



Bufs won't take RedHawks lightly

Hawkins says CU must play better than last week or face another loss

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, September 22, 2007

In losing 12 of the first 15 football games of Dan Hawkins' tenure as head coach, the Colorado football team has experienced it all.

The Buffs have lost the no-hopers just as everyone expected them to. They have come close to pulling off big upsets only to drop the ball when it mattered most. They've lost in triple overtime, lost at home and on the road, lost to the ranked and unranked, lost to rivals and strangers, lost because they couldn't pass and lost because they couldn't run.

And going back to that first day for Hawkins on the sideline in Folsom Field one year and three weeks ago, they lost to the one team they were definitely supposed to beat.

Not since Division I-AA Montana State visited Boulder to kickoff the 2006 season have the Buffs been favored by as wide a margin as they are today with 1-2 Miami (Ohio) in town from the Mid- American Conference.

CU has the same record as the RedHawks but oddsmakers made the Buffs a two-touchdown favorite over an opponent with a history of pulling off upsets in similar situations.

A week ago as the Buffs prepared to face Florida State and the winningest coach in major college football history, Hawkins spoke of giving the same respect to each opponent whether they are favored or not.

"I would never disrespect or overlook Johnny Schaboiken,"he said.

With that in mind, Hawkins has emphasized the point over and over again this week that the Buffs have to do more than show up this afternoon (1:30 p.m., no television). Considering everything this team has been through over the past 13 months and the fact that it seems to have lost the heart to run the football, it seems like something Hawkins shouldn't have to mention.

"How can you be 1-2 and think you're the prohibitive favorite?" Hawkins said. "I don't see how that can happen, and I don't think our guys will think that way because I certainly don't.

"So I don't think there is any reason for us to think all we have to do is show up. I think we know we have to go out and play better then we've been playing or we'll get beat again."

The Buffs have spent the week trying to find answers in the running game which has produced a total of

five yards on 51 carries the past two games. Hawkins and running backs coach Darian Hagan have publicly criticized senior Hugh Charles and redshirt freshman Demetrius Sumler for not running hard and missing the few holes that have been created by the offensive line.

Competition was re-opened during practices this week and fans shouldn't be surprised to see more of true freshman Brian Lockridge, who made his debut last week but was equally unimpressive.

Offensive linemen also have been forced to prove they belong on the field again, and it's possible true freshmen Ryan Miller or Kai Maiava could see the first action of their careers against the RedHawks. The same five linemen have played all 212 snaps so far this season.

The quarterbacks on both sides could be very busy when they take the field in the first contest with a mid-day start time this season for the Buffs.

CU starter Cody Hawkins is coming off the first 300-yard passing day of his career. His 54 attempts last week were the second most in school history and could become the norm until the running game finds its legs.

The RedHawks turn to sophomore Daniel Raudabaugh as their starter today because senior Mike Kokal has struggled so far this season.

Raudabaugh has played in the past two games and has thrown for 462 yards, three touchdowns and three interceptions. Raudabaugh is more of a prototypical pocket passer while Kokal sometimes made plays on the run.

Miami's new starter will face a tough CU defense that allowed just 16 points to Florida State last week and stopped the Seminoles and 12 of 13 third-down conversions. The Buffs should be even stronger now with defensive lineman Chris Perri eligible after serving a three-game suspension for off-field incidents.

Cody Hawkins will face a Miami defense that has given up at least 41 points in each of the past two games. However, one of those contests was a 41-35 loss at Minnesota, which was also a heavy favorite.



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Miami (Ohio) at Colorado matchups

CU RUN OFFENSE VS. MU RUN DEFENSE — So the RedHawks are giving up nearly 200 yards a game on the ground and have surrendered five rushing touchdowns. That's not enough to convince us to give the sluggish Buffs the edge here. CU couldn't be much worse in the running game right now. The Buffs should have an advantage in speed and strength against this opponent, but we'll believe it when we see it. This team lacks anything resembling consistency on the ground right now. The Buffs have rushed for five yards — yep, five yards — on 51 carries in the past two games. **Edge: EVEN.**

CU PASS OFFENSE VS. MU PASS DEFENSE — The RedHawks are giving up 255 yards per game and 10.8 yards per catch along with seven touchdown passes in three games against mostly inferior competition compared with what they will face today. Those numbers will continue today. The Buffs are coming around in the passing game. As bad as the line has been blocking in the run game, it has been pretty decent protecting quarterback Cody Hawkins, who is coming off his first 300-yard passing day. Today might be his second. The RedHawks have only one interception and two sacks to their credit. **Edge: CU.**

MU RUN OFFENSE VS. CU RUN DEFENSE — Miami has run for 4.1 yards per carry and is averaging 131 yards per game, but they face an improving defense today and starting tailback Andre Bratton is out with a knee injury. The Buffs have given up a few big plays on the ground, but otherwise have been strong here. CU gets inside linebacker Michael Sipili back and will combine his talent with that of the nation's leading tackler — Jordon Dizon. CU also adds another healthy defensive lineman to the mix which should allow veterans such as George Hypolite and Brandon Nicolas more time to rest so they are fresh when they're on the field. **Edge: CU.**

MU PASS OFFENSE VS. CU PASS DEFENSE — This is where the RedHawks will have to win the game. Miami sophomore quarterback Daniel Raudabaugh has played well in a reserve role the past two games. This week he becomes the starter. The Buffs have made first-timers look like studs in the past, but we're guessing they've grown beyond that. Expect the RedHawks to throw between 40 and 50 times. The Buffs gave up one first down on 13 third downs last week to Florida State. That's pretty good. CU needs to generate more of a pass rush from its defensive ends, but the Buffs are getting to the quarterback an average of three times per game so far. With a cornerback like Terrence Wheatley on the field, the Buffs should be able to lock down Miami's best receiver Armand Robinson. **Edge: CU.**

SPECIAL TEAMS — Dan Hawkins says the RedHawks are good in the kicking game. The statistics say they're about even with the Buffs. CU has to be wondering about place-kicker Kevin Eberhart after the fifth-year senior missed a pair of very makeable kicks last week. But Miami's Trevor Cook has made just four of eight attempts this season. CU could get a big play in the return game this week because it should have an advantage in speed for the first time since the season opener. The Buffs must improve in punting. They are averaging 34.3 net yards per punt — 73rd in the nation. **Edge: EVEN.**

PREDICTION — CU 38-10

— **Kyle Ringo**



Woelk: CU needs to capitalize on get-well game

By Neill Woelk

Saturday, September 22, 2007

It wouldn't be right to call it a breather — there's no such thing for the Colorado Buffaloes these days. Teams that go 2-10 over the course of a season and follow it up with a 1-2 start the next year aren't afforded the luxury of counting any game as a gimme.

But after an opener against their in-state rival and two games against upper-tier BCS conference schools, the Buffs have a chance today to fix some of the problems they've encountered thus far.

That should be CU's goal today against the Miami RedHawks.

Forget the score. The Buffs need to find some legs for their running game, give their defense a chance to produce another solid outing and correct the glitches that have popped up on special teams.

If the Buffs do that, the final score will take care of itself.

If not, today's game against Miami is an opportunity wasted.

No disrespect to the RedHawks here, but this is a team the Buffs should beat. Oddsmakers have installed CU as a two-touchdown favorite, and there's usually a reason for such a spread.

The 1-2 RedHawks are coming off a 47-10 loss to Cincinnati, they're starting a new quarterback, their leading rusher is injured and won't play and their defense has given up 88 points in the last two games.

That's the perfect recipe for a get-well game — and the Buffs need to cook one up today, their last chance to do so before they head into the Big 12 schedule.

Somebody mention the league schedule?

Yes, that is indeed No. 4 Oklahoma on the horizon, a team that has a Fiesta Bowl-sized chip on one shoulder and an NCAA sanction-sized block on the other.

Dan Hawkins' Buffs would be well-advised to work out the kinks, pick up some momentum and have a little confidence in their pockets before the Sooners hit Folsom Field.

Fact is, the Buffs haven't had too many "complete" games in Hawkins' tenure. You can count them on one hand and have a couple of fingers and a thumb left over.

Too many times, they've walked off the field at game's end lamenting their mistakes.

Today, they need to take care of business and leave the mistakes to the other guys. Play well, get a win

and get ready for the Big 12 schedule.

There doesn't appear to be much of a chance of the Buffs being overconfident. As Hawk noted earlier in the week, 1-2 teams don't have much reason to be cocky about anything.

There are also plenty of players on this Buff squad that remember the 2006 season opener, when they fell flat against Div. I-AA Montana State.

A wish list for today?

Start with some semblance of a running game. The Buffs did show glimpses of being able to run the ball in the opener against Colorado State, but since then, have largely been running in place — or even backward.

Along that same vein, it would be nice to see one of the running backs — Hugh Charles, Demetrius Sumler, Brian Lockridge, take your pick — establish himself as the clear No. 1 guy.

And, while we're at it, more than a few folks out there would love to see some of the young freshmen offensive linemen make their debut.

Defensively, we know we're going to see plenty of Jordon Dizon, a young man who might be playing as well as any Buff defender in recent history. Throw in a few turnovers from the defense and eliminate the big plays, and we'll be happy.

Finally, a little more consistency from the passing game. Cody Hawkins is improving, and the number of dropped balls was reduced last week — but a few long drives that produce some touchdowns rather than field goals would nice.

And, lest we forget, a win.



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College football notebook, September 22

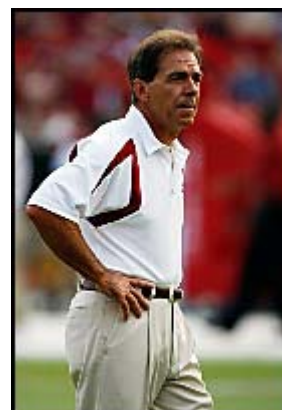
September 22, 2007

CU

Faster, with patience

Freshman tailback **Brian Lockridge**'s most recent timing in the 40-yard dash was a 4.45-second effort a couple of years ago. Now, Lockridge says he's "way faster."

But that's not the key to him being productive for the Buffaloes. Lockridge says that in his debut last week, against Florida State, he was "getting too fast up to the line and missing the holes. I put that on me. This week, I have to be more patient." But that runs contrary to his "Energizer Bunny" personality. He admits to doing "everything fast . . . But there's some things you can't rush; you've just got to calm down" and wait for a running lane to appear.



Nick Saban

Front and center

Depending on how Miami opens offensively, sophomore linebacker **Michael Sipili** could move directly into CU's starting lineup in his first game back after a three-game suspension.

Linebackers coach **Brian Cabral** doesn't have a lot of options. Junior **R.J. Brown**, who took Sipili's place, is not expected to play today because of a concussion, and freshman **Nate Vaionmunga** (mouth) is listed as day to day.

Cabral believes Sipili has "matured a lot" after his arrest for a summer brawling episode. "I think he understands responsibility, what that means and the consequences . . . he fully felt that weight," Cabral said. "I'm hoping this is going to pay off for a lifetime."

The 300 Club

Quarterback **Cody Hawkins**' 306 yards passing against Florida State represented his first climb above the 300-yard mark as a Division I-A starter. He would have taken a victory instead.

"When you lose like that (16-6) . . . it doesn't really matter what an individual accomplishment is," he said. "I would have rather have thrown for 5 yards with four interceptions and won the game."

Still, Hawkins and the CU passing component impressed. He called it "something to improve on. It was good for the passing game. (The Seminoles) were dropping eight (in coverage) and they're a heck of a defense . . .

"But we're a total offense, and it's our job to score points and we're not doing that. It's nice to say you had a bunch of statistical triumphs, but that's not good enough."

Numbers game

212 **offensive snaps** have been taken by CU's starting five offensive linemen. Through three games, no substitutes have played. That could change today.