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Longmont, Colorado
Friday, August 10, 2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 8/9/2007

Jackson embraces slash

Former starting QB refusing to take position switch personally

By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

Bernard Jackson is not being considered as a candidate to start at quarterback for the University of Colorado, even though he started 11 times in 2006 and no other QB on the roster has played a down of Division I football.

He isn't bitter about what some see as a slight.

"I don't see why," he said. "I don't understand. That's just my take. I don't complain or question anything the coaches tell me or the team. I'm having fun, doing something I love. I don't need to complain."

Jackson may not be complaining, but he's trying to find other ways on the field.

Jackson wants to play some safety in 2007. His aspirations have been boosted by how he said secondary coach Greg Brown views the possibility.

"Coach Brown loves it," Jackson said. "He's been saying 'bring it on.' He's been saying, 'If you guys aren't going to use him, give him to me.'"

"That being said, that's a lot of motivation to me. He's a guy that's been in the (NFL) for 15 years, and he sees something in me that he can exploit. It motivates me a ton."

Jackson has played a ton of positions at CU, including receiver and running back. But never safety. He said he can't play cornerback because he lacks the hips he'd need there. He said he's more optimistic about playing some safety this season than he was two weeks ago.

"It all comes down to the coaches and how they feel about the situations," Jackson said.

Jackson begins his football day by meeting with the quarterbacks, and later meets with the receivers and running backs. He said he likes the "slash" role he's scheduled to fill.

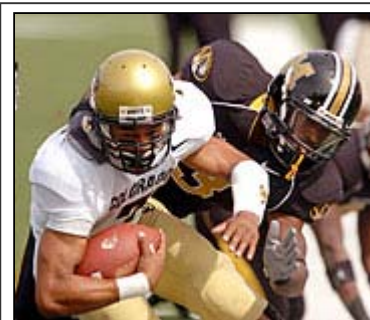
"It takes a lot of pressure off," Jackson said. "Now I don't have to worry about carrying the team; now I got to worry about not going 2-10 again. It takes a lot off me, and I'm a lot more at ease."

Head coach Dan Hawkins thinks Jackson can be a playmaker on a team that needs them.

"That guy can fit in at a lot of places, and we need to be creative about giving the ball to him," Hawkins said.

And Jackson does not lack confidence.

"My hands and route-running skills are superb," he said. "I have the best hands on the team."



Bernard Jackson, left, started 11 games at quarterback for the University of Colorado last season. This year, he's expected to play a variety of positions, including safety and wide receiver. **AP/L.G.**

Patterson

Looking forward: Sept. 1 can't get here soon enough for the Buffaloes.

Eager to erase their nasty memories of a 2-10 season, several Buffs spoke Wednesday at the program's Media Day about the need to start strong in 2007 to boost confidence.

CU faces Colorado State at Invesco Field on Sept. 1 in the opener for both programs. The Rams beat CU, 14-10, in 2006.

"Having a lot of freshmen on the team, at times it's difficult as a team because as older guys, because we have to embrace them, we have to get them ready, we have to cultivate their talent, we have to make sure they understand everything," CU junior defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "Sometimes you have to be a little hard on them, because that's what's going to happen. You have to maybe push their buttons a little bit because when we get into Colorado State, Colorado State is going to push their buttons out there on the field. That's the law of the jungle.

"What we want to do right now is cultivate an attitude. It's to get them on board with what was built last year, the foundation we had."

Hawkins said CU will play 20 to 25 freshmen this year. CU is expected to have more than 50 freshmen on its roster.

Hawkins said 70 percent of the time, teams that win their opener go on to have a winning season. At CU, he said, that figure is 82 percent.

"You have a team that didn't win a lot of games last year," Hawkins said. "There are a lot of factors that put huge importance on (the opener)."

Extra points: Receiver Alvin Barnett and offensive linemen Keenan Stevens and Erick Faatagi remained out of practice to focus on classwork, Hawkins said. ... Jeff Pitman, CU's director of strength and conditioning, has injured players working out in an unusual way. On Wednesday, they were shoveling sand into a wheel barrel, then pushing it from the South to the North side of the practice field, and emptying it into a pile. Pitman said the pile will be returned to the South side today. Bryan Stengel and Tony Poremba pulled the duty Wednesday morning. ... Former CU coach Eddie Crowder received a citation of honor Wednesday from the Football Writers Association of America to recognize his "long and honorable career in intercollegiate football." ... CU's split roster practices today at 9:45 a.m. and 4 p.m. The first full-squad, full-pad practice will be Friday at 4 p.m.

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Already under pressure

Cody Hawkins caught in glare of Media Day spotlight

By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — Media Day at Colorado found a freshman at the center of attention.

That's life with the Buffs these days.

If things remain as they stand now, the football roster in 2007 will carry 55 freshmen. That's redshirt, walk-on and true, according to preseason lists. CU coach Dan Hawkins said 20 to 25 of them are going to play.

But on Wednesday, not one of them looked like they had the chance to occupy the spotlight like his son, Cody does.

Cody Hawkins redshirted last year and is one of two Buffs battling for the starting quarterback job. He emerged in spring ball as the favorite to win the job, and judging by how he had to hold court Wednesday, a lot of people think he's still the guy to beat.

Questions ranged widely, but how he'll deal with being the head coach's son arose most prominently. It's an issue he'll face in myriad situations over the next four seasons.

Wednesday, some wondered whose advice he has sought to deal with it. As Hawkins said, few possess that kind of knowledge.

"I haven't found much from other people," he said. "It'd be nice to talk to some other kids. I've talked to guys who played for their dads in high school. That's a much different situation.

"I've heard stories about stuff. John Elway and his dad. He went to a different college than his father did. He kind of regretted not playing for his dad because that would have been a great opportunity, and he would have gone to the NFL anyway.

"It's going great for me right now, and I have no questions or regrets about it. I'm pretty excited about it."

If Hawkins starts Sept. 1 against Colorado State, he'll be the first freshman quarterback to do so at CU since Craig Ochs in 2000. Only two Buffs freshmen in the 1990s — Zac Colvin in 1999 and Koy Detmer in 1992 — made starts under center.

Playbook knowledge separated Hawkins in the spring from Nick Nelson, the junior college transfer who's also vying for the spot.

Offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said this week Nelson has closed the gap.



CU redshirt-freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins hands off to tailback Kevin Moyd at practice Tuesday. **Times-Call/Joshua Buck**

Hawkins said CU's offense is "totally different" from what he ran at Bishop Kelly High School in Boise. There, he had two reads to make whenever he dropped back to pass, and he simply chose the best one.

He didn't start learning CU's scheme until July 2006. Helfrich said Hawkins' grasp of it is "definitely above average."

"He's not off the charts on everything yet, and obviously that's what we want out of everybody," Helfrich said. "But Cody is more of a conceptual guy. He gets pictures in his mind pretty quickly, and that's an advantage for a quarterback."

Hawkins said it's still pretty simple.

"Basically we have a small group of plays that we tweak every week," he said. "We have little bits of pieces that we're always working on and trying to get the best plays in there and game-planning specifically for each team. When you get used to that, then stuff just comes easier because you have the basic concepts down. And once you have the concepts down you can mix and match any way you want."

Cody is vocal and confident at practice. He not only seems willing to be a leader at such a young age, but eager to be one. CU's media guide lists his record as a starter since his Pop Warner days as 59-0.

But if Cody is your typical coach's son, it does not appear to be intentional. His father rarely made it to his football games growing up, he said, due to his time demands as Boise State's coach.

Once a year, Mom would pick the game Dan could attend, and everyone had a grand time. As Cody grew into a Division I prospect as a junior and senior, Dan made a couple more each year.

"That was always pretty funny in high school because he'd be sitting in the stands in the game and all the other parents would be asking, 'What would you do?'" Cody said. "He was just sitting back trying to be a dad."

"He was a great Dad throughout. He let me play sports for me and he'd try and be there for moral support. He didn't try to coach me up unless I sought him out."

Dan Hawkins might one day have to deal with some unique situations here

If a clear winner between Cody and Nelson does not emerge in camp, and Helfrich — whose opinion matters most — decides Hawkins should start, how will that go down? If CU loses under Cody's quarterbacking, will the head coach be quicker, or slower, to make a switch?

Those questions are not yet relevant.

The coach said Wednesday CU's starter won't be officially named until the week before the opener. He looks forward to the scrimmages to see who's doing what.

"Cody and Nick have had their moments out there," Dan Hawkins said.

"It's kind of a horse race, and who ever goes out and runs and gets going, that will be the guy. ... We need to start getting someone in the saddle as soon as we can."

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THE DENVER POST

cu football

In a hurry to get separation

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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MDT



CU's head coach Dan Hawkins talks to players during their first practice. (The Denver Post | Omar Vega)

Boulder - A need for speed at wide receiver.

Colorado had it. The need part, that is.

Last fall, the Buffaloes ranked last among Big 12 Conference schools in yards per pass attempt (5.6). It wasn't all the quarterbacks' fault.

"The No. 1 recruiting priority for us was to get guys who can run and stretch the field," said Eric Kiesau, CU's receivers coach and passing game coordinator.

Although a recruiting class shouldn't be judged until two or three seasons have passed, Kiesau believes the mission was accomplished. Each of the three wide receivers signed by CU is turning heads - including those of defensive backs as they watch them whiz by.

Josh Smith, a 6-foot-1, 185-pound blur

College Football 2007

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from Moorpark, Calif., averaged 22.7 yards per catch as a high school senior. He ran sprints for the track team and set a school record in the long jump at 23 feet.

Kendrick Celestine, a 6-foot, 190-pounder, clocked a career-best 10.6 seconds for the 100 meters at Mamou (La.) High School. He averaged 20.8 yards per catch as a senior.

The highest-rated of trio, Markques Simas, is not regarded as a speedster. But Simas, a Californian rated the third-best receiver in the West last year by SuperPrep, can get downfield and is adept at using his sturdy 6-2, 195-pound frame to outreach smaller cornerbacks. He averaged 19.5 yards per catch as a senior, 21.3 as a junior.

During the Tuesday morning practice session, Smith nabbed two long passes from freshman quarterback Matt Ballenger and outraced the defender to the end zone.

"I feel like I'm trying to 'get to the house' every time," Smith said.

CU coach Dan Hawkins reacted to the big gains like a kid spotting his first bicycle under the Christmas tree.

"I love the longball. I do," Hawkins said. "As I've kind of come along in this game, I think you have to pound it (on the ground) and launch it. That's just my style.

"Clearly, you've got three guys that are knocking on the door. They all have traits that they are bringing to the table."

With the trio supplying so much playmaking ability, CU's veteran wideouts must be looking over their shoulders wondering if they will lose playing time to the youngsters. Last year the Buffs seemed to have a roster full of possession receivers.

"That's why we brought these guys in," Kiesau said. "They can run. They can get vertical downfield."

That's not to say Simas, Celestine and Smith are polished and ready for the opening bell.

"Basically, if I can get the plays down and not have to think about it, it will be all good," said Celestine, who arrived a day late after missing a flight from Baton Rouge.

"It's one thing to have speed. But you have to know where to go to catch it."

Footnotes

Hawkins called Tuesday's afternoon session "one of the best practices we've had since I've been here in so many ways." ... As expected, defensive end Drew Hudgins has been ruled out for the season. Hudgins, who had 19 sacks last season at Highland Community College in Kansas, tore an Achilles tendon this summer. .. Walk-on receiver Steve Melton opened some

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eyes in the morning session with a circus catch. He played junior college ball last year after beginning his career at UCLA. Another invited walk-on, offensive lineman Joe Fruechtel, began at Army. ... Today's morning session is followed by media day.

Staff writer Tom Kensler can be reached at 303-954-1280 or tkensler@denverpost.com.

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Reinforcements welcome sight for CU D-line, too

By Kyle Ringo
Wednesday, August 8, 2007

Eugene Goree would like nothing more than to be playing football on his 18th birthday.

If the wish comes true it will mean the Colorado true freshman defensive tackle has had a solid training camp. It will also mean that Goree (pronounced Gore-ray) will experience the Colorado-Colorado State rivalry in his first college playing time.

"Even if I just get in a play or two, it will make my day," Goree said of the Sept. 1 game at Invesco Field in Denver.

A lot has been made in the run-up to training camp and the first two days of practices about the size and number of offensive linemen now on the Colorado roster.

The new defensive linemen aren't too shabby either.

Goree (6-foot-2, 285 pounds) and fellow true freshmen Conrad Obi (6-4, 235) and Lagrone Shields (6-3, 260) all have the size, strength and speed to play right away. Whether they live up to that potential over the next three weeks remains to be seen.

"They pass the eyeball test," junior defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "Unfortunately, playing young is not about passing the eyeball test."

Hypolite said he and other veteran members of the defensive line took it upon themselves to work with the young guys over the summer, trying to teach them the fundamentals of what can be a difficult defense to learn.

Hypolite said he believes this freshman class of defensive linemen is much further along at the outset of camp than his class was because of all the work veterans and rookies have done together over the summer. Hypolite said the defense he first learned as a freshman was much more simple than the one CU now employs.

CU defensive line coach Romeo Bandison would like to have two groups of four competent linemen to shuttle in and out of games each week. The most he has had in any season is six.

Bandison said the Buffs are much closer to reaching that goal now than they were a year ago at this time, but there is still a lot of training camp to complete and a lot of learning to do for the young guys.

"It's only been two days and no pads," Bandison said. "I can go out there right now in no pads and look awesome. ... So far from what those young guys have shown, we feel we were right in the way we evaluated them and they're definitely going to be part of this defense."

"If not right away, they're going to pan out."

Obi might be the most likely of the three true freshmen to play right away, in part because the team is thin at defensive end in the wake of a summertime season-ending Achilles injury to junior college transfer Drew Hudgins.

CU has two experienced defensive ends in Maurice Lucas and Alonzo Barrett, but they are backed up by a pair of redshirt freshmen in Marquez Herrod and Eric Lawson, who practiced all last season as a defensive tackle.

Herrod is a speedy player more in the mold of former Buff Abraham Wright, who led the Big 12 Conference in sacks last season. Herrod's teammates selected him for the Defensive Scout team award last season and he made a name for himself in high school as a one-man wrecking crew on special teams coverage units.

"I know I'm going to contribute, definitely," said Herrod, who is second on the depth chart at left defensive end behind Lucas. "I don't know how much at this point. I'm working hard just like anybody else. I'm No. 2 right now and I've got a lot of respect for No. 1. I just got to work my way up there."

It has been nearly a full year since Obi played football. He missed most of his senior season in high school in Grayson, Ga., because of a hand injury. He said he is fully recovered now and itching to don the pads and hit someone.

"I definitely have confidence in myself," Obi said. "I know I can compete with these older guys. They've been here for four years, five years for some of them. So you just got to learn the ropes first before you can walk them."

Colorado's offensive line coach Jeff Grimes has satisfied a lot of interview requests in the first two days of fall camp, talking about his excitement in going from six linemen in spring ball to 19 now. But he isn't the only line coach in Boulder with a smile on his face.

"I think this year we'll have a lot more luxury as far as the backups and the guys I can play and the guys I can trust and the guys who can go in there no problem with no drop-off in play," Bandison said.



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Bufs have to grow up fast

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, August 8, 2007

Here are some numbers that might get Colorado football fans chewing on fingernails in advance of what they hope is a better football season in Boulder.

The current CU roster features 51 freshmen and redshirt freshmen and 17 sophomores. Roughly two-thirds of the 2007 team — 105 players total as of Tuesday — will consist of underclassmen.

Five more freshmen and two more sophomores are scheduled to join the program as invited walk-ons or transfers on the first day of fall classes.

None of this bothers coach Dan Hawkins one bit.

"I think it's great," Hawkins said. "I mean, obviously that whole experience thing is important, but I like the talent, like the enthusiasm, like where we're going. We'll eventually get there.

"That would be the only thing. There is no way you can re-create experience. They have to kind of go through that."

It's no wonder Hawkins has said on several occasions that he expects a large number of freshmen to play this season. The team might have no choice.

One of the most interesting days of camp will come probably next week when the program releases its first depth chart including all the newcomers to the roster.

Hawkins pointed to a brief bout of fisticuffs in the afternoon scrimmage between defensive tackle Brandon Nicolas and center Daniel Sanders as another reason he isn't concerned about so many young players on the team.

Last year, a similar fight might have escalated and led to more fighting in practice, and plenty of running as punishment. This year the players quickly broke it up — a sign of excellent leadership, according to Hawkins.

He called the afternoon practice one the best since he's been in Boulder.

"I just think we're really starting to understand the finish, we're understanding the tempo, we're understanding communication, we're understanding rallying back, and the little things," he said. "How they handled that thing, there was a lot of maturity there."

A thin herd

Junior linebacker Marcus Burton left Tuesday morning's practice early to study. Coaches confirmed Burton is in jeopardy of being declared academically ineligible this fall if he fails to pass his summer classes, which end this week.

If Burton is ineligible, coaches would have one fewer option to turn to replace sophomore Michael Sipili, who has been indefinitely suspended after being arrested last week for his alleged role in a street fight earlier this summer.

Junior R.J. Brown, a team captain, and sophomore Jake Duren are Sipili's primary backups on the depth chart released at the outset of fall camp. Neither has played a snap from scrimmage at CU.

Going deep

Wide receivers made several highlight-reel plays and scored on long passes in both practices Tuesday. True freshman Josh Smith hauled in two passes and ran to the end zone for scores in the morning and senior Dusty Sprague burned his defensive teammates in the afternoon.

"I love the long ball, I do," Hawkins said. "As I've kind of come along in this game, I think you've got to pound it and launch it. That's just my style."

True freshman quarterback Matt Ballenger has caught plenty of attention in the first two days of camp with his strong, accurate throws. He is in a unique position as the only new quarterback on the roster this fall and he gets offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich all to himself each morning.

"Matt is one of those very interesting guys," Hawkins said. "I just think he's very, very raw. I think he's going to continue to get better at an accelerated rate."

2B or not 2B

Hawkins is hoping the NCAA board of directors rescinds a rule change made earlier this year banning text messaging in recruiting. The board is scheduled to meet today.

Hawkins said it has been difficult on him the past week since the new rule went into effect. He has used texting religiously for several years in recruiting and in communicating with current players. He is not allowed to text message walk-ons in the program until the first day of classes.

"Sometimes I just pick it and rub over the things wishing I could text somebody," he said.

The Daily Hawkism

Hawkins on whether veteran wide receivers should be concerned about newcomers at the position: "I don't care if it's day-to-day or week-to-week or season-to-season, I just don't think anybody should walk out here and go, 'Well, you know, I've got chips in the bank.' I just don't subscribe to that. You've got to get up every day and compete."

Notable

Bernard Jackson missed practice in order to study. Offensive linemen Erick Faatagi and Keenan Stevens as well as wide receiver Alvin Barnett also missed another day of work in order to catch up academically. ... Freshmen wide receiver Kendrick Celestine made it to camp and participated in

Tuesday's morning practice. He missed the first day dealing with travel problems from his home in Mamou, La. ... Walk-on safety Jason Espinoza hasn't been able to practice the first two days while he awaits results from his Sickle Cell trait test.



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