



Solder casts long shadow for Buffs

Nearly 6-9, tight end turning lots of heads in camp

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, August 15, 2007

It might be the question most often asked by newcomers in the gallery at Colorado football training camp.

Who is No. 92?

And it's no wonder Nate Solder is getting so much attention. He's hard to miss these days both because of his size and his ability to make plays.

The redshirt freshman tight end is 6-83/4 and 265 pounds. He runs the 40-yard dash in 4.8 seconds. When he's sprinting, he gobbles up nearly five yards of turf with every stride.

"I could probably be faster if I worked on it a little," he said.

When his mental maturation in the game catches up to his NFL body, he's going to be a force, especially if he adds a little fierce to his game.

Quarterbacks Cody Hawkins and Nick Nelson can throw passes his way 10 feet in the air and he doesn't have to jump very high to snatch them.

Hawkins is 5-foot-11 but doesn't even look that big sometimes when he's behind his linemen. Meanwhile, Solder casts the longest shadow on the roster. When the two connect it's like Mighty Mouse throwing touchdown passes to Big Bird.

"The dude is almost 6-9. He's the tallest guy on our team," Hawkins said. "It's always nice having the Eiffel Tower in your offense. Everybody talks about my size issues, but Nate is a guy who no matter where he is, all the quarterbacks see him."

Despite a plethora of depth, talent and experience in front of him on the depth chart, Solder will be on the field this fall catching passes, blocking in the running game and playing a lot of special teams.

Defensive ends who line up across from Solder and tackles such as Tyler Polumbus (6-8) or Ryan Miller (6-8) might just want to take their footballs and go home. It's a lot of man to get around on the way to the quarterback.

"He's definitely going to see time," tight ends coach Kent Riddle said. "He's made a lot of strides in the last week. He is gaining confidence and the more confidence in his assignments, his technique, the faster he can play. He's starting to do that. He's really made a huge jump in the last week."

Solder entered camp fourth on the depth chart at tight end behind seniors Tyson Devree and Joe Sanders and sophomore Riar Geer, who was the team's leading receiver last season. When the first depth chart — or list of contributors as coach Dan Hawkins likes to call it — is released next week, Solder might have taken a step or two up the ladder.

Even if he doesn't, he still figures to see regular playing time because this coaching staff likes to use a lot of different players and packages in each game.

"I need to get my plays down pat to where I can do it without thinking about it and just go for it," Solder said.

Conventional wisdom suggests that Solder will eventually become an offensive tackle in the mold of former CU tight end Matt Lepsis, who has made a pretty fair living in the NFL for more than a decade now with the Denver Broncos.

Solder, who is soft spoken but doesn't play that way, is fine with making that move when and if the time comes.

"Well, best thing for the team. However that goes," he said. "I don't think that's in the plans right now."

He is practicing on most of the Buffs' special teams units, which are also coached by Riddle and figures to make an immediate impact there. If a big paw reaches up from the middle of the line a few times this season and denies an opposing field goal kicker, it shouldn't be a surprise if it's Solder.

"When he knows what to do, he's hard to stop," Riddle said. "He's a big powerful person."

Notable

CU officials said they had sold 31,059 tickets for the season opener against Colorado State as of Tuesday evening. That number includes student tickets. Officials said the school has 6,400 tickets remaining in its allotment for the game and 1,500 tickets left for students. The season-ticket count had reached 21,609 Tuesday, but that number includes tickets given to sponsors. About 6,300 tickets remain available for the Florida State game on Sept. 15. ... The Buffs are scheduled for two practices today: 9-11:30 a.m. and 8-10 p.m.



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Paintball replaces practice

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By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder - Saying his football players needed to regain their legs after a week of two-a-days, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins canceled Tuesday's only scheduled workout.

Replacing the practice was a trip to a paintball center.

"They've worked really hard, they really have," Hawkins said. "That doesn't mean you back off of them. (But) you've got to be smart and temper it a little bit.

"It's a long season. We want to make sure they're fresh when the first game starts (Sept. 1 against Colorado State at Invesco Field at Mile High)."

The public is invited to watch practices until the gates close Sunday.

A Saturday scrimmage, scheduled for 10 a.m. at Folsom Field, is open to season-ticket holders only.

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CU scrimmage to decide QB

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder — Colorado's starting quarterback will be announced sometime after Saturday's intrasquad scrimmage and Cody Hawkins has pulled ahead, CU coach Dan Hawkins said this morning following a 2-1/2-hour practice.

Cody Hawkins, a 5-foot-11, 190-pound redshirt freshman and the coach's son, has been battling junior-college transfer Nick Nelson (6-1, 225).

Cody Hawkins took more repetitions today with the No. 1 offense.

"Cody's in a little bit of a lead," Dan Hawkins said. "We'll probably decide officially after the scrimmage (on Saturday) for the ease of everybody."

Dan Hawkins and offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said they still consider the competition to be a race.

"It's still a healthy, viable, good situation," Helfrich said.

Not taking anything for granted, Cody Hawkins said today he thought things were going well and he

looked forward to the scrimmage, as are all the players.

Helfrich said the difference between Cody Hawkins and Nelson has been consistency.

"Cody has been very consistent," Helfrich said. "He's been practicing really well. He's made a few more plays here and there. And has taken care of the ball."

"Nick has been doing fine. He had a good practice today, after pressing a little bit the day before yesterday. He made some very uncharacteristic mistakes (Monday), trying to do a little too much."

"We just have to work those things out of him and keep this thing competitive."

Saturday's scrimmage is scheduled at 10 a.m. in Folsom Field. Helfrich said a decision would be made later this week whether to give Cody Hawkins more snaps in the scrimmage.

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

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A helpful Tip for Polumbus

CU lineman remembers late grandfather

By Patrick Ridgell

The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — Colorado senior left tackle Tyler Polumbus is thinking he'll have some extra help this season.

His grandfather, Emile Anthony "Tip" Polumbus, died June 10 at age 94. Tip was a successful petroleum engineer and businessman within the oil industry who became a well-known and friendly face around the CU football program.

"When I told (fellow lineman) Edwin Harrison that my grandfather died, he said, 'You mean the one that was traveling to all of our games?'" Tyler said. "It hit him as much as it hit me. It was a really tough loss. He was a great man.

"I'm always thinking about him. His picture is the first and last thing I see as I'm walking in and out of my house. ... It's important, and I know he's looking (from) up there smiling. And he's excited to see me for my senior year."

Two of Tip Polumbus' sons competed in varsity athletics at CU. Tad Polumbus, Tyler's father, lettered in football, basketball and golf in 1965 and 1966. He made 14 career receptions for the Buffs. Gary, Tyler's uncle, lettered three times in golf and made two trips to the NCAA Championships. Tyler said Tip traveled to many of his games, including CU's two most recent bowls, the 2005 Champs Sports Bowl in Orlando, Fla., and the Houston Bowl in Texas in 2004.

"I guarantee you he was the only 94-year-old traveling to our bowl games," Tyler said. "He was just as big of a face around here as anybody. ... He was so important to me and my teammates."

Ticket sales: CU officials reported Tuesday afternoon that a total of 21,609 season tickets have been sold so far for the upcoming football season. That exceeds 2006's total season ticket sales of 20,450.

This is CU's busiest selling time for football tickets. Athletic director Mike Bohn said last month that he hoped the department could sell 23,000 season tickets. It hasn't reached that level since 2004. The 2007 home schedule includes dates with Florida State, Oklahoma, Missouri and Nebraska.

For the home opener, Sept. 15 against Florida State, CU has sold 34,888 public tickets. There are 6,300 tickets unsold for the game.

CU has sold more than 31,000 tickets for its season opener, Sept. 1 against Colorado State at Invesco Field in Denver. There are 6,440 remaining unsold in CU's allotment for the game.

Music man: Walk-on long snapper Austin Bisnow has made his second record. It's called "Ain't Logical."

Mastered at Bernie Grundman Mastering, where Bisnow said artists such as Alanis Morissette and Elton John have worked, "Ain't Logical" contains 15 songs written by Bisnow, who goes by Austin Paul on the disc.

He sang and played the piano to make the record, and he describes the music as "pop." Former Washington Redskins offensive lineman Tre Johnson raps on the record.

Bisnow, a redshirt freshman from Washington, D.C., said the disc is being manufactured and should be ready soon. He

said he'll try to sell it in Boulder and get it played on local radio.

"I might try at the book store," he said. "I might give one to every one of my teammates and coaches to thank them for their support."

Extra points: CU resumes camp today after taking most of Tuesday off. The Buffs are scheduled to practice from 9 to 11:30 a.m. and 8 to 10 p.m. ... CU coach Dan Hawkins said the reason for tonight's late practice is to help prepare for the late kickoff against Florida State. That game starts at 8 p.m. ... CU will hold a scrimmage and Fan Appreciation Day at 10 a.m. Saturday at Folsom Field. It'll be the final open practice of camp.

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