



# Faatagi says he's still vying for starting spot

## Junior returns to practice after missing first week

By Kyle Ringo  
Sunday, August 12, 2007

The Colorado football team welcomed back four of its members Saturday morning after they missed most of the first week of training camp because of class conflicts or improving their individual academic standing.

Quarterback Bernard Jackson, offensive linemen Erick Faatagi and Keenan Stevens and wide receiver Alvin Barnett won't be able to practice in pads until early next week.

Coach Dan Hawkins said it could still be a week or more before he knows who is academically eligible this fall and who isn't.

Faatagi was expected to vie for a starting job at guard on the offensive line prior to camp. Those expectations might have lowered a bit in some minds now that Faatagi has missed so much time, but the 6-foot-2, 310-pound junior college transfer, who redshirted at CU last season, remains confident.

"There is nothing a little hard work can't cure," Faatagi said.

Faatagi said he still has work to complete in a class and probably won't take the final for another 10 days or so. He said he has worked out the schedule with his professor who is out of town next week.

It's possible Faatagi won't find out if he is eligible to play this season until the week leading up to the season opener against Colorado State. Faatagi said he is completely confident he hasn't thrown away a year of eligibility. He is a junior this season.

When he was on the field in a limited role in spring practices while rehabilitating following surgery, he was one of just a handful of linemen. Now there are three times as many players, with an influx of freshmen. Faatagi had an opportunity to see what he is up against Saturday.

"Technique-wise, I'm seeing a lot of the young guys making mistakes and in my mind, I'm saying, 'They should have stepped this way,' " he said. "So experience-wise and as far as technique, I feel I have a little bit of an advantage."

### Sophomore surge

A lot has been made of three freshman wide receivers this week, but the biggest surprise at the position thus far might be former Montbello High School star Jarrell Yates.

Yates redshirted two years ago after injuring his knee in the first week of fall camp. He was wildly

inconsistent last year and coaches questioned his toughness.

So far this week, he's been making all the right moves and catching almost everything thrown his way.

"Last year it seemed like every time he'd get healthy and start looking good, 'Oh, my shoulder is bothering me.' or 'Something this or something there,' Hawkins said. "He just could not maintain a steady stream. He's done a nice job so far."

### **Hawk wants points**

The team will treat today's scrimmage as much like a game day as possible, with an early wake-up call and a walk-through. Officials also will be on hand at Folsom Field to call penalties in what is expected to be about a two-hour scrimmage with special teams work mixed in.

Hawkins made it clear he is hoping to see improvement from his offense.

In his time at Colorado, the offense has never come close to producing an explosive day in any of its scrimmages or in two spring games.

"I'm just not used to going through a bunch of scrimmages or a bunch of spring balls without scoring a bunch of touchdowns," Hawkins said. "I'd love to see us get some big plays. I'd love to see us score.

"Now, again, defense wins championships, but doggone it, let's score some points."

### **The Daily Hawkism**

Hawkins was asked whether improved pass defense has been emphasized in camp this year. After all, the Buffs allowed opponents to complete 66 percent of their passes in 2006. "You guys have asked me what are your top three, and when you're 2-10, you can't have a top three. There's a top 37."

### **Notable**

Freshman Nate Vaionmunga, a 5-foot-11, 190-pound defensive back, has been getting some work at linebacker because coaches believe he is a good blitzing and a possible option in some pass defenses. Three years ago another player spent the first few days of practice as a defensive back before moving permanently to linebacker. His name is Jordon Dizon. Maybe history will repeat itself. ... Hawkins said coaches are allowing punter Matt DiLallo to work on kickoffs. With kickoffs taking place from the 30-yard line this year, the length of kickoffs is more important than ever. ... Tight end Tyson Devree and defensive tackle Brandon Nicolas sat out practice Saturday afternoon and worked strength coach Jeff Pitman's wheelbarrow brigade. Nicolas should be back today.



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# Frosh TB bids for playing time

## Hagan wants redshirt Sumler to push seniors

By Kyle Ringo  
Sunday, August 12, 2007

Colorado running backs coach Darian Hagan had a message for his two senior tailbacks Saturday afternoon.

There is a redshirt freshman nipping at their heels.

Hagan said seniors Hugh Charles and Byron Ellis remain No. 1 and 2 on the depth chart at tailback, but he likes what he has seen so far in the first week of training camp from Demetrius Sumler.

"I can tell you this: If those guys start thinking they're on easy street and everything is sewn up, it ain't," Hagan said. "That guy is working his butt off and he wants to be the guy."

All three will have an opportunity to separate themselves today in the first scrimmage of August camp at Folsom Field at 10 a.m. The public is invited and admission is free.

Hagan wasn't pleased with some of what he saw from Charles in Saturday's morning session in full pads. Charles is the incumbent starter.

Hagan said on several occasions he saw the "old Hugh" when Charles reverted back to some of the bad habits he got into last year of avoiding contact and trying to out-run people. On one sweep, Hagan said Charles could have made one cut and probably produced a 60-yard touchdown run, but the senior chose to string the play out to the sideline instead.

Hagan said welcoming contact and running with power hasn't always been Sumler's strength either, but the 5-foot-10, 210-pound back who has thighs as thick as a young Earl Campbell has become a more physical player recently.

"I'm going to let him be the guy if he's the guy that is shining and doing everything we want him to do and every time he goes out he does it the right way," Hagan said. "I've told him I'm looking for perfection on every given play."

Hagan said he has spent the early part of camp pulling his hair out. He said all of his running backs are making the same mistakes over and over and need to become more detail-oriented.

With his younger players such as Sumler and sophomore Kevin Moyd, Hagan said he is fighting a mind-set where players believe they need to wait for their turn to play and allow veterans such as Charles and Ellis to enjoy their senior seasons.

"Guys shouldn't be like that," he said.

Sumler came to Colorado a year ago after completing a prep career as the San Diego area's all-time leading rusher with 5,696 yards. He spent his first season building strength, learning the ropes and watching his teammates struggle to move the football.

"You learn real fast that none of that means anything when you get to the college level," Sumler said. "You come in with all those titles and all that, but once you're on this field nobody cares what you did in high school, how many yards you ran for. It doesn't make a difference."

Sumler said he must improve his pass blocking to earn the coaches' trust and get on the field this season. He said he made a name for himself prior to college by running around people with a shifty style and a knack for seeing the field. Now he has to constantly remind himself to be more aggressive and choose to run over defenders.

"That was just my style," Sumler said. "I tried to make guys miss more than I punish guys. This year I'm trying to punish guys first. I feel like I'm being very productive doing that."

Hagan uses the same analogy with all his players when coaching them to run downhill. He says the CU offense functions like a camera. It opens a hole briefly and backs have to hit that hole hard before it closes.

If Sumler continues to embrace that approach, he might become the team's short-yardage back this season, and maybe more.



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cu NOTES

## Scrimmage could see offense hitting stride

By The Denver Post

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Boulder - Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins isn't shy about saying what he wants to see today from the offense in the team's first scrimmage of fall camp. If that puts more pressure on starting quarterback candidates Cody Hawkins and Nick Nelson, so be it.

The offense needs to start showing something, Dan Hawkins said Saturday. Today's scrimmage, scheduled from 10 a.m. to noon at Folsom Field, is open to the public.

"I'm not used to going through a bunch of scrimmages ... without scoring a bunch of touchdowns," Hawkins said. "I would love to see us get some big plays (in today's scrimmage), and I would love to see them score.

"Defense wins championships. But doggone it, let's score some points."

Last fall, Hawkins' first in Boulder, CU ranked last among Big 12 Conference teams in scoring (16.3 points per game), pass offense (118.5 yards) and total offense (291.4 yards).

New at the controls this season will be either Nelson, a junior college transfer, or Cody Hawkins, a redshirt freshman and the coach's son.

Both look forward to showing what they've got today during a game-like format.

"I'm ready for it," Nelson said. "It gives me a chance to prove myself."

In many respects, the scrimmage will simulate a game situation. Referees will be used. Coaches will be on the sidelines. Players will be awakened early for a pregame meal. Offenses will be allowed more latitude.

"Scrimmages are definitely more fun," Cody Hawkins said. "You can mix things up a little bit, try some things you wouldn't do in a regular practice."

- Tom Kensler

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## Offense provides early signs of hope

Five scores, more than 600 yards produced in opening scrimmage

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News  
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BOULDER - That avalanche of points Dan Hawkins is accustomed to is yet to be triggered, and had it happened Sunday in the University of Colorado's first training camp scrimmage, this morning would find him fretting over a good news/bad news scenario.

For now, go with the good news: CU is in the process of returning the "O" to offense - as in, "Oh, my," instead of, "Oh, no."

In a 122-play scrimmage at Folsom Field, the Buffaloes scored five touchdowns, had another negated by penalty and punched up 600-plus yards of offense (332 rushing, 308 passing).

So?

Those numbers don't mean CU's 2006 offensive woes are in remission. But when contrasted to the five scores the Buffs managed in *three* scrimmages last August - only two touchdowns from the No. 1 offense - progress isn't difficult to detect.

Hawkins called the two hours of work "a little better" than what he has seen thus far in camp. "I'm just not used to going through a whole bunch of scrimmages and going, 'Well, OK, we kicked a field goal - that was pretty stellar.' "

Instead, stellar work was submitted by several offensive players, including quarterbacks Cody Hawkins and Nick Nelson; receivers Josh Smith, Patrick Williams and Kendrick Celestine; and tailbacks Byron Ellis and Hugh Charles.

Williams, inconsistent as a sophomore, is being pushed by fleet freshmen Smith, Celestine and Markques Simas. And offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said Williams is pushing back: "He's made more plays in the last two days than all last year."

The rangy (6-foot-2, 200 pounds) Williams caught two touchdown passes on short (8, 12 yards) fade routes thrown by Cody Hawkins, while Smith (6-1, 185) took a 54-yard scoring pass from Nelson, who bruised his throwing hand on a defender's helmet but continued to play. Nelson is listed as day to day.

The loquacious Smith, an emerging playmaker who had a 40-yard touchdown catch nullified by penalty, learned how not to celebrate after his first score in a major scrimmage. His dive into the end zone drew an unsportsmanlike-conduct penalty and a frontal barrage from Hawkins, who yelled, "This ain't a video game; you just cost us 15 yards."

The next time Smith, dubbed "J-Fly" by his teammates, entered the end zone, he opted for a non-*SportsCenter* move and graciously lobbed the football to an official.

"Lesson learned," Smith said. "A rule is a rule, and you've got to follow (it). . . . It won't count against my record; I fixed my mistake early."

Added his coach: "As I've said before, 'Once, a mistake; twice, it's behavior.' "

The Cody Hawkins-Nelson quarterback duel will carry into Week 2 of camp, said Helfrich, noting work Sunday showed scant "separation" between the two. Still, Helfrich reiterated when an edge is apparent, coaches will act on it.



Cliff Grassmick ©  
Daily Camera

Patrick Williams, right, beats cornerback Gardner McKay for one of his two touchdown receptions Sunday during the Buffaloes' first scrimmage.

"In the next couple of days, it could happen," he said.

**ETC.:** The other touchdowns on came on a 5-yard end around by Celestine and a 4-yard pass from freshman **Matt Ballenger** to sophomore **Jake Behrens**. . . . After two flags were thrown on the first two plays, only three were thrown thereafter. . . . Among the nearly 1,500 persons watching was Ponderosa High School linebacker **Jon Major**, who has CU on a list of seven finalists. Major spent time after the scrimmage with Buffs linebackers coach **Brian Cabral**. . . . The first depth chart likely will be issued today, so this configuration could change. But in the opening series Sunday, the No. 1 offensive line consisted of **Tyler Polumbus** and **Edwin Harrison** at tackles, **Devin Head** and **Kai Maiava** at guards and **Daniel Sanders** at center. Maiava was joined by fellow freshman **Ryan Miller** in the lineup a couple of series later, as position coach **Jeff Grimes** seeks to identify his top players and most cohesive unit. . . . Aside from Nelson's bruised right hand (X-rays were negative), the only notable injury was to tight end **Riar Geer**, who was assisted off the field because of a left ankle sprain. Position coach **Kent Riddle** didn't believe Geer's injury was serious and also said tight end **Tyson DeVree**, held out of the work because of a shoulder injury, likely would return today. Also held out was defensive tackle **Brandon Nicholas** (ankle). Geer is listed as day to day. . . . Other nonparticipants were quarterback/tailback/receiver **Bernard Jackson** and offensive linemen **Erick Faatagi**, **Keenan Stevens** and **Wes Palazzi**. Because all missed most of work last week for academic reasons, they must spend a set time practicing without pads before joining full-contact work. Grades could be available by Tuesday.

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