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cu football

## Buffs like fast-break football

By Tom Kensler  
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder - Fasten your seat belts.

Coach Dan Hawkins said Wednesday during the school's media day activities that CU will play offensively in more of an "attack" mode this season.

"I've coached a little basketball in my day, and I'm not a guru," Hawkins explained, "but if I were a basketball coach, we'd run. We'd run. We'd attack and we'd run every time. We'd push the ball."

That frenetic pace was Hawkins' trademark when he went 53-11 in five seasons at Boise State. But Hawkins didn't inherit enough firepower last fall in his first season at CU to incorporate much razzle-dazzle.

Hawkins can go to more places with the ball this season. And no doubt, in the wake of a 2-10 debut, he will. Providing more options are the additions of two pure passers (his older

son, redshirt freshman Cody Hawkins; and junior college transfer Nick Nelson), the arrival of three freshman receivers and being able to utilize former quarterback starter Bernard Jackson in a "slash" role primarily as a wideout and running back.

The goal is keeping the opponent's defense guessing. That doesn't happen when remaining conventional and playing it safe.

"I love to shift and motion," Hawkins said, "but 'We're going to shift over here, we're going to motion out there, you do this, you do that.' ... OK, (after all that) it's second-and-6.

"How about us get 45 yards instead of 4? I mean, sometimes it takes the same synchronicity to do that as it does to get the 4 or 5 yards."

"We're going to move people around a lot more," senior tailback Hugh Charles said, including himself in the strategy.

### Footnotes

Former CU coach and athletic director Eddie Crowder was presented with a lifetime achievement award from the College Football Writers Association of America. ... Former quarterback John Hessler, who was seriously injured in an Oct. 19, 2003, auto accident, attended the media day and received dozens of handshakes and well-wishes. The latest development in Hessler's rehabilitation is

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riding horses. Although Hessler was born in Merino and grew up in Brighton, he never had gotten in a saddle before this year. Hessler got around with the help of a walker. "I'm doing better," he said. ... Jackson said he would like to add another slash to his title and help out at safety. ... Hawkins reiterated he may not officially name a quarterback starter until the week before the Sept. 1 opener against CSU. But Hawkins said either his son Cody or Nelson could take lead before then. "No one is the starting quarterback yet," Cody said. "Our goal is to establish a starting quarterback early ... We are trying to get that done by the last scrimmage (Aug. 24)."

Staff writer Tom Kensler can be reached at 303-954-1280 or [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com).

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# Hawkins: Fast start 'critical'

By Kyle Ringo  
Thursday, August 9, 2007

The first question out of the gate Wednesday for Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins at the athletic department's fall sports media day went something like this:

How important is the first game?

Hawkins came well-prepared with an answer and the statistics to back it up.

"All first games are important for a lot of reasons," he said. "Statistically, in football, if you win your opening game, about 70 percent of the time you are going to have a winning season. At Colorado, I believe it's 82 percent if you win your opener, the Buffs have had a winning season. That is critical."

Hawkins lost his first game at CU last season to Montana State. It led to a change in quarterbacks, the transfer of another quarterback and a complete offensive meltdown the rest of the season.

It also led to a six-game losing streak to start his tenure, a 2-10 season overall and some members of the fan base scratching their heads in December wondering if school officials had made the right decision in hiring Hawkins.

So, perhaps it's not surprising that Hawkins is so familiar with the percentages and dynamics of season openers.

But Hawkins also said the importance of the game Sept. 1 rises to another level this season because the opponent is in-state rival Colorado State instead of a Division I-AA foe. It's also heightened because of last season's results and because of the philosophy of the program to start fast.

"There is many factors that put a huge importance on that first game," he said.

## Kicking game

Here is another eye-catching statistic courtesy of Hawkins:

In his five years at Boise State, only twice were teams able to drive the ball for a touchdown after starting inside their own 20-yard line.

Hawkins mentioned the statistic Wednesday when discussing how he thinks the rule change on kickoffs will affect the game in 2007. Kickoffs will come from the 30-yard line this year as opposed to the 35 in previous seasons.

Hawkins predicts a jump in returns for scores, an overall increase in scoring and a dramatic shift in

average starting field position this season, based on research special teams coach Kent Riddle did in the offseason.

"There is much more importance in getting all your fastest people on that team and trying to do the best job you can in limiting them," Hawkins said.

The Buffs also won't have the big leg of Mason Crosby to fall back on this year, but Hawkins said he is confident in the abilities of fifth-year senior Kevin Eberhart

"He is a solid kicker and may not have the same range as Mason, but few guys do outside of Tom Dempsey," he said. "He has a chance to be a very good kicker. He has good pop when the ball comes off his leg. I think he'll do some good things."

### **Sounds familiar**

A year ago, Hawkins and his assistants considered using speedy cornerback Terrence Wheatley at wide receiver on offense, but they never did because Wheatley was playing with a weak wrist after reconstructive surgery.

Hawkins revived the concept Wednesday and said it is much more likely to happen this time around because Wheatley's wrist is much stronger. Hawkins said Wheatley's 4.2-second speed in the 40-yard dash must be respected by the defense and it would be relatively easy to teach the senior a handful of reverses and pass routes.

"I think having that guy in there and sending him deep, there are going to be a few guys who can stay with him but that guy is fast. He's legitimately fast," Hawkins said.

### **The Daily Hawkism**

"I'm not a big depth-chart guy. I'm into guys who contribute. I don't know if there is a first team, second team, third team. I like to look at guys and see if we can get a contribution from them and then throw them in the mix."

### **Notable**

Wide receiver Alvin Barnett, offensive linemen Erick Faatagi and Keenan Stevens and do-it-all man Bernard Jackson all missed practice again Wednesday while working on their academic commitments. ... The afternoon practice began Wednesday with players in a giant circle at midfield. One offensive and one defensive player entered the circle at a time and wrestled each other to the ground. Hawkins said the offensive line was undefeated but the defense won the overall competition.



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# Bufs being pushed to excel

## Sidelined or not, CU players put in a full day of work

By Kyle Ringo  
Thursday, August 9, 2007

There were times in Dan Hawkins' first season as football coach at Colorado when he would look to the sidelines or the end lines in practices and notice an alarming number of players wearing orange jerseys, signifying they were hurt.

Some stood there and watched entire practices. Others rode stationary bikes.

Hawkins is a little old-school when it comes to this particular issue. He's a rub-some-dirt-on-it sort of guy, unless your knee is where your ankle used to be.

In Hawkins' world — entering his 25th season in coaching — football players play hurt. Being injured is an entirely different matter.

When a player is hurt but not seriously injured and he still wants to spend practice on the sideline, Hawkins turns him over to strength and conditioning coach Jeff Pitman, who has found something new for players to do this fall when they're nursing a sore spot.

Pitman has players shoveling sand into wheelbarrows and hauling those loads through a chain-link fence, up a small hill and then the length of the practice fields, where they empty them and repeat the process.

Walk-on inside linebacker Jeff Stengel said team trainer Miguel Rueda held him out of practice Wednesday because of a sore hamstring. Stengel was sent to Pitman, who introduced him to the sand, shovel and wheelbarrow.

"I'm going to go out and practice (today)," Stengel said. "I don't care what the trainer says. I mean, I hate to admit it, but that was a lot harder than practice.

"I asked Pit what it was and he said, 'It's a continuous moving sand pile.' So if people get hurt, he'll pick a new spot for the sand to be put."

Pitman knows a thing or two about hard work from his childhood growing up on a dairy farm in rural Idaho. His tactics are perfectly suited to building the kind of blue-collar approach to football that Hawkins covets.

Hawkins used to talk a lot last season about building toughness and changing the mentality ingrained in the program. During his press conference Wednesday at the CU athletic department's media day for fall sports, he was asked if these Bufs are tough.

"I definitely think there is much more assertiveness that way," he said. "Getting out of an excuse mode of, 'My dog ran away.' or 'I had to move out of my apartment.' or 'I lost my shoe.' Whatever it is. You've got to develop a mentality of 'There is no excuses. No excuses. Be here. Get it done. Put it in.'"

"I've seen some of that assertiveness start happening. I see some toughness in our leaders a little bit."

Defensive tackle George Hypolite admitted there were some players last year who weren't completely bought in to the Hawkins-Pitman approach after spending years doing things differently under the former coaching staff.

Hypolite said the vibe within this year's team is considerably different to this point early in camp because there is much better leadership from team captains and veteran players.

"We're a lot more understanding of what we need to do, and so from that standpoint, morale is boosted," Hypolite said. "... Blue-collar attitude is we just put our work boots on and we don't take days off. That's our attitude right now as a team and that has been instilled in us from the coaches."



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## Former CU coach Crowder receives prestigious honor

Camera staff  
Thursday, August 9, 2007

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Former Colorado head coach and athletic director Eddie Crowder was presented Wednesday with the 2007 Citation of Honor, given annually by the Football Writers Association of America.

The award has been given to a coach every year since 1964 by the FWAA in recognition of "long and honorable careers in intercollegiate athletics, and specifically contributions to football."





Crowder took the reins at CU in January 1963 and built CU into a national power. He produced a 63-49-2 record in 11 seasons as CU's head coach, a stretch that included CU's first 10-win season in history (1971), a year that saw the Buffs finish No. 3 in the

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He also served as CU's athletic director from 1965-84, and was responsible for hiring Bill McCartney (football), Ceal Barry (basketball) and Mark Simpson (golf), three of the most successful coaches in CU history.

In 1990, he was inducted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame, and he became a member of CU's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2004.

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Other recipients of the FWAA award include Frank Broyles, Bear Bryant, Dan Devine, Bob Devaney, Frank Kush, LaVell Edwards, Ken Hatfield, Hayden Fry, Darrell Royal, Vince Dooley and Duffy Daugherty.



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## college football

### CU already gearing up for CSU

By Tom Kensler  
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder — Colorado has had football coaches who declined to place additional importance on an opening game, even when Colorado State was the opponent.

"Every game counts the same," they echoed each year.

Don't count current CU boss Dan Hawkins among them.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday afternoon during Colorado media day, Hawkins already sounded pumped for the Sept. 1 battle against Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High.

"All first games are important, for a lot of reasons," Hawkins said. "Statistically, if you win your first game, about 70 percent of the time you're going to have a winning season."

Hawkins said the school's sports information department ran the numbers for CU

throughout its football history.

"I believe it's 82 percent that the Buffs have

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had a winning season if they win that first game," Hawkins said. "That in and of itself is always critical."

Last year didn't help the percentage. In Hawkins first game in Colorado, the Buffs were upset at home 19-10 by Montana State, a Division I-AA school that fell the following Chadron (Neb.) State, a D-II program.

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The Buffs finished 2-10.

"As we try to live within our philosophy to start fast and get going early, that's a critical component to (winning the opener)," Hawkins said.

"You obviously have your in-state rival, that adds a huge component to it. And you also have a (CU) team that didn't win a lot of games last year, so you're trying to establish yourself that way.

"There's many factors that put a huge importance on that huge game."

Staff Writer Tom Kensler can be reached at 303-954-1280 or [tkensler@denverpost.com](mailto:tkensler@denverpost.com)

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## Jackson is satisfied with hybrid role

Offensive captain has skill, desire to fill needs of Buffs

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News  
August 9, 2007

BOULDER - A year ago, he was in the position he'd always wanted to play - quarterback. Now, he meets with the quarterbacks, then, according to the needs of the day's practice itinerary, he might sit in with the tailbacks, receivers or return specialists.

And before Bernard Jackson's hither-and-yon football career at the University of Colorado is complete, he might find himself in a dimly lit defensive meeting room, contemplating O's rather than X's and conjuring up any untapped safety skills.

With reporters knotted around him Wednesday on CU's media day, this is how Jackson described five tumultuous years in Boulder:

"I don't know; it's tough . . . it's been tedious, it's been fun - just a combination and hard to pinpoint. . . . But I'm just living the life right now."

Say this for CU's vagabond offensive captain: He has locked the past in its place and has matured enough to not let hard feelings harden his outlook.

If people can't understand him not being wrought with frustration or bitterness about being yanked this way or that, his reply is, "I don't see why. . . . I don't complain or question anything the coaches tell me or the team."

And if he's not comfortable in and happy with his "slash" role - QB/WR/TB/KR/DB - he's offering an Oscar-worthy charade.

"It's fantastic; I promise, I wouldn't lie," he said. "I'm ecstatic about what we're doing and the direction we're taking. Wherever I'm needed, I'm there. Tailback, kick returner, receiver, I'm there."

"I like it; it takes a lot of pressure off of me . . . it puts me more at ease and lets me relax. So it's a good move. It just gives me an opportunity to showcase my talent and help this team and do great things for this program - and maybe help myself get to the next level."

But the current level is the one Jackson is focused on now. With him starting the majority of the season at quarterback, CU finished 2-10 in 2006 and was at or near the bottom in most NCAA offensive categories.

Don't even think about laying all of that on Jackson, CU's last QB standing when Brian White bailed and James Cox suffered a season-ending hand injury.

The Buffaloes were transitioning to coach Dan Hawkins, and quarterback was but one of the unsettled elements in a disheveled season.

Still, Jackson can't help wondering how things might have been with a full year in Hawkins' system. "We wouldn't have been 2- 10," he said.

"It's something that's in the back of my mind; how it would have been with an extra year (to learn). But I'm not complaining or holding grudges."

Instead, he's doing all he can to eliminate a horrific repeat of 2006. He "can fit in a lot of places, and we need to be creative about giving the ball to him," Hawkins said.

"We want to be smart and not confuse him (with too many positions). On paper, between him and Hugh (Charles, tailback), I would say we want to get it in their hands."

Offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich concurred, noting Jackson will "be a little of everything . . . he's been effective at tailback, he's good at wide receiver. And he'll get special-teams work, too."

And maybe that look in the secondary. Jackson has lobbied defensive coordinator Ron Collins and secondary coach Greg Brown about playing for them.

"You never know," he said. "Coach Brown loved the idea. He's been saying from Day 1, 'If you're not going to use him (on offense), send him to me.' That being said, it's a lot of motivation . . . it motivates me a ton."

After five chaotic years, that he's motivated, not frustrated, speaks volumes about the guy.

**ETC.:** Helfrich said a starting quarterback will be identified "when it is apparent." He hopes it will be by the Tuesday before game week, "But that's not set in marble." He wants the issue settled by the players and hopes it unfolds like this: "If I'm the left tackle, I'm going, 'Yeah, that's our quarterback.' It's going to percolate through the team." But Hawkins still said an official announcement might not come until the week of the Sept. 1 opener. . . . **Nick Nelson**, who's dueling with **Cody Hawkins** for the top spot, is up to 230 pounds and says he has grasped the offense "tons better" than in spring drills. "The coaches are going to have a hard decision," he said. . . . Former CU coach/athletic director **Eddie Crowder** was presented the 2007 Citation of Honor award by the Football Writers Association of America. He is the first CU coach to receive the award.

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