year of recruiting often is affected by the transition. With the salaries head coaches make in this era, I'm not as uncomfortable with piling on expectations as I used to be, since it falls under the heading of coming with the territory. But I also think the word "expectations" should involve more than just winning games and a bigger picture should be taken into account as well.

If you talk in private with Hawkins, it's virtually impossible not to come away with a better understanding of how he can be effective with parents and prospects, and also earn the loyalty of assistant coaches working in a state that prevents them having multi-year contracts. I scratch the surface of that in the page 2 piece, and the point to the story is that especially in this era of computer and digital technology, the coaching staffs working 20 hours a day — and bragging about it — are inefficient, spinning their wheels, or simply doing it because they think they're supposed to. It isn't necessary and one of Hawkins' points is that how can coaches credibly talk about a "family atmosphere" in a program if part of the program is that they turn their backs on their own families? Here's more from my recent conversation with Hawkins:

**On how much autonomy Kiesau will have:**

"Total. That said, I've probably been more involved in this offseason, even with Mark. Maybe I'm selling short a little bit, but I think the average fan or average person on the outside doesn't always get how a football staff runs. It's really no different than in your business. You have an editor and he's sort of in charge of everything, but if that guy micromanages every one of your stories, it would drive you nuts and it would mess it up. To me, that's the way a head coach needs to be, too.

"And I certainly am wanting certain things and saying those are going to be priorities and all that, but if you are having too many fingers in the pie, it gets messed up and you're dysfunctional. So you have to be careful about that. . . A lot of times, people will say, 'Sometimes I watch you on gameday and it doesn't look like you're always doing a lot.' I go, 'When things are going well, you're really not.' You're just going, 'Hey, good job,' and you're trying to make them aware of certain things. You can't have a bunch of people talking on the headsets or it gets dysfunctional.

"Now there are certain things I'm saying I want to see. I always have various forms of input, whether it's the running game or some things we do, but you can't stand on the sideline and have the coordinator make the call and then say, 'No, I don't like that, here's what we're doing.' That's bad management."

**On the Buffs' professed plan to run more often out of a two-back set and run more "downhill":**

*(Uh, actually, Hawkins nicely challenged me to say what I meant by "downhill," since it's one of those in-vogue terms that's often just repeated because it sounds good ... kind of like "command" in baseball. I said, to me, the major example would be a fullback leading a tailback through a hole.)*

"The thing is," Hawkins said, "back when you played and when I played, and that's the thing you try and educate about, it was different. The whole thing is different now. There aren't bubbles anymore in the defense like there used to be. Everybody's moving. That's why zone, inside zone and outside zone, has become a very prevalent play, because of the zone blitz and line stunts and all that. It used to be in the old days that people used to line up and there would be a bubble there and you could lead the fullback on that guy. Those days are out. You never see that from a defense anymore."

**On his his previous coaching experiences, including at Boise State as an assistant and head coach, and as head coach at Willamette University affected his outlook:**

"When I was in Boise, I was the assistant head coach, special teams coach, the recruiting coordinator and tight ends coach. There were three guys who made money than I did and Kirk (Koetter) was always worried about that. I told Dirk, 'I don't care about that. That's not important to me. I just want to see my kids.

"Even when I got the Boise State job, it was, 'Well, you've been the head coach at Willamette.' I said, 'Well, let me tell you something. I was the equipment man and the field maintenance guy. I'm sometimes lining and mowing the fields. I washed the uniforms. There was me and two other full-time guys and a bunch of volunteer guys.

"I'm a big reader and connoisseur of leadership and effective organization and all this stuff. I'm just saying that when you have it going, and you have a lot of people who are oriented and they take care of business, you don't have to micromanage them. . .

I'm not the smartest guy, but I'm a reader and a learner. Job autonomy is the number one thing.

"Now, again, I sit down with these guys and I evaluate them twice a year and we talk and commiserate and say, 'more of this and less of this,' 'work on this,' 'pitch this,' all of that. That's always going on. But no really competent guy wants to be micromanaged. They don't. They'll fight it."

---