



Bufs show some offense in first scrimmage

Passing game, run attack put points on the board

By Kyle Ringo
Monday, August 13, 2007

Some Colorado football fans who came to Folsom Field Sunday morning for the first scrimmage of fall practices left the stadium a few hours later downright giddy, using terms like "explosive" to describe the offensive production.

Boy, have these people been starved for action.

Five touchdowns in 14 drives probably doesn't qualify as incendiary at most programs around the country, but in Boulder, where the Bufs scored just 196 points in 2006, it's more than enough to get people talking.

The Bufs racked up 609 yards of total offense, including 332 yards rushing on 60 attempts. The scrimmage lasted just under two hours and included 122 plays — 103 from scrimmage.

Senior linebacker and tri-captain Jordon Dizon said the difference between the offense now as compared to last season is "night and day."

"Last year they were so predictable. They could only run so many plays. They were limited in what they could do," Dizon said. "This year, they opened it up. They had four months to learn what they can learn and they're finally doing what they can do. It's nice to see them actually run a whole bunch of different plays and different schemes."

Redshirt freshman quarter-back Cody Hawkins emerged still holding a slight lead in the battle for the starting job with junior Nick Nelson, who suffered a bruised hand on one of the most exciting plays of the day.

Nelson scrambled to his right on the play trying to avoid on-rushing Dizon. He heaved the ball down field just as Dizon clobbered him and he hit his hand on Dizon's helmet. X-rays were negative.

Freshman wide receiver Josh Smith was on the other end of the pass, hauling it in and diving into the end zone in celebration. The act drew a 15-yard penalty and the ire of coaches.

"He definitely brings a bunch of excitement to what we're doing," coach Dan Hawkins said of Smith. "If it was the Dan Hawkins league, you could jump and shout and do all the gyrations you wanted. But it's not the Dan Hawkins league. The rules are the rules."

Smith said after Hawkins got in his face he wanted to get back to the end zone to show he knew how to handle himself. He almost did twice, but one pass fell just out of his reach and another was called back

on a penalty.

"As coach Hawkins said, the rule is the rule and you've got to act like you've been there before," Smith said. "I'm just an excitable guy. I have to learn to control those emotions."

Smith wasn't the only wide receiver to have a big day. Junior Patrick Williams caught a pair of touchdown passes from Cody Hawkins.

CU did not release official individual statistics because coaches believe it gives opponents too much advance information, sports information director Dave Plati said.

Cody Hawkins led the Buffs to three scores and looked calm and comfortable directing the offense. Nelson led the team to one score but also threw an interception to safety Ryan Walters. Nelson said he felt like Hawkins performed better overall.

"Cody did have a real good game today," Nelson said. "He's pushing me and hopefully I'm pushing him. So I think it's pretty close still."

Cody Hawkins said the first scrimmage this year felt entirely different than the first go-around last fall. He joked that he was able to correctly call plays in the huddle. He also downplayed any perceived advantage he might have in the quarterback race at this point.

"I think today some things went my way, but Nick definitely made some great plays," he said. "He had a couple protection busts that we're going to work on to improve. I was just on the good end of that.

"He made that one throw to Josh, which was an unbelievable play. That was a senior-quarterback, starting-caliber type play because he got blasted by Jordon. "

Offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich will make the final decision about the starting job and he called the competition healthy.

"Both guys are making plays," he said. "Both played fairly free and confident today. In a situation like this, guys start to press or tighten up and start to press or push or force, and that didn't really happen today, except for maybe once. "

Smith and the quarterbacks stole the headlines, but the running game was the real success story. Running backs Hugh Charles and Byron Ellis looked solid in their roles as 1A and 1B on the depth chart. But underclassmen such as Demetrius Sumler, Kevin Moyd and Brian Lockridge also ran hard.

Freshman wide receiver Kendrick Celestine also scored a touchdown on a reverse play near the goal line.

"In general for a young untested offensive line, and, to some degree, some untested backs, I thought they hammered it up in there pretty good," coach Hawkins said.

Scoring summary

Kendrick Celestine 5 run (Kevin Eberhart kick)

Josh Smith 54 pass from Nick Nelson (Eberhart kick)

Patrick Williams 8 pass from Cody Hawkins (Eberhart kick)

Jake Behrens 4 pass from Matt Ballenger (Eberhart kick)

Eberhart 48 yard field goal blocked (Terrence Wheatley)

Williams 12 pass from Hawkins (Eberhart kick)



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Frosh Maiava gets time with top unit

By Kyle Ringo
Monday, August 13, 2007

It wasn't a surprise to see a true freshman offensive lineman playing with the No. 1 offense Sunday morning at the first scrimmage of Colorado fall football practice.

It was a surprise that the lineman in question was Kai Maiava.

The 6-foot-1, 295-pound Hawaiian, who plays with long locks of hair hanging out the back of his helmet, was one of the last additions to the 2007 recruiting class. In fact, Maiava might not be in Boulder now if another recruit hadn't decided to attend another school.

Maiava was playing guard Sunday in a starting line that included Tyler Polumbus and Edwin Harrison at tackles, Daniel Sanders at center and Devin Head at the other guard. He also played center at times with the second-string line.

"He's done a very nice job. He's a great kid, trying to learn and very competitive," offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said. "He's kind of the guy who I guess if you're saying a surprise guy, he would probably be it."

Coach Dan Hawkins said coaches are still a long way from identifying starters on the offensive line or even the core group of seven or eight players who are most likely to play this season. Hawkins said getting Erick Faatagi, Wes Palazzi and Keenan Stevens back into the mix this week will help give the coaches a better idea of where they stand.

Faatagi, Palaazi and Stevens have missed most of the first week of fall drills wrapping up their summer academic commitments.

Maiava said he is excited by his success to this point and he hopes to be able to play right away. He said he feels more comfortable at guard right now because he needs work on his shotgun snapping.

"I like how everybody pushes me out here," Maiava said. "I just try to follow their lead and do what I can to help."

Growing pains

Senior linebacker Jordon Dizon said he was disappointed with the overall performance of the defense Sunday, but he also said the team is going to have some missed assignments playing so many young players.

"We had a lot of breakdowns, but we had a lot of young guys out there," Dizon said. "That was our problem. It was just little things and little details that screwed us up."

The Buffs did come up with one interception by free safety Ryan Walters and at least one fumble recovery. They also sacked the quarterback five times.

WR Williams coming around

Junior wide receiver Patrick Williams might be feeling the pressure to perform with talented freshmen on the roster behind him.

Something has definitely ignited a fire inside him

Williams caught two touchdown passes in Sunday's scrimmage and has made tough catches during the first week of camp that he might have dropped during training camps of the past.

"He's made more plays in the last two days of practice than he did all of last year," offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said. "That's competition."

The Daily Hawkism

"You've got to transcend your team to this group of guys that are really trying to chase perfection and really have a zeal for attaining that mythical or that higher level of performance. If you've got a group that is going, 'We didn't score. We stunk.' or 'We scored a lot. We're awesome.' Then you're missing it."

Notable

Matt DiLallo punted twice for a 45.5-yard average. Tom Suazo also punted twice. One was blocked and the other went 54 yards. ... Defensive tackle Brandon Nicolas and tight end Tyson Devree did not participate because of injuries but both are expected back this week. ... The team committed five penalties in the scrimmage, but two came on the first two plays. ... The Buffs are scheduled to practice twice today: 9:30-11 a.m. in the morning, and in the afternoon from 4-6:30 p.m.



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COLORADO

Senior Charles cuts to the chase

With coaches' prodding, RB gaining an aggressive approach

By Tom Kensler Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder - Teammates and coaches shouldn't be surprised Colorado senior tailback Hugh Charles earned his pilot's license as a sophomore in high school. They always knew he could fly.

Regarded as one of the fastest players on the team about 4.4 seconds after he arrived in Boulder in 2004, the 5-foot-8, 190-pound Charles can scoot. But CU coaches would like to see him stay a bit more grounded this season.

Less prancing. Less dancing.

It's a wonder Charles can fall asleep at night, what with the coaches' "one cut and go" ringing in his ears.

Nobody called it "the doghouse" early last season, but Charles couldn't seem to escape from a funk. Admittedly, he sulked a bit when first-year coach Dan Hawkins announced that the starting job at tailback was open to competition early in August drills. Charles got just five carries (for 35 yards) in an embarrassing, season-opening loss to Montana State and didn't start the following week against Colorado

State, although an elbow injury suffered in the opener might have contributed to the brief demotion.

Charles earned good marks for his 109 rushing yards against Arizona State, but contributed to the heartbreak against Georgia the following week by fumbling early in the fourth quarter of the 14-13 road loss.

Although he finished as CU's leading rusher (779 yards), Charles would rather forget his junior year.

"I didn't get down last year, but there was a lot of confusion with everybody new coming in," Charles said.

Coaches never questioned Charles' work ethic or his attitude but wondered about his heart. Did he have the all-out desire to excel? Teammates couldn't help but notice.

"We saw a few plays last year," senior offensive tackle Tyler Polumbus said, "where Hugh would have an opportunity for a huge play and then he'd get called out by the coaches because he'd go out of bounds instead of taking on the defender to get 5 extra yards.

"We've seen a huge difference in Hugh this year. He's just a lot more aggressive."

Emotion in motion

Hawkins calls it "passion," the passion to perform at one's fullest.

"I'm old school, a Walter Payton fan," Hawkins

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explained, "and there was a guy who ran with extreme passion every single play, regardless of what the score was, regardless of what his team did. That's what great backs have. So we're trying to get Hugh to have a tremendous amount of passion every time he has the ball.

"With all great backs, if you block it for 12 (yards), they get 25. We want him to be one of those guys. We don't want to block it for 15 and him to get 15. We want him to put his shoulder down. We want him to get some extra yards. We want him to burst.

"We want him to be an athlete."

Charles had a lot of trouble adjusting to the new staff last year, running backs coach Darian Hagan said. The staff began to see things click during the second half of the season.

"In the Texas Tech game, after he fumbled, I was up in his grill a little bit and challenged him," Hawkins said. "The next time he touched the ball, he broke some tackles, outran some guys. He did above and beyond the normal.

"We're trying to get him to aspire to be that guy. To his credit so far in camp, he's been that."

Charles has never had trouble getting to the outside, but coaches say he really turned the corner during spring drills. Afterward, he was named the most improved offensive back of the spring and was bestowed with an Iron Buffalo Award, given to a player at each position for hard work, dedication, toughness and accomplishments in the weight room.

Let's get physical

Hagan made it his pet project during the spring and summer to turn Charles into a more physical runner. They watched hours of game film together.

"At times, Hugh just relies on speed," Hagan said. "I tell him, at this level, everybody can run."

The starting quarterback in Colorado's run to the 1990 national championship, Hagan showed tape of a former teammate.

"We watch Eric Bieniemy's film," Charles said, referring to CU's all-time leading rusher. "Coach Hagan wants me to be an aggressive back like him. If you want to be the best, you have to watch the best."

Though not as powerful as the barrel-chested Bieniemy, Charles has enough strength to make defenders pay. There's no denying his talent.

"Hugh is a very scary individual when he has the ball in his hands and he's across from you," said teammate George Hypolite, a junior defensive tackle. "He has made some cuts in practice that I just went, 'How?'"

Charles hopes to become the seventh player in CU history to lead the team in rushing three times, the last being Herchell Troutman (1995-97). Charles gained 842 yards in 2005 (sixth most for a Buffs sophomore) under Gary Barnett.

Hagan will be disappointed if Charles doesn't reach 1,000 yards this season. That kind of production could take pressure off the new quarterback (Cody

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Hawkins or Nick Nelson), young receivers and even the CU defense by controlling the clock.

"Being a senior really puts it in my head that I'm going to be the guy this season," Charles said. "I really have to make something happen. I have to prove it to myself and prove it to the fans that I'm here for a reason. I really want it."

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

Carrying the load

Top returning Big 12 rushers (2006 statistics):

Player ... Team ... Class ... Games ... Att ... Yds ... Avg ... TD

1. Tony Temple ... Missouri ... Sr. ... 13 ... 193 ... 1,063 ... 5.5 ... 7

2. Shannon Woods ... Texas Tech ... Jr. ... 13 ... 152 ... 926 ... 6.1 ... 10

3. Mike Goodson ... Texas A&M ... Soph. ... 13 ... 127 ... 847 ... 6.7 ... 4

4. Jamaal Charles ... Texas Jr. ... 12 ... 156 ... 831 ... 5.3 ... 7

5. Dantrell Savage ... Oklahoma St. ... Sr. ... 11 ... 126 ... 820 ... 6.5 ... 8

6. Hugh Charles ... Colorado ... Sr. ... 12 ... 139 ... 779 ... 5.6 ... 1

This article has been corrected in this online archive. Originally, due to a reporting error, it erroneously included running back Brandon Jackson as the No. 2 returning rusher in the Big 12 Conference. He left Nebraska a year early and is now a rookie with the Green Bay Packers.

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CU coaches feel good after scrimmages

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder — Colorado defensive coordinator Ron Collins could joke today that reviewing the game film of Sunday's scrimmage was like sitting through a horror show — what with the offense getting 609 yards and five touchdowns on 102 offensive plays against his guys.

Rather than hide, Collins was more upbeat today than anyone could have imagined.

"We've got to do better on the run sets, which is correctable," Collins explained. "We played a lot of young kids. Our freshman defensive linemen played about 60-some snaps. So that was a factor.

"When the first-team guys were in there, we gave up the touchdown (54-yard pass from Nick Nelson to Josh Smith) on the scramble. But other than that, it was not a bad scrimmage for those guys."

Breakdowns can be corrected.

"The beautiful thing is, when you watch the film it was all mental mistakes," junior defensive tackle

George Hypolite said. "You can't coach effort. You can never do that. But you can fix a guy by lining him up in the right gap or do the right techniques."

Many of the yards were gained by the first-team offense against the second-string defense. Coach Dan Hawkins wanted his offense to gain some confidence.

"I will say this, the offense did a great job," Collins said. "I'm not taking away anything from those guys. They did a great job with the play-action pass and the running game."

For both sides of scrimmage, Hawkins said the game film "was kind of like we thought. It's never as good as you think. It's never as bad as you think.

"There are a lot of little details to iron out. With the structure and the way we did it, and having more of a game kind of thing, I think they did pretty well."

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