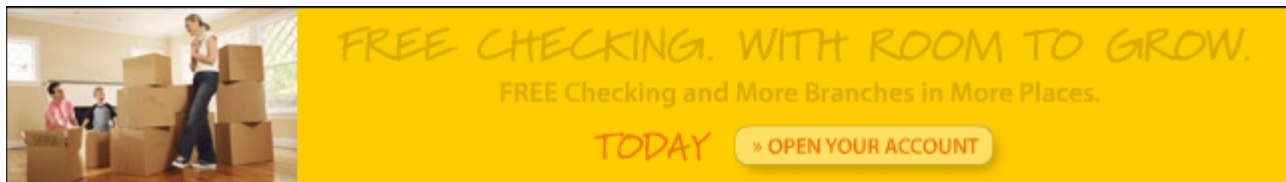


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Bufs report for duty

Hudgins, Brown arrive with opposite emotions as camp begins today

By Kyle Ringo ([Contact](#))
Monday, August 6, 2007

Not all of the 105 members of the Colorado football team who reported to campus Sunday morning in advance of the first day of fall camp today, did so with wild-eyed enthusiasm and a little extra pep in their step.

The day wasn't exactly everything defensive end Drew Hudgins had dreamed of all these years growing up in Spring Hill, Kan.

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Hudgins, a junior college transfer from Highland Community College in Kansas, was supposed to make an immediate impact this fall on the defensive line, where CU is trying to replace departed seniors Abraham Wright and Walter Boye-Doe. Wright led the Big 12 Conference in sacks last season.

But Hudgins has had nothing but bad luck since arriving in Boulder in January. He missed most of spring

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practices after suffering a knee injury that required arthroscopic surgery. And this summer as his knee was continuing to heal, he ruptured his left Achilles tendon ending his 2007 season before the first practice.

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Hudgins said team physicians told him the normal recovery time following surgery for a ruptured Achilles is six months. He is in his second month of that process.

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Hudgins has a redshirt year available to him and will have two years to play two beginning next fall.

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"It's incredibly disappointing," Hudgins said. "This was finally supposed to be my time to get to the big place I've been looking to get to from junior college. Now, it's like I have to wait even longer.

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"I've got to stay optimistic and hope everything works out for the best. Keep faith in everything and keep working."

While Hudgins hobbled into the Dal Ward Center on reporting day with no reason to look forward to the coming season, junior linebacker R.J. Brown bounced in and out obviously on the opposite end of the emotional spectrum.

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Brown vaulted to the top of the depth chart at middle linebacker last week when sophomore returning starter Michael Sipili was suspended indefinitely after being arrested for his alleged role in a street fight in June.

Brown isn't happy to find himself at the top of the depth chart because of a teammate's misfortune or poor decision-making, but he isn't about to shy away from the opportunity. Brown is entering his fourth year in the program and was named special teams captain by his teammates during the winter. All of his playing experience in his three years in the program has come on special teams. He has never played a down defensively.

"It isn't strange," Brown said of his sudden rise to the top of the depth chart at the Mike linebacker position. "It's just a little different. We've still got to see what happens with (Sipili). If anything, it's just exciting and I kind of go into it with maybe a little different mind-set."

All but two members of the 2007 recruiting class reported Sunday. Devan Johnson, a tight end from Pennsylvania, will grayshirt this fall and enroll in classes in January and running back P.T. Gates, from Saddleback College in California, must complete two more junior college courses this fall before coming to Boulder at the semester break.

Lamont Smith, a defensive back from Pennsylvania, said he has been cleared to participate after a delay held up some of his paperwork needed for the academic clearinghouse process. Smith said he has been in Boulder for about a week and loves what he has seen, but that hasn't made it any easier fighting off a case of homesickness.

"I'm all right," he said. "I'll get through it."

Defensive back Anthony Wright, from Compton, Calif., is also expected to be cleared once his paperwork is processed.

It is not uncommon for recruits from California to lose time in training camp while waiting on the pencil pushers. Some players, such as Wright, don't graduate from their California high schools until the middle of June, which can delay official transcripts from arriving at CU in time for the paperwork to be processed before camp.

Players received three-ring binders filled with everything they should need to help them navigate the next 20 days before the first day of classes. They were fitted for equipment and got to see their new locker room, which was refurbished over the summer. They attended meetings and ate dinner as a team Sunday evening.

The Dal Ward Center was filled all day with what some players referred to as a 'buzz.' The veteran Buffs have been waiting more than eight months for this week to arrive since last year's difficult 2-10 season ended in a humbling defeat in Lincoln, Neb. Those veterans, particularly the 17 seniors on the roster, want to restore the program to its winning ways.

"I definitely think so," senior wide receiver Dusty Sprague said. "That's a fair statement to make. Any time you have two wins in a season, you're ready to get that bad taste out of your mouth and get back going."

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CU football: Halftime ritual energizes LB Dizon

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News
August 5, 2007

BOULDER - To your shortlist of life's sureties (death, taxes, Larry King in suspenders, Paris Hilton in the news, no more \$1.50-a- gallon gas), add this: If it's halftime at a University of Colorado football game, Jordon Dizon will be intimately acquainted with an IV drip.

If football is Dizon's first love, feeling the business end of a needle apparently is Love 1-B. Or so it has seemed to best bud and fellow linebacker R.J. Brown and their veteran position coach, Brian Cabral.

In truth, it's not that way at all, explained Dizon. Even in high school, he played so hard, expended so much energy and spent so much of himself, he needed the needle more often than not.

At CU, the poking merely became a Saturday ritual. Or, as Dizon said, "Once you feel like your whole body is cramping up, it gets to be a routine. It (stinks) getting stuck that much, but when it's done once a week, it gets kind of redundant."

In football, this is among the things that earn merit badges and widespread respect, which Dizon unquestionably has from his teammates and coaches. He's the Buffaloes' defensive captain, as well as a preseason all-Big 12 Conference selection by a number of publications.

"What I like best about watching him play, he comes into the locker room at halftime, drenched in sweat, gets IVs in both arms and is ready to get back out there. He pushes his body as far as it can take him," said Brown, the Buffs' special teams captain.

"You hate to see him or anybody else getting poked with IVs, but he just can't help it. It's kind of become commonplace."

What's more, added Cabral, "the (game-day) temperature doesn't matter; Jordon usually is going to need an IV." Dizon receives a standard IV of rehydration solutions to treat dehydration, which can be a fairly common condition in athletics.



Evan Semon © News © 2005

Quarterbacks have been prone to wind up on the turf - Brad Smith of Missouri found that to be the case in 2005 - when Colorado's Jordon Dizon, right, is in the hunt. The senior inside linebacker and current defensive captain had four sacks last season.

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considerable. As CU begins practice today, he enters his senior season as the nation's fourth leading active tackler (280, career).

Culture shock?

Dizon, of Waimea, Hawaii, arrived in Boulder in 2004, a temporarily out-of-sync islander who wore flip-flops (he still does) through the snow to class and, only when prodded, told engagin tales of he and his knife-wielding high school buddies stalking wild pigs for summertime fun.

So what could be that different or difficult about bringing down a Division I running back cradling a pigskin? For Dizon, not much.

Converted from safety to linebacker in August camp of his freshman season, Dizon immediately proved the prescience of CU's former coaching staff, which wanted him nearer the ball when it was snapped.

Although about 30 pounds short of his current weight (225), the 6-foot Dizon became the only freshman to start for Cabral, who is poised to begin his 19th season as a CU staffer and has lengthy and luminous list of former Buffs linebackers.

Dizon quickly justified Cabral's faith in him, setting a school freshman record for tackles (82, 51 solo), being named Big 12 freshman of the year by the league's coaches and landing on a number of all- freshman teams.

Dizon's deeds resulted mostly from lateral foot speed and football instinct. He has been among Cabral's surest tacklers and most consistent playmakers, but controlled play wasn't a strong suit.

Cabral recalls Season 1 of the Dizon era thusly: "He showed up and was running around like a chicken with his head cut off, going 1,000 miles an hour until he crashed and burned. He would just run out of fuel emotionally and physically."

No wonder the need for the, ah, halftime needlework. Dizon was stuck in overdrive - really no that bad a gear for an inside linebacker but one obviously requiring frequent maintenance. That has changed.

Said Cabral: "He's learning to play a little calmer and put it in idle because he understands th defense now, how he fits into it and not just his role but the roles of the guys around him - that's the biggest thing."

It has been a big thing for the entire defense. "For everybody on the defense last year, it was know what you do and that's it," Dizon said. "This year, it's know what everyone else does . . knowing where your help is coming from. That's crucial. Last year, we were just aiming to hit, and who cares where (the ballcarrier) goes.

"Now, it's more of a technical thing for us, turning a runner inside or out. We use a lot more safety help now (and) in run support; knowing which way they're coming is crucial."

Yet in Dizon's development, there also has been another crucial element: He has matured into the type of senior leader Cabral craves.

Making some noise

Upon his arrival for college life on the mainland, Dizon was ultraquiet. Three and half years later, said Brown, a fellow islander (Honolulu) who played against Dizon in high school and roomed with him during their sophomore seasons at CU, the Buffs defense is blessed with an ultravocal leader who can commandeer his teammates' attention in an instant.

"Once he gets acquainted with you, he becomes very vocal," Brown said. "He's the type of

guy who kind of pops. He'll usually stay at a certain demeanor, then he reaches the point where he'll get in your face.

"The guys expected him to be a captain; he was an absolutely clear-cut choice. The respect comes from what he's done; there's confidence in him throughout the team."

Although Dizon didn't anticipate such a transformation, he accepts and cherishes the role. He feels he won't be tuned out if he has to call out a teammate.

"Half of leadership is being vocal, saying it when it's supposed to be said," Dizon noted. "This being my senior year, it's time for me to say what's right and what's not. The group of guys we have now is really close. We all respect one another, (and) I know I'm not going to get grief if I point them out."

To Cabral, Dizon has become "a marvelous leader, a guy who's really stepped up during the spring and summer. I couldn't have foreseen it. He's really quiet, humble and doesn't want to draw attention. But he's stepped out of his self and become a leader, and that's just what we need."

Much of what drives Dizon comes from a desire to not disappoint his coaches, a trait Cabral saw in former CU Butkus Award winner Matt Russell. If Dizon believes he has disappointed his coaches, particularly his position coach, he is "very, very hard on himself," Cabral said.

That's mainly because Dizon views Cabral as "my dad away from home. My freshman year, I don't know what I could have done without him. He would tell me to do this or go home. I thank him for it, for pushing me and never letting up.

"Sometimes I'd be like, 'Why are you picking on me?' But he wanted me to be the best I can be. Giving me an extra 10 minutes of film or running me after practice because I'd done something wrong - it all worked out. He knew what he was doing, but I didn't know it at the time."

He knows it now, just as Cabral knows he has produced yet another top-tier 'backer. Dizon is "not as big as some of my (former) guys, but he'll make just as many plays," Cabral said. "But the size of his heart - that will match any of those guys. My hope is for him to stay healthy and enjoy his senior season."

Just keep those halftime IVs flowing.

CU at a glance

- **Practices:** Conducted on fields north of the Dal Ward Athletics Center, across Boulder Creek. All practices are open to the public unless otherwise indicated.

- **Tentative practice dates this week:**

Today, 9:45-11:45 a.m. newcomers, 4-6 p.m. veterans; Tuesday, 9:45-11:45 a.m. newcomers, 4-6 p.m. veterans; Wednesday, 9:45-11:45 a.m. newcomers, 4-6 p.m. veterans; 8:45-9:30 p.m. walkthrough for full squad; Thursday, 9:45-11:45 a.m. newcomers, 4-6 p.m. veterans; Friday, 4-6:30 p.m., full squad in pads;

Saturday, 9-11:30 a.m., 4-6 p.m.; Sunday, scrimmage 10 a.m.- noon, 8-9 p.m.

- **2006 record:** 2-10 overall, 2-6 (fifth) in Big 12 Conference North Division.

- **Opening game:** Sept. 1, Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High (10 a.m., FSN Rocky Mountain).

- **Media's predicted Big 12 finish:** Fifth in North Division.

- **Preseason to-do list:** Name a starting quarterback. Build offensive-line depth and identify two new starters. Find a hard-nosed, load-bearing running back and at least two deep-threat receivers. Identify a defensive end who can rush the passer. Shore up the secondary and all special teams, especially the kicking game.

- **Best reasons for optimism:** Counting two offseasons, the Buffs have more than a year under their belts in the Dan Hawkins system, which should stabilize them on game day. Plus, overall quarterback play and game management should improve with either Cody Hawkins, below, or Nick Nelson at the position.

Dizon's career statistics

Year Games Plays Tackles UT-AT Total tackles Tackles for loss Sacks

2004 12 597 51-31 82 6 1

2005 12 475 42-19 61 7 3

2006 12 679 80-57 137 11 4

Totals 36 1,751 173-107 280 24 8

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