



Restoring confidence in CU athletics

Athletic director Mike Bohn looks to change the culture and restore black-and-gold pride

By Kyle Ringo
Monday, August 27, 2007

Friday nights on the Pearl Street Mall before home football games at the University of Colorado used to be quintessential Boulder — mellow.

People strolled beneath the trees, in and out of shops. Some ate dinner or enjoyed a beverage on patios. Aside from the CU T-shirt or jackets worn by a few, it was hard to tell the difference between Boulder and other towns and small cities in the mountains and along the Front Range.

There was no sign of a passionate college football fan base with years of tradition passed down from one generation to the next. It was a far cry from what one might expect to see in other college towns such as Knoxville, Tenn.; Baton Rouge, La.; or College Station, Texas, where thousands of Texas A&M fans gather at Kyle Field the night before a home game for "yell practice."

Two years ago, the Colorado athletic department, with new leadership by athletic director Mike Bohn, was searching for ways to begin changing the culture within the athletic department by building traditions that brought the campus to the community.

Bohn's plan was to restore confidence in CU athletics while building a bigger, more loyal fan base and a healthier bottom line.

Bohn approached the city of Boulder about the possibility of decorating downtown lampposts in CU flags and colors and allowing the Golden Buffalo Marching Band and CU cheerleaders to lead a Pearl Street Pep Rally on Friday evenings.

The city embraced the idea with some initial skepticism of whether it would be welcomed by the public and businesses along the mall.

By Nov. 10 last fall, the night before the final home game of a disappointing 2-10 season, hundreds of Boulder citizens and CU fans were on board. Those calm Friday fall evenings of old had been replaced by the band and cheerleaders slowly making their way up the mall playing the CU Fight Song for those strolling beneath the trees or dining under the stars. It was now a festive atmosphere of school spirit and black-and-gold pride.

Culture shift

While selling tickets, corporate sponsorships and winning the popularity contest is a big part of the bottom line in any athletic department, there is much more to making it a successful enterprise.

The biggest difference at CU in the past two years is the overall vibe the department gives the public, not through advertising or press releases but in dealing with people one-on-one.

"Finally somebody is saying thank you," David Threlfall, a longtime season-ticket holder said as he watched a recent CU football scrimmage in Folsom Field.

One of the first things Bohn wanted to change about CU when he arrived was its reputation for poor customer service.

Simple things irked him, such as listening to the way in which a staffer handled a complaint from a fan over the phone or the department sending an inaccurate bill to another fan. He wanted the feel of a personal touch with each communication.

There were larger problems, too, such as long lines at will-call windows prior to football games and instituting a more modern, efficient system for delivering season tickets and individual-game tickets to their buyers.

This summer fans received their tickets well ahead of the start of the season for the first time because the department began working on trying to make it happen in the spring of 2006.

“You find out that in order to make something happen July 1, you have to be on it Nov. 1,” said Tom McGrath, special assistant to the athletic director. “Now the ticket office is thinking about fulfilling ticket orders that have just been made in the last week as opposed to, ‘How do you get your season tickets out for the CSU game?’”

Bohn said when he arrived from San Diego State in 2005, it was difficult to tell when the department last invested in information technology. It took CU until just this year to provide an easy-to-use system for fans to print out their tickets on their home computers.

Bohn said simple things make a big difference and add to the level of confidence fans and the public have in the department.

“We still have a ways to go as far as making it easy and friendly to do business with the CU athletic program,” he said.

Reaching out

CU staffers say Bohn brought a grassroots approach to doing business. It was a fundamental shift in the department’s approach. The “Your Team” marketing campaign was Bohn’s brainchild. And it was just the first.

Rocko DeLuca, who served under former athletic director Dick Tharp and is now an assistant A.D. for annual giving, said Bohn has started six different programs aimed at attracting children — the recruits of tomorrow — to the school, including Ralphie’s Kids Roundup, Chauncey’s Kids and Boy Scout Day.

Chris May, associate athletic director for marketing and sales, said he recognized Bohn’s unique style right away. He said Bohn is the only athletic director he has heard of who personally handles sales calls for something as simple as a pair of season tickets.

“I think Mike’s outreach skills are second to none,” May said.

Bohn has regularly made trips outside Boulder to rebuild forgotten relationships or begin new ones. In his first year on the job, Bohn made one such trip to a Fort Morgan steakhouse to meet with a small group of fans.

The idea made sense to him. His research had told him the department had lost nearly 25 season-ticket holders from the area in recent years. He figured if he could win back their support and each spent an average of \$1,000 at CU each year, it was well worth the long drive and a few hours of his time.

“We were not as user-friendly and as responsive as we needed to be,” he said. “I think over time that will improve.”

One year ago, staffers watched Bohn stand and address fans at the demolition derby at the Boulder County Fair in Longmont. It wasn’t his typical crowd, but he seemed to win them over, and, as always, invited each to visit campus.

“He’s so willing to do anything,” DeLuca said.

Bohn is a Boulder native who spent some of his Saturday afternoons as a boy selling Cokes in Folsom Field. His

earliest experiences in business still shape him today.

“To me, growing up here, I think the dynamics are a little bit different,” he said. “I think kids and the community and local businesses and the little guy are just as important as our good friends at Coors.”

Pulling it all together

CU athletics isn't close to where it ultimately would like to be financially, but over the past two years it has made changes to the way it does business that could help it in the future.

Earlier this summer, Bohn reported his department finished the 2006-07 fiscal year with a small budget surplus.

The news didn't inspire cartwheels in the hallways of the Dal Ward Center, the department's headquarters, but it was well-received by athletics staffers who had been asked over and over to tighten their belts since Bohn took over. It was a sign that CU athletics might be returning to health. The development came as a surprise considering rising scholarship costs (now more than \$7 million per year) and a poor year at the turnstiles for football and men's basketball. The two revenue-producing programs combined to win just nine of 39 contests combined.

Fundraising successes offset poor ticket sales, but the department still has work to do to find true financial stability.

Only a year ago athletics was forced to borrow \$8 million from the campus to stay solvent. The first payment on that loan was due in the spring, but President Hank Brown's office picked up the \$750,000 tab instead, saving athletics from yet another deficit.

Its initial budget request for the current fiscal year topped \$40 million for the first time. The department requested \$41,642,825, a 10.5 percent increase over its initial budget last year.

The department has a history of living on the edge, trying to keep a budget in balance while remaining competitive. In the past 30 years it has never managed to establish a significant reserve to fall back on in hard times because it usually spends every penny it earns.

It's a history Bohn is trying to change by beginning a reserve fund with the first \$590,000 allocation budgeted for this fiscal year. Bohn said he would like to grow the fund to several million dollars over the coming years to give the department some true flexibility and a sense of stability.

While it appears CU is heading in the right direction, things could easily go south once again if football coach Dan Hawkins and men's basketball coach Jeff Bzdelik — both Bohn hires — are not able to turn around win-loss records and bring back more paying customers.

The initial news on 2007 tickets sales is positive. The total number of season tickets sold for football has increased for the first time since the 2004 season and is back above the 21,000 mark. Club seats remain a difficult sell — costing at least \$1,500 per season or \$250 per game — but there has been progress there, too, and the stadium suites should be sold out for nearly every game this fall.

Football has always been the department's lifeblood. The Buffs are coming off one of the three worst seasons in 117 years with seemingly nowhere to go but up. On a recent sunny day in Folsom Field, Hawkins was asked if the responsibility of filling those 53,750 seats weighs on him.

“In football and men's basketball, everybody has got to support those two programs so that they can pull the train,” Hawkins said. “And then if they can't pull the train, you get a new conductor. I mean, that's kind of how the business works.”

“That being said, you have to understand what that takes. Are we giving that conductor all the elements to actually make that train move?”

During his first season in Boulder last year, Hawkins probably would have answered his question with a resounding “no.” But donations to the department over the past two years allowed it to fund construction projects all over the Dal Ward Center, most of which have benefited the football team.

They include remodeled coaches’ offices, a new locker room, a new varsity room (used by all athletes) and a new multipurpose practice bubble down the hill from the department’s headquarters. Those projects cost more than \$4 million combined.

Bohn’s strategy seems to be focused on making the department’s cash cow stronger, hoping that it eventually benefits everyone.

“He’s always asking, ‘Hey, can I try this?’ or ‘Hey, can we do that?’” CU’s Chief Financial Officer Ric Porreca said. “Most of the time we say, ‘You bet. How can we help make that happen?’ Once in a while it’s, ‘You know Mike, that just isn’t going to fly.’”



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Bufs wrap up preseason camp

With 5 days to go until opener, Hawk likes team's progress

By Ryan Thorburn
Monday, August 27, 2007

Colorado's football team is now only five nights and an early wake-up call away from kicking off the season.

The Bufs wrapped up their preseason camp Sunday morning and players start fall semester classes today.

Second-year CU head coach Dan Hawkins and his staff already have some important homework to do as they burn the midnight oil preparing a game plan for Colorado State.

The Bufs and Rams kick off the season at 10 a.m. Saturday at Invesco Field.

Hawkins' team was able to answer a lot of questions the coaching staff had over the past three weeks. Cody Hawkins established himself as the starting quarterback, significant progress was made on the offensive and defensive lines, and Kevin Eberhart seemed to handle the pressure of replacing All-American place-kicker Mason Crosby pretty well.

"We had a long laundry list, and I think we're pretty close," Dan Hawkins said. "I think we still have a lot of young guys and new guys and inexperienced guys, so I think some of that stuff is still out there. But the rest of it I think has been pretty good."

The Bufs will rely on a lot of green players to beat the much more experienced Rams.

Cody Hawkins is a redshirt freshman, six of the top 10 offensive linemen are freshmen, and as many as three true freshmen could have an impact at wide receiver this season.

CU's defense is a promising one with solid talent on the defensive line, great leadership at linebacker and some sound, hard-hitting players in the secondary.

In other words, the Bufs haven't look or acted like a team that was 2-10 last season.

"What came out of this is a lot of tougher guys," linebacker Jordon Dizon, entering his fourth year as a starter, said after Sunday's practice. "Last year we thought we were better than we were, but we weren't. This year we're humble and we're ready. ...

"When you come off a year like that a lot of guys are ready to go and show the world that we're better than a 2-10 team."

Dan Hawkins had a post-practice meeting with team leaders, including Dizon, to make sure they were ready to show the younger players how to handle themselves on campus, in practice and between the lines every Saturday.

The Bufs, unlike last season, when the players were still adjusting to the new coaching staff, appear to be on the same page.

"One thing that's different is the trust. I trust the players next to me, they trust me. I trust the coaches, they trust us," said Dizon, one of the team's captains. "We finally came to this place where you could say we're all on an equal level

and we all believe in each other. Last year it was like, 'I don't know if this guy can get this done because we haven't done this too long. I don't know if he knows the details.'

"We've just come to this understanding where we trust each other."

Notable

The Bufs will not practice today and will probably have only one full-pad practice this week, likely Tuesday. Dan Hawkins wants to keep the players fresh for Saturday's game. ... Wide receiver Josh Smith (bruised kidney) watched Sunday's session but is not expected to return from the injury in time to play against CSU. ... Bernard Jackson did not attend practice and his status for the season remains in doubt. ... This will be the earliest kickoff for a CU game involving another team from the Mountain Time Zone.

CU depth chart

As of Aug. 27:

Offense

WIDE RECEIVER (x)

4 Patrick Williams, 6-2, 200, Jr.

83 Dusty Sprague, 6-4, 190, Sr.-5

48 Cody Crawford, 5-11, 180, Jr.

38 Chase McBride, 5-7, 160, Sr.-5

80 Jarrell Yates, 5-11, 200, Soph.

(9 Josh Smith, 6-0, 180, Fr.; injured)

WIDE RECEIVER (z)

21 Scotty McKnight, 5-10, 190, Fr.-RS

1 Stephone Robinson, 5-8, 195, Sr.-5

5 Kendrick Celestine, 5-11, 180, Fr.

6 Markques Simas, 6-2, 195, Fr.

17 Alvin Barnett, 5-11, 195, Sr.

LEFT TACKLE

77 Tyler Polumbus, 6-8, 300, Sr.-5

79 Sione Tau, 6-5, 330, Fr.

LEFT GUARD

65 Wes Palazzi, 6-1, 295, Fr.-RS

Bufs wrap up preseason camp

64 Mike Iltis, 6-2, 290, Fr.

CENTER

75 Daniel Sanders, 6-3, 310, Jr.

51 Kai Maiava, 6-0, 295, Fr.

56 Keenan Stevens, 6-3, 275, Fr.-RS

RIGHT GUARD

72 Devin Head, 6-4, 295, Soph.

56 Keenan Stevens, 6-3, 275, Fr.-RS

61 Erick Faatagi, 6-2, 310, Jr.

RIGHT TACKLE

76 Edwin Harrison, 6-4, 300, Sr.

73 Ryan Miller, 6-7, 320, Fr.

TIGHT END

87 Riar Geer, 6-3, 255, Soph.

13 Joe Sanders, 6-3, 235, Sr.-5

84 Tyson DeVree, 6-5, 245, Sr.-5

92 Nate Solder, 6-8, 270, Fr.-RS

33 Patrick Devenny, 6-3, 240, Soph.

QUARTERBACK

7 Cody Hawkins, 5-11, 190, Fr.-RS

3 Nick Nelson, 6-1, 230, Jr.

10 Bernard Jackson, 6-0, 200, Sr.-5

TAILBACK

2 Hugh Charles, 5-8, 190, Sr.

27 Byron Ellis, 6-0, 215, Sr.

23 Kevin Moyd, 5-7, 195, Soph.

8 Demetrius Sumler, 5-10, 215, Fr.-RS

FULLBACK

32 Maurice Cantrell, 6-0, 240, Jr. AND

43 Samson Jagoras, 5-10, 220, Sr.-5

41 Jake Behrens, 6-0, 230, Soph.

Defense

LEFT DEFENSIVE END

91 Maurice Lucas, 6-4, 260, Jr.

90 Marquez Herrod, 6-2, 255, Fr.-RS

DEFENSIVE TACKLE

86 George Hypolite, 6-1, 285, Jr.

78 Jason Brace, 6-4, 265, Soph. OR

69 Eric Lawson, 6-3, 275, Fr.-RS

NOSE TACKLE

94 Brandon Nicolas, 6-3, 290, Jr.

98 Eugene Goree, 6-2, 285, Fr.

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END

47 Alonzo Barrett, 6-3, 235, Sr.

93 Conrad Obi, 6-3, 250, Fr.

MIKE (INSIDE) LINEBACKER

34 R.J. Brown, 6-1, 230, Jr.

57 Jake Duren, 5-11, 230, Soph.

(10 Michael Sipili, 6-1, 250, Soph.; SUSP-Indef.)

WILL (INSIDE) LINEBACKER

44 Jordon Dizon, 6-0, 220, Sr.

45 Jeff Smart, 5-11, 210, Soph.

35 Nate Vaiomounga, 5-10, 195, Fr.

SAM (OUTSIDE) LINEBACKER

Bufs wrap up preseason camp

40 Brad Jones, 6-3, 225, Jr.

59 B.J. Beatty, 6-1, 220, Fr.-RS OR

52 Bryan Stengel, 6-2, 215, Soph.

LEFT CORNERBACK

26 Terrence Wheatley, 5-10, 175, Sr.-5

6 Gardner McKay, 5-11, 160, Jr.

3 Jimmy Smith, 6-2, 195, Fr.-RS

FREE SAFETY

15 Ryan Walters, 5-11, 200, Jr.

23 Jalil Brown, 6-1, 205, Fr.-RS

STRONG SAFETY

9 Daniel Dykes, 6-2, 210, Jr.

25 Lionel Harris, 6-0, 195, Sr.

30 Joel Adams, 5-11, 185, Jr.

RIGHT CORNERBACK

42 Benjamin Burney, 5-11, 190, Jr.

29 Cha'pelle Brown, 5-7, 175, Soph.

Specialists

PUNTER

14 Matt DiLallo, 6-1, 200, Soph.

PLACEKICKER

39 Kevin Eberhart, 5-11, 195, Sr.-5

KICKOFF RETURN

2 Hugh Charles, 5-8, 190, Sr.

27 Byron Ellis, 6-0, 215, Sr.

PUNT RETURN

1 Stephone Robinson, 5-8, 195, Sr.-5 OR

Bufs wrap up preseason camp

38 Chase McBride, 5-7, 160, Sr.-5

HOLDER (PINNER)

21 Scotty McKnight, 5-10, 190, Fr.-RS

SHORT SNAPPER

70 Justin Drescher, 6-1, 235, Soph.

LONG SNAPPER

70 Justin Drescher, 6-1, 235, Soph.



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college football

Lowdown on the Showdown

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SHOWDOWN: COLORADO VS. COLORADO STATE

Saturday, 10 a.m. at Invesco Field at Mile High (FSN)

The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 08/27/2007 12:43:53 AM MDT

PERSPECTIVE

Special teams swing back CSU's way

For the past three years, special teams in the Colorado-Colorado State series have been synonymous with CU's former All-America kicker, Mason Crosby. His 55-yard field goal as a sophomore in 2004 interrupted CSU's comeback from a 17-0 deficit and helped CU win 27-24. A year later, his 47-yarder with four seconds left was automatic in a 31-28 Buffs win.

He would have ended his career against the Rams with a 61-yarder last year, but it was wiped off by a timeout call before the kick.

This time around, the kickers on both sides are mere mortals. CSU's Jason Smith is coming off a forgettable campaign in which he hit 8-of-15 attempts, with a long of 49. He ended the mock game Saturday with a 57-yarder. Kevin Eberhart finally gets his chance after spending four years watching Crosby at CU.

The series, however, has produced some other remarkable highlights in the return department: Calvin Branch's 96-yard kickoff return for CSU in 1996; Jeremy Bloom's career debut 75-yard punt return in 2002.

Both teams emphasized improvement in the return game during preseason camp. While CSU vets Damon Morton and Johnny Walker haven't erased memories of ex-Rams great Dexter Wynn, but might have just a little confidence edge after the Buffs finished last in Big 12 returns.

It will be interesting to see how both teams handle the rule change with kickoffs now coming from the 30-yard line.

- Natalie Meisler

TIGHT END GEER BACK IN HIGH GEAR

One of the best catches from the Western Slope

After completing a two-hour practice Sunday morning, CU sophomore tight end Riar Geer said he felt like he was finally back to 100 percent after suffering a sprained left ankle in an Aug. 12 scrimmage.

Geer, who led the Buffs with 24 catches in 2006, played quarterback at Fruita-Monument High School.

"(Being entrenched as a starter) definitely feels good coming from the Western Slope, because there are so few of us," Geer said Sunday. "I feel like high school players from there don't get much respect. Maybe I can be an inspiration to them."

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SERIES HISTORY

Short work by CU

CU 45, CSU 20

Sept. 9, 1989, in Boulder (44,921)

A year after CU needed a late scoring drive to win in Fort Collins, it was the perfect setup for CSU. CU had only five days to get ready for the instate rival after a stunning, Labor Day night, 27-6 win over Texas vaulted the Buffs to No. 9 in the polls. Next up for CU was a home game with Jeff George-led Illinois.

The Rams needed just six seconds to bring CU back to earth with a 59-yard Tony Alford run. Buffs QB Darian Hagan, now the CU running backs coach, answered with a 71-yard run. CSU had one more gasp left when QB Kevin Verdugo hit Sean Willis with a 55-yard pass.

CU proceeded to fine-tune one of the more dominating running attacks in history with a 452-yard explosion on the way to an unbeaten regular season.

HEALTHY SQUAD DOESN'T HURT

"Anytime you get through without anybody getting hurt, that's the No. 1 plus. But I think we achieved a lot of our objectives." - CU coach Dan Hawkins, right, on Sunday's conclusion of the three-week fall camp and the arrival of game week

FORGET HISTORY, AND BRING ON SATURDAY

"Last year is last year. We're a completely different team from that game, and they are a completely different team from that game." - Colorado State defensive end Jesse Nading, left

DEPTH CHART UPDATED

Buffs' lineup taking shape

Although CU coach Dan Hawkins says he's "not a depth chart guy," the Buffs released an updated pecking order Sunday for the Colorado State game. There were few changes from the depth chart released a week earlier.

Daniel Dykes, a 6-foot-2, 210-pound junior and a transfer from Idaho, is listed alone as the first-team strong safety. Dykes supplanted senior Lionel Harris, who started six of the last seven games in 2006. Harris had been listed as a co-starter with Dykes in the previous depth chart.

"Both of those guys will play," Hawkins said Sunday.

Dusty Sprague, a 6-4, 190-pound senior wideout, moved up to second-team X-receiver after having been listed as third-team Z-receiver. Patrick Williams, a 6-2, 200-pound junior, remained the starter.

Freshman lineman Ryan Miller, a 6-7, 320-pound Parade All-American from Columbine, remained on the second team but moved from right guard to right tackle, where he will play behind senior Edwin Harrison.

Another freshman offensive lineman, Sione Tau,

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switched from second-team right tackle to second-team left tackle. Tau (6-5, 330) will play behind senior Tyler Polumbus.

Freshman defensive backs Anthony Wright and Anthony Perkins are off the depth chart, an indication that coaches hope to redshirt them this season.

Wright and Perkins had been listed previously as co-backups to junior Ryan Walters at free safety. Jalil Brown, a 6-1, 205-pound redshirt freshman, is now the top reserve behind Walters.

"We're pretty close," Hawkins said when asked Sunday if the team was ready for the season to begin. "We still have a lot of young guys, new guys, inexperienced guys. Some of that stuff is still out there, but the rest I think is pretty good."

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Monday, August 27, 2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

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Just not enough

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Colorado has four tight ends who are expected to contribute in 2007, making it one of the deeper and more experienced positions on a young team.

But for coach Dan Hawkins, four good players there still aren't enough.

"Down the road, I'd love to see that group be more of a six-to-eight kind of a group," Hawkins said.

"When we had a real solid group before (at Boise State), I'd recruit tight ends and I'd show them stats. Our fifth guy caught a lot of balls and had a lot of plays. We need to keep working on that here."

CU released an updated depth chart Sunday, and the tight end "grouping" included 6-foot-3, 255-pound sophomore Riar Geer, the team's leading receiver in 2006, who missed part of August camp with a minor injury. He's followed by seniors Joe Sanders, 6-3, 235, and Tyson DeVree, 6-5, 245, redshirt freshman Nate Solder, 6-8, 270, and sophomore Patrick Devenny, who's 6-3, 240.

Sanders moved from linebacker in the offseason back to the position he played when he first arrived in Boulder in 2003. Solder excelled in camp and looks like he could grow into something special. After sitting out a year as a transfer, DeVree was slowed early by a hip injury and caught only four passes in 2006.

The tight ends displayed versatility and the ability to make plays in camp. And confidence, by the sound of it, is plentiful.

"Truthfully, I think we can be the best tight end core in the nation," Sanders said. "That's just my opinion. We have too much skill out there not to be. I don't know how many teams in the nation can say they can put four tight ends in and have the same production of four receivers.

"We're deep at tight end, so it's a good thing."

Hawkins said the potential is there, but they all have work to do.

"Joe has to continue to learn," Hawkins said. "Nate is showing steady progress. Riar had been a little bit dinged up and Tyson has been dinged up.

"Potentially, that's a very nice group. They're physical and they can run and that's what you want the picture to look like. Again, it's just forcing the issue a little bit with those guys. Most of those guys have the height, weight, size, speed and ability you like to have."

Depth deliberations: There were some minor changes to the depth chart.

On the defensive line, Jason Brace and Eric Lawson are listed as Geore Hypolite's back-up at defensive tackle. Taj Kaynor and Chris Perri, two other defensive tackles, are suspended for Saturday's opener against Colorado State (10 a.m., FSR, Invesco Field).

Jalil Brown moved from left corner to free safety. Gardner McKay has gone from right to left corner, backing up Terrence Wheatley.

B.J. Beatty shares the No. 2 spot at outside linebacker with Bryan Stengel, behind Brad Jones.

On the offensive line, Sione Tau has moved to left tackle behind Tyler Polumbus, Keenan Stevens is backing up Devin Head at right guard, and Ryan Miller is listed second at right tackle behind Edwin Harrison.

Leaders abound: Hawkins ended practice Sunday morning by huddling with selected players, including several seniors, for a leadership conference. Hawkins said he wanted to address "a lot of agenda items" that he wants them to lead on. In camp, he said the leadership was

good.

“Guys are stepping up, rallying guys and leading by example,” he said. “There’s definitely much more of a presence.”

Early risers: Saturday’s 10 a.m. kickoff isn’t the only date in 2007 CU will face such a start time. The Nov. 23 finale against Nebraska is also scheduled for 10 a.m.

But Saturday marks the first time CU will kick off at 10 a.m. against an opponent from the Mountain time zone. All previous games beginning at that hour pitted CU against a program from the Central or Eastern zones.

Hawkins held camp scrimmages at 10 a.m. so his team could grow used to the early start. He said the players responded well.

“They’ve been great the days we’ve scrimmaged,” Hawkins said.

“They’ve come in bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.”

All parking lots at Invesco Field will be open at 6 a.m. Saturday.

Extra points: The Buffs get today, the first day of classes, off. They’ll practice Tuesday in pads again, but that might be the only time this week coaches make them don pads. ... Senior Bernard Jackson missed Sunday’s work. Hawkins said it’s “highly doubtful” he’ll be a part of Saturday’s game plan. He said the team continues to wait on his situation to resolve before it decides to name a new offensive captain. ... Freshman receiver Josh Smith (bruised kidney) did not talk to reporters following Sunday’s practice. He will not play Saturday.

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Rocky Mountain News

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Buffaloes leaning to fresh approach

By **B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News**
August 26, 2007

BOULDER - The University of Colorado football team's unofficial 2007 motto could be "In With the New."

CU's game-week depth chart released Sunday has 22 freshmen (nine true, 13 redshirt) poised to contribute when the season begins Saturday against Colorado State (10 a.m., Invesco Field at Mile High, FSN Rocky Mountain).

Among the true freshmen is top recruit Ryan Miller, a No. 2 right guard on the first depth chart of preseason camp and now listed at No. 2 right tackle.

Elsewhere:

- Billed as a utility offensive player, senior Bernard Jackson is listed as the No. 3 quarterback and nowhere else. Jackson's uncertain eligibility has curtailed his practice time and made him "highly doubtful" for the opener.
- Redshirt freshman De- metrius Sumler remains fourth in the tailback grouping, but running backs coach Darian Hagan contends he lists players alphabetically. Hagan has said Sumler and senior Hugh Charles are neck and neck.
- Senior Dusty Sprague moved behind Patrick Williams in the "x" receiver grouping. Scotty McKnight and Stephone Robinson are 1-2 in the "z" grouping. Freshmen Kendrick Celestine and Markques Simas are behind Robinson.
- There were no surprises on defense. No. 1 returners are Charles (kickoffs) and Robinson (punts). McKnight is the first new holder in four seasons.

ETC.: The Buffaloes are off today and will resume work Tuesday for what coach **Dan Hawkins** said likely would be the only day of contact. "Physically, they're right where they need to be," he said. . . . The start time Saturday is CU's earliest in history against a team from the Mountain time zone. It will necessitate a 9 p.m. bed check, as opposed to one or two hours later before most Saturday games. "You've got to be the sort of team and person that that stuff doesn't determine your performance," Hawkins said. "It's easier said than done."

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Bernard Jackson
might miss opener.



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Lowdown on the Showdown

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SHOWDOWN: COLORADO VS. COLORADO STATE

Saturday, 10 a.m. at Invesco Field at Mile High (FSN)

The Denver Post

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PERSPECTIVE

Special teams swing back CSU's way

For the past three years, special teams in the Colorado-Colorado State series have been synonymous with CU's former All-America kicker, Mason Crosby. His 55-yard field goal as a sophomore in 2004 interrupted CSU's comeback from a 17-0 deficit and helped CU win 27-24. A year later, his 47-yarder with four seconds left was automatic in a 31-28 Buffs win.

He would have ended his career against the Rams with a 61-yarder last year, but it was wiped off by a timeout call before the kick.

This time around, the kickers on both sides are mere mortals. CSU's Jason Smith is coming off a forgettable campaign in which he hit 8-of-15 attempts, with a long of 49. He ended the mock game Saturday with a 57-yarder. Kevin Eberhart finally gets his chance after spending four years watching Crosby at CU.

The series, however, has produced some other remarkable highlights in the return department: Calvin Branch's 96-yard kickoff return for CSU in 1996; Jeremy Bloom's career debut 75-yard punt return in 2002.

Both teams emphasized improvement in the return game during preseason camp. While CSU vets Damon Morton and Johnny Walker haven't erased memories of ex-Rams great Dexter Wynn, but might have just a little confidence edge after the Buffs finished last in Big 12 returns.

It will be interesting to see how both teams handle the rule change with kickoffs now coming from the 30-yard line.

- Natalie Meisler

TIGHT END GEER BACK IN HIGH GEAR

One of the best catches from the Western Slope

After completing a two-hour practice Sunday morning, CU sophomore tight end Riar Geer said he felt like he was finally back to 100 percent after suffering a sprained left ankle in an Aug. 12 scrimmage.

Geer, who led the Buffs with 24 catches in 2006, played quarterback at Fruita-Monument High School.

"(Being entrenched as a starter) definitely feels good coming from the Western Slope, because there are so few of us," Geer said Sunday. "I feel like high school players from there don't get much respect. Maybe I

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can be an inspiration to them."

SERIES HISTORY

Short work by CU

CU 45, CSU 20

Sept. 9, 1989, in Boulder (44,921)

A year after CU needed a late scoring drive to win in Fort Collins, it was the perfect setup for CSU. CU had only five days to get ready for the instate rival after a stunning, Labor Day night, 27-6 win over Texas vaulted the Buffs to No. 9 in the polls. Next up for CU was a home game with Jeff George-led Illinois.

The Rams needed just six seconds to bring CU back to earth with a 59-yard Tony Alford run. Buffs QB Darian Hagan, now the CU running backs coach, answered with a 71-yard run. CSU had one more gasp left when QB Kevin Verdugo hit Sean Willis with a 55-yard pass.

CU proceeded to fine-tune one of the more dominating running attacks in history with a 452-yard explosion on the way to an unbeaten regular season.

HEALTHY SQUAD DOESN'T HURT

"Anytime you get through without anybody getting hurt, that's the No. 1 plus. But I think we achieved a lot of our objectives." - CU coach Dan Hawkins, right, on Sunday's conclusion of the three-week fall camp and the arrival of game week

FORGET HISTORY, AND BRING ON SATURDAY

"Last year is last year. We're a completely different team from that game, and they are a completely different team from that game." - Colorado State defensive end Jesse Nading, left

DEPTH CHART UPDATED

Buffs' lineup taking shape

Although CU coach Dan Hawkins says he's "not a depth chart guy," the Buffs released an updated pecking order Sunday for the Colorado State game. There were few changes from the depth chart released a week earlier.

Daniel Dykes, a 6-foot-2, 210-pound junior and a transfer from Idaho, is listed alone as the first-team strong safety. Dykes supplanted senior Lionel Harris, who started six of the last seven games in 2006. Harris had been listed as a co-starter with Dykes in the previous depth chart.

"Both of those guys will play," Hawkins said Sunday.

Dusty Sprague, a 6-4, 190-pound senior wideout, moved up to second-team X-receiver after having been listed as third-team Z-receiver. Patrick Williams, a 6-2, 200-pound junior, remained the starter.

Freshman lineman Ryan Miller, a 6-7, 320-pound Parade All-American from Columbine, remained on the second team but moved from right guard to right tackle, where he will play behind senior Edwin Harrison.

Another freshman offensive lineman, Sione Tau, switched from second-team right tackle to second-team left tackle. Tau (6-5, 330) will play behind senior Tyler Polumbus.

Freshman defensive backs Anthony Wright and Anthony Perkins are off the depth chart, an indication that coaches hope to redshirt them this season.

Wright and Perkins had been listed previously as co-backups to junior Ryan Walters at free safety. Jalil Brown, a 6-1, 205-pound redshirt freshman, is now the top reserve behind Walters.

"We're pretty close," Hawkins said when asked Sunday if the team was ready for the season to begin. "We still have a lot of young guys, new guys, inexperienced guys. Some of that stuff is still out there, but the rest I think is pretty good."



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