



Tide defense will be major test for CU

riter

Saturday, December 29, 2007

SHREVEPORT, La. -- The Colorado football team is coming off one of the highest scoring outings in its history and hopes to carry momentum a month in the making into its bowl game Sunday against Alabama.

It's going to be considerably more difficult to move the ball and reach the end zone against Alabama than it was against the worst Nebraska defense anyone can remember. The Buffs scored 65 points against the Cornhuskers on Nov. 23. They'll be lucky to get half that this week.

As CU redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins put it, "Everybody has scored a lot of points against Nebraska. Nobody has scored a lot of points against Alabama."

Only three of Alabama's 12 opponents scored more than 24 points this fall. One of them needed overtime to do it and another is Louisiana State, which will be playing for the national title next month.

The Crimson Tide ranks 29th in the nation in scoring defense, allowing 22 points per game using a 3-4 scheme primarily. The Buffs didn't fare too well against the only other team they faced this season that prefers to use three defensive linemen and four linebackers as its base scheme.

But CU lost that game at Kansas State because it committed turnovers and allowed a blocked punt. The Buffs aren't concerned so much about scheme heading into the bowl game as they are taking better care of the ball.

However, the scheme can also be a problem, particularly for a young offensive line. CU offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said Alabama is good at moving in and out of three- and four-linemen looks and what makes it difficult to block is the fact that Alabama players have the athleticism to make either option work.

"They can try to confuse you," Helfrich said. "So we've got to do a good job of recognizing that and still playing aggressively and not totally reacting to what they're doing."

The Buffs could be facing several future professional football players on Sunday, but Alabama defensive lineman Wallace Gilberry is a no-brainer. He is the second leading tackler for the Crimson Tide this season, including making 22 tackles for loss and nine sacks.

It's likely Alabama will try to move Gilberry around and have him matched up against one of the Buffs' true freshman starters on the offensive line. Coaches have been preparing Kai Maiava and Ryan Miller for that situation.

Hawkins said the Buffs are finally getting to the point in their offense where in-game adjustments are more easily made. A year ago, they were nearly impossible and earlier this season they were limited. He

pointed to the second half of the Nebraska game as one example.

"Basically in that second half our coaches dialed up some stuff that we could move the ball up and down the field however we wanted," Hawkins said.

One-on-one audition

One of the more interesting matchups Sunday will feature Alabama wide receiver DJ Hall going against CU cornerback Terrence Wheatley. Both are considered probable draft picks in the April NFL draft.

Hall is the all-time leader in receptions and receiving yards at Alabama and Wheatley is second on CU's career interceptions list with 14.

Hall said this week he always looks forward to playing against players he believes he might see at the next level. He said he sees that potential in Wheatley.

"They got one of the best cornerbacks in the nation and we gonna see what he got," Hall said.

Wheatley smirked when told of Hall's remarks.

"That's normal," Wheatley said. "If you don't want to compete, you're playing the wrong sport, the wrong conference, the wrong everything. That should be expected. It's his last college game, too. So why not go out and try to do something special?"

Wheatley has already faced a handful of the nation's best receivers this season in Michael Crabtree from Texas Tech, Jeremy Maclin from Missouri and Jordy Nelson from Kansas State.

Hall isn't ruffling his feathers.

Notable

Final fall semester grades were posted Friday and Hawkins said every player is academically eligible and none will have to be sent home before the game. ... Defensive tackle George Hypolite has been gutting out practices on a bad hamstring, but he is expected to play. Hypolite played against Nebraska just days after suffering partially torn hamstring tendons.



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CU athletics expect budget surplus

TV games, ticket sales, increased attendance all contribute

Friday, December 28, 2007

The Colorado football program is back to fulfilling one of its primary responsibilities -- paying the way for the other 15 intercollegiate athletic programs in Boulder.

Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn said Friday his department expects a budget surplus of \$2 million or more this fiscal year thanks to conservative budgeting, an overall attendance increase of nearly 30,000 fans at football games this season and a school-record nine nationally televised games.

Bohn said most of the surplus will come from ticket sales but the department is making at least \$500,000 in extra revenue from its 10 regular season television appearances.

When the Buffs play Alabama on Sunday night in the Independence Bowl on ESPN (6:07 p.m.) it will be the 11th time in 13 games the team will have played on television in 2007. Only Big 12 champion Oklahoma and Texas have appeared on television more often this season and only the 2002 CU team appeared on television more often in the program's history.

"When you have a football program that is being run the way it is under coach (Dan) Hawkins' leadership and you play the type of schedule that we have and our fans and supporters respond, it all comes together," Bohn said. "It gives us an opportunity to invest in efforts like recruiting and it's paying off for us so that our coaches can continue to compete for the best student-athletes in the nation."

Bohn said he won't know the final amount of the surplus from football until well after the bowl trip is completed. He said it is also too early to know where the money will go.

The athletic department received an \$8 million loan two years ago from the school and the CU system, and agreed to pay back the money over a 10-year period with interest. President Hank Brown's office agreed to make the first payment on the loan for the athletic department last spring because of a surplus there.

Under the terms of the loan agreement, any over-realized revenues earned by the athletic department during the life of the loan are returned to the campus and Chancellor G.P. "Bud" Peterson decides how the money should be spent.

"What I've asked Mike to do, and what he is in the process of, is put together an additional budgetary request that we will consider and review," Peterson said earlier this month. "But this is the important part, I think. Those additional revenues don't automatically return to the athletic department."

"I don't think there is any question that some of it will go back to the athletic department. I have no

intention of taking all the over-realized revenue and doing something else with it. Whether or not it would be used to offset some of the outstanding debt? I don't want to presuppose what Mike will want to submit."

Bohn said he believes some of the revenue will be paid toward the debt, some will be saved and invested in a reserve account and some will be used to make improvements that can benefit the department's teams, student-athletes and coaches.

Bohn said with nearly \$4 million added to the football budget over the past two fiscal years and commitments made to improve facilities for the basketball teams, it is time to focus some spending on improvements for women's sports, such as soccer.

Bill Hempen's team continues to produce nationally ranked teams that compete for Big 12 Conference championships each season, and he does so on a home field without many basic amenities such as a permanent restroom at Prentup Field.

"We have some obligations obviously, but we also want to make some key investments," Bohn said. "And we also want to put some away for a rainy day."



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THE DENVER POST

cu football

Buff WR happy to be back near home

By Tom Kensler
The Denver Post

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Colorado Football

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SHREVEPORT, LA. — The only Louisianan on the Colorado football roster, freshman wideout Kendrick Celestine has been bombarded by questions from teammates regarding his home state ever since Colorado was named to the

Independence Bowl.

He's been glad to oblige.

"But I couldn't tell them anything about Shreveport," Celestine said. "This is the first time I've never been there."

Correction: Celestine had visited Shreveport once before — four years ago as a high school freshman when he participated in a Max Emfinger combine at Independence Stadium, site of Sunday night's Independence Bowl matchup with Alabama.

A sports writer for the Shreveport newspaper, The Times, apparently has a better memory than Celestine. But Celestine can be forgiven. Four years is awhile ago. And Shreveport is 140 miles from Mamou, a speck in the south-central part of the state. Mamou has about 3,500 residents and many pack the high school stadium on Friday nights during football season.

"I tell the guys how football is a big thing here in Louisiana," Mamou said.

A high school quarterback until switching to wide receiver for his senior season at Mamou, Celestine picked Colorado over Texas A&M because Buffs wide receivers coach Eric Kiesau convinced the speedster (best time of 10.6 for 100 meters) that he could play as a true freshman in Boulder. Celestine has no complaints. He enters the Independence Bowl with 11 catches for 151 yards, earning a spot in the starting lineup in the upset win over

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THE DENVER POST

Oklahoma.

Making an impact Sunday night would be a dream come true, Celestine said. He expects to have at least 55 friends and family at the game. That includes his mother, who has only been able to see two CU games in person: at Baylor and at Texas Tech.

Others will have to watch the ESPN telecast.

"People have been calling me since the day we found out about the game," Celestine said. "I don't think I can come up with any more tickets. I've had to tell some people, 'No more tickets. No more tickets.' That's tough."

Celestine was asked if playing in his home state brings added pressure.

"Naw, I'm not going to be nervous," he said. "I'm used to having everybody in the stands."

Tom Kensler: 303-954-1280 or
tkensler@denverpost.com

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Longmont, Colorado
Monday, December 31,
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TIMES-CALL

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Opportunity beckons Buffs

Program's development could use a bowl win Sunday against Alabama

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

SHREVEPORT, La. — Building the University of Colorado football program into a national power will take patience and seizing the right opportunities.

The Buffs believe they can meet the latter requirement Sunday.

Their game against Alabama in the Independence Bowl (6 p.m., ESPN) won't impact the standings and, win or lose, is unlikely to deter any recruit who's considering CU. But there's plenty at stake for the Buffs, who've endured a season marked by extreme highs and lows.

A step in the right direction can be taken with a win over a tradition-rich opponent like the Crimson Tide and ending 2007 on a high.

"I feel like it could be real huge turning point," freshman receiver Josh Smith said.

Said coach Dan Hawkins: "You want to start fast and finish strong and be able to get into the offseason with a win. That's obviously a feather in your cap."

Hawkins has made it clear he hated missing the postseason last December. He stewed at home while Big 12 rivals and seemingly the rest of college football participated in the bowl season. He and his team are here, which should make the rest of the winter a bit easier to bear.

But Hawkins has also trumpeted the importance of finishing strong since he set foot in Boulder. This is the Buffs' first bowl under Hawkins, and his players are echoing him.

"Like when coach Hawkins asked the seniors to address the team during Nebraska week, it's the same approach here," senior offensive tackle Edwin Harrison said. "It really doesn't matter who we're playing. It doesn't matter if it's Alabama, or if it was the national championship. All that matters is how you finish things."

"We need to come out and play well and win this football game. We should want to finish. That's what we're trying to do. It doesn't matter how you start things; it's how you finish. I can say that about my entire career here. We need to finish this strong not for anybody else but ourselves."

Hawkins and his staff started harping on CU's recent bowl record before the team departed Boulder, and have continued to do so since arriving in Louisiana. CU is 12-15 all time in bowls, but has lost three of its past four.

Most of the roster and coaching staff has turned over since CU lost to Clemson, 19-10, in the 2005 Champs Sports Bowl.

Obviously, no current player was on the 2001 or 2002 rosters that lost in the Fiesta and Alamo Bowls in ugly fashion. Still, there's a strong sense of irresponsibility that this group needs to change the trend.



University of Colorado coach Dan Hawkins, left, listens as Alabama coach Nick Saban responds to an interviewer's question during an Independence Bowl luncheon Friday in Shreveport, La. The Buffs and Crimson Tide square off at 6 p.m. Sunday. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

“You look at the bowl games this decade, and we’ve won one out of five,” senior linebacker Jordon Dizon said. We have to change that around.”

“It symbolizes what your program is about. A lot of teams are just happy to be in a bowl and they don’t care if they win or lose. I’ve been in one and lost. If you win, you look back and say that was a great bowl game. If you lose ...

“We’ve struggled with that and want to get better with that. Overall, it symbolizes the strength of your team.”

Again, it’s about opportunity for the Buffs. One awaits Sunday.

“We’re our own team and we want to clear Colorado name,” quarterback Cody Hawkins said. “But as far as us, we’re a new team and we want to try to find our own identity and prove ourselves.”

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

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Longmont, Colorado
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TIMES-CALL

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Buffs' QB seizes the spotlight

By Patrick Ridgell

Longmont Times-Call

SHREVEPORT, La. — Every media member with an Independence Bowl credential who hails from somewhere other than Colorado is asking coach Dan Hawkins the same thing.

What's it like to coach your son? Or something like that.

It's reached the point where some preface their questions with, "I know you've been asked this a million times ..."

Hawkins revealed Thursday that Cody Hawkins' Little League baseball coach was the one and only Bill Buckner, giving Cody plenty to discuss.

Buckner was an outstanding Major Leaguer who's best remembered for the ground ball that rolled through his legs in Game 6 of the 1986 World Series when he was Boston's first baseman. Buckner was Cody Hawkins' baseball coach for six seasons.

Dan Hawkins was an assistant on the team, but said he let Buckner handle most of the teaching.

Cody's memories of Buckner have nothing to do with ground balls or Boston.

"He was an awesome guy and always believed in me a lot," Cody said. "He probably built my confidence more as a player than any other guy I had."

Asked if Buckner has received one of the most unfair raps of any athlete, Cody Hawkins said: "Absolutely."

Other topics the CU quarterback discussed was his introduction prior to the Nebraska game, which South Park's Eric Cartman made.

"I thought it was awesome, I'm a huge Cartman fan," Cody Hawkins said. "Just hearing Cartman say my name was the highlight of my life so far." Cartman said during the introduction Cody is the quarterback because he's the coach's kid and he can do whatever he wants.

There's no word how former CU basketball great Chauncey Billups plans to introduce Cody when he handles the duties Sunday.

SCHEDULING MATTERS:CU athletic director Mike Bohn wants to help the team out with a rugged 2008 schedule that pits the Buffs against Florida State, West Virginia, Texas and Kansas on consecutive weeks.

On Thursday, CU listed Thursday, Sept. 25, on its web site as the date for its game with West Virginia. The date changed Friday to back to Saturday, Sept. 27.

The Buffs are set to play Florida State on Sept. 20 somewhere in Florida. CU has an open date Sept. 13. Bohn is exploring ways to move one of the non-conference games to a Thursday.

Bohn said CU's non-conference scheduling philosophy won't change. Asked if the program has bitten off more than it should try to chew, Bohn said no.

"That's why recruiting is going so well, because of the number of times we're on television and the way fans respond to us," Bohn said. "It'll only make us better. Coach Hawkins has a goal of winning a national championship, and that's how you do it."

Players say they relish the challenge.

"I think next year's schedule is like Murderer's Row and the Yankees' lineup in the 1920s — we have some heavyweights," defensive tackle George Hypolite said.

"I love the University of Colorado because I've played a top 10 schedule my entire career. Not to many other guys can say that. Playing teams like West Virginia and Florida State and at Texas, those are games I've dreamed about since I was a little kid. And now I'm doing them."

GOOD GRADES: Hawkins said Friday no player will be academically ineligible for Sunday's game.

"They're all good to go," he said.

Friday marked the last day for grades to be posted from the fall semester.

EXTRA POINTS:Hypolite said he'll be fine playing Sunday. He's still nursing an injured hamstring. ... Tailback Byron Ellis received a scholar athlete award at the Minuteman Luncheon on Friday that featured both coaches, Hawkins and Alabama's Nick Saban. Ellis holds a grade point average that's above 3.5. ... Hawkins said he wants today to be as close to a Friday during normal game week as possible. He and some players will have to attend a news conference at Independence Bowl Stadium, though.

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.



Stakes high for CU, Alabama in Independence Bowl

By B.G. Brooks

Saturday, December 29, 2007

SHREVEPORT, La. — National interest might be difficult, perhaps impossible, to detect, but for Colorado and Alabama it's relative.

The Independence Bowl stakes are high - not national championship high, or even final top 25 high. But college football's bowl landscape is so littered with games (32) that for all but two of the 64 teams - the pair playing in the Bowl Championship Series national title game - the postseason is about next season.

And the Buffaloes and Crimson Tide heartily subscribe to that.

"It's the first game of next season . . . and we want these guys to go into it 1-0," CU senior linebacker Jordon Dizon said Saturday at an Independence Bowl media conference attended by both head coaches and a pair of players from each team.

"This game isn't about the seniors going out with a win," CU senior offensive tackle Tyler Polumbus added. "It's about the program; the Buffaloes belong in a bowl every year, and we want to put the program on solid ground."

Top to bottom, Alabama shares that desire, with first-year coach Nick Saban even going so far as to term the contest "a defining game for everybody on this team . . . Every young player can send a message for the future as to what they want to be and what they want this program to be."

Ditto, said CU coach Dan Hawkins: "It can be kind of a watershed moment . . . There's a winning record kind of sitting out there at the Mendoza line; we need some concrete proof to move it to the other side."

The shift Hawkins is referring to is finishing either 7-6 or 6-7, neither being spectacular but one definitely preferable to the other. Also, a victory Sunday would allow CU to avoid back-to-back losing seasons for the first time in 22 years, while Alabama needs a win to avoid consecutive losing seasons for the first time in 49 years.

Both teams finished 6-6 overall this season and 4-4 in their respective conferences, and they so closely mirror each other in a number of other statistical categories that anything but a tight game is difficult to imagine.

The 'X' factor, though, appears to be Alabama's current frame of mind after finishing the season with four consecutive losses to end what Saban has admitted was a rocky transitional season.

Senior defensive end Wallace Gilberry said among the lessons learned during a season that saw the Crimson Tide open 6-2 was this: "There were a lot of guys who were willing to tough it out . . . despite our plunge at the end of the season. It's an honor and blessing to play another game."

After Alabama won six of its first eight games, senior receiver DJ Hall claimed he and his teammates weren't "thinking about bowls . . . but we didn't go out to lose our last four and end up in Shreveport."

The Crimson Tide played here last December, losing 34-31 to Oklahoma State.

Hawkins, directing the Buffs to their first postseason game since 2005 and his first at the school after a 2-10 debut season, also says his team showed grit in dealing with a schedule that offered no weekends off - and that doesn't mean byes.

Although the Buffs won only two of their final six games, Hawkins believes they recaptured most of their fervor during

postseason preparation.

"Anytime you get in a bowl game, your team has a freshness and swagger to it," he said. "I see that in our guys."

Aside from the usual prescriptions for winning - play effective run defense, eliminate mistakes, etc. - Hawkins and Saban outlined these requirements for winning a bowl game:

Hawkins: Be better conditioned and emphasize special teams play.

Saban: Make and/or eliminate explosive plays and turnovers.

Hawkins calls himself "kind of a research fiend" when it comes to evaluating what works and what doesn't. The emphasis on conditioning and special teams play came from, among others, former UCLA coach Terry Donahue, whose 8-4-1 bowl record included seven consecutive postseason wins between 1982-88.

Hawkins said he continually heard other coaches talk about emphasizing special teams play and conditioning before bowls - or if they didn't, how they should have.

"I've always tried to ramp that up, and in general, it's been pretty successful," he said.

Senior defensive end Alonzo Barrett said, "Our whole thing has been geared towards special teams, being strong in the fourth quarter. I think that's going to give us an edge."

Added senior corner Terrence Wheatley: "It's been an everyday thing for us.

Look at some of the (bowl) games that have been played already and you see that (special teams and conditioning) are sort of make or break things."

Both teams are as healthy as they've been in several months, with CU's only apparent question mark being junior defensive tackle George Hypolite. He suffered torn tendons near his left hamstring before the Nebraska game but played anyway. He is listed as a bowl starter.

Alabama's lone injury question mark appears to be defensive back/return specialist Javier Arenas, who is recovering from a high ankle sprain. Running back Terry Grant (hip) is expected to play, but will share time with Glen Coffee and Roy Upchurch.

ETC.: Alabama's bowl record is 30-21-3, CU's is 12-15 Saban is 3-5 in bowl games, Hawkins 2-2 Alabama is playing in the Independence Bowl for the third time, CU for the first The teams have met twice previously in postseason play, each winning a game The game's projected payout is \$1.1 million per team No college teams regularly play at Independence Stadium (capacity: 49,182). Its primary tenant is Fair Park High School, but the venue is the occasional site of an NFL preseason game CU defensive line coach Romeo Bandison was drafted by Cleveland in 1994 when Nick Saban was in his final season as the Browns' defensive coordinator. Bandison completed his NFL career with Washington (1995-97) The first Southeastern Conference team to play in the Independence Bowl was Mississippi, which lost 9-3 to Air Force in 1983. The game was played in a downpour Alabama's defensive coordinator is Kevin Steele, who moved from Baylor (head coach) to Florida State (executive head coach/linebackers) and was named Rivals.com's national recruiter of the year in 2005. Steele also was a Nebraska assistant (1989-94).

brooks@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5466

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Local college football report, December 29

By Staff Reports

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CU

Major influence

Cody Hawkins hasn't had much recent contact with **Major Applewhite**, but the University of Colorado's starting quarterback still considers Applewhite a role model and friend.

He also considers Alabama's offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach one of the sharpest minds operating in college football, and it's not difficult to see why.

Hawkins, who met Applewhite in Austin, Texas, while accompanying then-Boise State coach **Dan Hawkins** on a spring trip to the Texas campus, says Applewhite's coaching career "has just kind of hit warp speed. . . . The way he played the game when he was at Texas, you could tell he was a field general - he knew what was going on.

"Look at what he did with Rice's offense and how good Rice had been in the past. Regardless of what system they were running, they were garbage. He really turned them around."

Since quarterbacking the Longhorns to four consecutive bowl games (1999-2001) and serving for two years as a Texas graduate assistant, Applewhite, 28, has been the QB coach at Syracuse, the offensive coordinator/QB coach at Rice and now is in his first season at Alabama.

In his lone season at Rice (2006), the Owls scored the most points (350) and gained the third-most yards (4,486) in school history. Also, for the first time, Rice had a 1,000-yard rusher, passer and receiver.

Get out more, son

In Cody Hawkins' estimation, Applewhite and CU's **Mark Helfrich** are two of the college game's brainiest offensive coordinators. Told of Cody's opinion, Helfrich laughed and said, "Cody's only met me and Major. . . . That's a limited study."

The Scott watch

Here's one way of assessing progress in the Buffaloes' recruitment of **Darrell Scott**: It appears the top national running back prospect is CU's to lose.

Not only has Scott been telephoning or text messaging other CU recruits and chatting up the merits of being in the same signing class, he has told some current Buffs he "can't wait to get over here and play with us."

That comes from freshman receiver **Kendrick Celestine**, who is close to fellow freshman receiver **Josh Smith** - Scott's uncle.

Said Celestine: "Josh talks about him 2 4/7. Darrell calls the house, (and) I talk to Darrell. We can't wait for him to get up over here so we can ball. And he says he can't wait to get over here and play with us. I think we can win a national championship in three years."

Scott, of St. Bonaventure High School in Ventura, Calif., will participate on the West squad in the U.S. Army All-Star Game in San Antonio (Jan. 5) with two other CU recruits - offensive lineman **Bryce Givens** (Mullen High School) and linebacker **Lynn**

Katoa (Salt Lake City).

Get your mind right

Will the residue of Alabama's up-and-down regular season trickle into the postseason? Crimson Tide players, who haven't won since Oct. 20 (41-17 against Tennessee), say it won't.

"Our bowl practices have been good," junior tight end **Nick Walker** said. "Usually, we'd be off and on - we'd have three good days and a bad day. It was going like that. But every bowl practice has been good - tough and with a lot of energy."

Referring to Alabama's four-game losing streak to close the season, senior receiver **Matt Caddell** said, "We didn't really finish games like we wanted to. It kind of just led to a snowball effect, and it got a little bit contagious or whatever. We just have to go out and finish strong (Sunday)."

Numbers game

55 bowl appearances by Alabama is an NCAA record, as is the Crimson Tide's 30 postseason victories.

He said it

"When you win two games (as he did in 2006), nobody wants you protected."

Dan Hawkins, on why two state troopers aren't flanking him as he enters and exits stadiums.

Air Force

Go inside and play

Air Force started practice at 8:30 a.m. Friday, but after about an hour, coach **Troy Calhoun** moved the players into the Texas Christian indoor practice facility in Fort Worth, Texas, for the final 30 minutes of drills.

"I wanted to make sure the footing was extremely firm," Calhoun said. "I just thought we had to do it for the overall quickness of practice. It had rained a little bit, and part of it was just the morning moisture."

Calhoun, whose team hasn't played since Nov. 17, is pleased with the progress of practices.

"We're better ballhandlingwise than we were two days ago," he said. "And you just don't have busts assignmentwise. We have guys that are doing what we ask them to do on both sides. No question, we've been a little crisper."

Living like kings

Quarterback **Shaun Carney** appreciates what it has been like for the team since arriving in Fort Worth three days ago.

"It's great not to go to school for four hours before you come out to practice," Carney said. "It's been awesome. We've been able to come out and practice hard and go back to the hotel and play PlayStation, hang out, take a nap, play some pool and then go to bed and do it all over again."

So who has been the king of the PlayStation competition?

"I can't really lie about it," Carney said. "I'm undefeated."

Always a cadet

Chad Hennings, a 1987 All-American and Outland Trophy winner who was the guest speaker Friday at the Kickoff Luncheon, didn't hesitate when asked which meant more to him, graduating from the Air Force Academy or winning three Super Bowl rings with the Dallas Cowboys.