



# For Buffs, Cody Hawkins, beauty only pigskin deep

## CU knows secret to looking good is no turnovers

By B.G. Brooks

Monday, August 25, 2008

If Cody Hawkins needed an offseason reminder about establishing his priority for the 2008 football season, it came in the form of a T-shirt that could be earned by his fellow quarterbacks and other skill-position players at the University of Colorado.

As winter settled in and spring practices loomed, reducing turnovers, recalled Hawkins' best bud, receiver Scotty McKnight, came to be a daily emphasis.

"We had a group that, if you didn't turn the ball over, you got a T-shirt that said on the back, 'It's All About The Ball,' " McKnight said. "We were really focused on keeping the ball, (and) as everyone knows, that wins or loses games.

"It's been a huge emphasis. As players, we carried it through summer workouts, in the seven-on-sevens. You could tell Cody was really focused on not turning the ball over, as well as all the other quarterbacks and receivers."

Hawkins, who will open Sunday against Colorado State in the Rocky Mountain Showdown (5:30 p.m., FSN, Invesco Field at Mile High), emerged from his first regular season as a Division I starter with record-setting freshman numbers: passing yards (2,693), attempts (424), completions (239) and touchdown passes (19).

Oh, yes - and interceptions (15).

With one more interception, Hawkins would have set a dubious school single-season record. But as his debut season neared its conclusion, he settled in (or down) and finished the regular season by throwing 70 consecutive passes (four touchdowns) without one ending up in the wrong hands.

Then, in CU's Independence Bowl loss to Alabama (30-24), Hawkins threw three touchdown passes but suffered a pair of picks, giving him a 22-17 touchdowns-to-interceptions ratio and planting him at No. 80 in NCAA Division I-A in pass-efficiency rating (119.8) and No. 9 in the Big 12.

But offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mark Helfrich said what he has seen from Hawkins through spring drills and preseason camp has been encouraging - with the exception of a second-scrimmage interception.

Overall, Helfrich said, Hawkins' timing "is a lot better" and he is "practicing really well right now."

Also, Hawkins has taken football's "bigger, faster, stronger" mantra to heart. He's now a couple of rib-eyes above 190 pounds, says he's sprouted to 5-foot-11 1/2 and can run himself and the Buffs offense out of a jam if necessary.

"I'm not trying to be Tim Tebow," he said of Florida's Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback and close friend. "I'm trying to be Cody Hawkins - just be the best I can be, and, hopefully, that's the best for the Buffalo program."

CU's offensive game plan will never exceed Hawkins' capabilities, meaning he never will be mistaken for a dual-threat quarterback. But, he said, "Last year, when I had to run the ball, I did fairly well (he finished with minus-11 rushing yards, with a long run of 12 yards and 97 yards lost in sacks).

"Whenever I've been asked to do things, I've been capable of doing them. Nobody on the staff is going to ask somebody to do something they can't. They're going to put us in position to succeed."

As CU's starter in 2007, Hawkins accepted a quarterback's leadership role, but he did so with a resume he believed was lacking in one critical area - experience.

"I knew the quarterback had to be a leader," he said. "But it was tough for me when it came to the aspect of having to call somebody out. . . . It was tough to call out guys who had been here for five years and tell them they need to do something when they've been here through so much and been here for so long.

"I tried to focus on just the physical aspect of leadership - show up at every workout and work very hard. I think now I'm in a much better (situation), where I can call guys out and get guys here to throw extra. I can call guys up to watch some extra film, I can pump guys up. I think I have a much better gauge for that."

To McKnight, the biggest change in Hawkins has been in his comfort level with his teammates and how he has been accepted.

"Obviously, it's a big jump from your freshman to your sophomore season and your first year playing," he said. "I think he's got a lot more confidence, more of a command of the offense and, this year, he's really got a leadership role - guys are looking to him to be a playmaker."

In 2007, he proved can be one. In 2008, he wants to do it more efficiently.

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# Ballenger, Hansen waiting in wings for Buffs at QB

By B.G. Brooks

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April departed, August arrived with no quarterback controversy and, in truth, not much competition at the University of Colorado.

That's no knock on the competitors lined up behind incumbent starter **Cody Hawkins**, who had the job firmly in hand when the Buffaloes ended spring practice. No surprise, but Hawkins transitioned smoothly to CU's version of the no-huddle spread.

But come spring drills 2009, offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach **Mark Helfrich** expects the competition at Hawkins' position to be ratcheted up several notches.

Current backup **Matt Ballenger**, a redshirt freshman, took a quantum leap during preseason camp and freshman **Tyler Hansen**, a redshirt candidate, is athletic and poised beyond his years. Plus, both run well - not a Hawkins strong suit in his first year as a starter, but not a major snag, either.

Running, Helfrich said, is "kind of an underrated part of (Hawkins') game. He's certainly not . . . a guy you can count on winning a game with his legs. But he's also a guy who's going to be a little more productive than you think with his legs.

"I don't think that's something we're going to design an entire game plan around, but he certainly has the capability to make that a part of it."

Missouri and Kansas, to name two Big 12 Conference North Division teams capitalizing on mobile quarterbacks, remind Helfrich what talented legs mean in a spread offense.

"I always think every offense is better suited for a guy who's a little more mobile, as long as he can still sling it," Helfrich said. "We still want to be able to throw the football efficiently, and I think there's a certain type of guy that requires."

But here's Helfrich's critical appraisal of the future and his quarterbacks: "You have to play to their strengths. . . . Cody sees the field well, starts in the right place almost all the time. You have to build on his strengths and build the game plan around that.

"(But) as we develop these other guys, Matt and Tyler, if their brand of our offense, so to speak, becomes more efficient than Cody, then they come to the fore. And that could certainly happen."

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CU vs. CSU

## Buff gets crash course in football

Scott tries to process volumes of information

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 08/26/2008 12:33:26 AM MDT

BOULDER — Classes began at the University of Colorado on Monday, but freshman tailback Darrell Scott already had been cramming for a month. With Sunday night's season opener against Colorado State looming as the first exam, Scott, like most newcomers, is trying to keep his head from spinning as he takes in so much, from so many directions.

That includes how to decipher X's and O's from an opponent's game film.

"I think it might be your junior year before you can do that on your own," Scott said of game preparation. "All the freshman running backs go in and watch film together."

Last winter, Scott was rated as high as the nation's No. 2 overall prospect for all positions by Internet recruiting sites. But while scratching his head as he tried to analyze video of CSU's defense, the fun-loving kid from Southern California must have realized this isn't high school anymore.

Colorado State, Scott has determined, looks big, fast and talented.

"And those guys, they're not going to give up," he said. "This is for bragging rights for the whole year. Everybody on the team talks about how hard they play."

Football is a quarterbacks' game, but eyes figure to be equally trained on the running backs Sunday at Invesco Field at Mile High (5:30 p.m., FSN). The unveiling of Scott, who is expected to come off the bench for the Buffaloes, is sure to create a buzz throughout the stadium. But there are other compelling issues, and plenty of questions to be answered, regarding the running attack of both teams.

How will new CSU coach Steve Fairchild use senior tailbacks Gartrell Johnson and Kyle Bell?

Is Johnson, who gained 957 yards in 2007 despite playing mostly fullback for the first five games, a classic late bloomer just coming into his own?

Will we see the Kyle Bell of old (1,288 yards in 2005 with 4.7 average) or last year's version that, coming off reconstructive knee surgery, managed just 3.8 yards per carry (for 691 yards)?

How well must CU sophomore Demetrius Sumler play to remain as the starter?

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## Colorado Football

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How many carries will Scott get, and can he break into the open field?

Can seldom-used CU junior Kevin Moyd take his excellent practices to the playing field?

How will the Buffs utilize freshman Rodney "Speedy" Stewart?

This much is clear: Colorado has more depth at tailback than during Dan Hawkins' first two seasons as head coach — enough to allow freshman tailback Ray Polk (rated the nation's 11th-best tailback prospect last winter by [Rivals.com](#)) to redshirt this season.

"(The depth) will give us a lot of options," said Sumler, who rushed for 335 yards on 100 carries (3.4) with four touchdowns in 2007 as Hugh Charles' backup. "We're going to be able to give the defenses a lot of different looks, a change of pace."

Sumler had his best game of last season in the 31-28 overtime victory over CSU, netting 85 yards on 16 carries with one TD. He believes the Buffs will have an advantage Sunday because Rams coaches have no game film on Scott or Stewart.

"It's definitely going to be an eye-opener for CSU when they see the speed of these young guys," Sumler said.

Hawkins and Hagan believe any element of surprise is overblown, especially in this situation. CU doesn't know what to expect from Fairchild, an NFL assistant for seven years before returning to his alma mater.

"I think there is going to be a lot of discovery on both sides on game

## Colorado State Football

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day," Hawkins said.

Even if Colorado State's schemes differ a bit this year they will still have those same battering Rams at tailback. Bell is 6-feet-2 and 231 pounds. Johnson goes 6-0, 227. The Buffs may not face another

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tandem all season with that size and strength. Bell rushed 40 times for 135 yards in last year's meeting.

"They're big bodies; you've got to wrap them up and get in front of them," Hawkins said.

Bell sounds as interested as anyone to see how CU's Scott fares in his college debut.

"It's a situation where a guy's got to prove himself," Bell said, when asked about Scott arriving with so much hype. "I'm sure he's talented. (But) physically, you have to be ready. You take as much beating as anyone on the field, if not more.

"And it's a big deal playing that first game at Invesco, in a rivalry game in front of so many people. That's something you can't see coming out of high school. You can't do that in fall camp. You can't simulate that."

*Staff writer Natalie Meisler contributed to this report.*

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## Three-deep tailbacks

*Colorado and Colorado State, who will play at Invesco Field at Mile High on Sunday night, are deep at running back:*

### Colorado

1. Demetrius Sumler, 5-feet-10, 220 pounds, So.: Top CU returnee with 335 yards on 100 carries in 2007.

2. Kevin Moyd, 5-7, 185, Jr.: Fourth-year player has only four career carries, but has looked good in August.

3. Darrell Scott, 6-1, 225, Fr.: Former prep All-American will "definitely be in the mix," coach Dan Hawkins says.

### Colorado State

1A. Gartrell Johnson, 6-0, 225, Sr.: Approached 1,000 yards (957) in 2007 despite being a sub for five games.

\*1B. Kyle Bell, 6-2, 234, Sr.: Among nation's best — 1,288 yards as a sophomore in 2005 — before blowing out a knee.

3. Mike Myers, 6-1, 207, Sr.: Yet another fifth-year senior, he's the Rams' change-of-pace speed back.

\*listed as co-starter on depth chart

*Tom Kensler, The Denver Post*

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