



# Bufs hurdle Eagles' upset bid

By Kyle Ringo

Saturday, September 6, 2008

The turning point on the field Saturday came late in the game when a diminutive cornerback leaped high to snatch victory out of thin air. But the mental and emotional change came at halftime when a group of seniors stepped forward in the locker room and said "enough is enough."

The Colorado Buffaloes looked well on their way to allowing another heavy underdog from the Big Sky Conference to walk into their stadium and smack them around at Folsom Field.

They spotted the Eastern Washington Eagles a double-digit lead with bad decision making and unforced errors, but unlike two years ago in that legendary defeat to Montana State, the Buffs executed adjustments, found some poise and rallied to a thrilling 31-24 win.

"Whew," coach Dan Hawkins said when asked for an opening statement postgame. "I told you guys they're a good football team, and they are. One of the things we always try to get our guys is not to get caught up in the decal on the side of the helmet."

The Buffs are 2-0 for the first time since 2005 and have 12 days to wait until a Thursday night home game against a West Virginia team that was unable to rally and avoid upset Saturday against East Carolina.

The Buffs credited their senior class, led by captains Patrick Williams, Daniel Sanders, Maurice Cantrell and Ryan Walters, for taking charge of a downtrodden locker room at intermission and not pointing fingers. CU trailed 21-7 at the time.

"They said, 'We're not out of this. Let's deal with the adversity, comeback, do what we know we can do and make some plays,'" wide receiver Scotty McKnight said. "Inevitably, that's what we did."

Colorado outscored EWU 24-3 in the second half and won the game in the final 2 minutes when junior Cha'pelle Brown intercepted Eastern Washington quarterback Matt Nichols and returned the ball 27 yards for a score in the south end zone. Thousands of students clad in gold T-shirts erupted in a frenzy of high-fives and jubilation.

Brown's play broke a 24-24 tie and gave CU its only lead of the day.

"Coach told us before that play when we went out there on defense, he said, 'Don't wait for the offense to score. Defense go out there and make a play and score.'" Brown said. "So that's what I did. Coach always says it doesn't matter how you start, it's how you finish."

It was clear from the beginning the Eagles came to prove themselves. They scored on the opening drive, marching 84 yards in nine plays, when Nichols connected with Brynsen Brown on a 43-yard touchdown pass.

Brown beat CU defensive back Jalil Brown on the play and dragged him nearly 20 yards to the end zone.

Nichols completed 32 of 51 passes for 303 yards, his second straight 300-yard passing game.

The Eagles converted on three third-down plays on the drive and finished the first half, going 7-for-10 in third-down situations.

Hawkins credited defensive coordinator Ron Collins for tweaking his approach in the second half. The Buffs began bringing more pressure with linebackers blitzing, forcing Nichols into two interceptions.

They limited the Eagles to converting four of nine third downs in the second half.

“We will have to learn how to finish an opponent,” EWU coach Beau Baldwin said. “Our team was a play or two from being where we needed to be.”

CU freshman running backs Darrell Scott and Rodney Stewart continued to show off play-making ability Saturday, and fans rewarded Scott by chanting his name on several occasions.

The Buffs scored on a 13-play drive in the first quarter. Scott provided the highlight with a 22-yard run in which he hurdled linebacker Zach Johnson.

Scott’s uncle, wide receiver Josh Smith, caught a 9-yard touchdown pass on the next play and admitted quarterback Cody Hawkins bailed him out with a good throw after he ran the wrong route.

Smith said watching his nephew hurdle a defender reminded him of playing with Scott in high school when Scott began hurdling defenders as a sophomore.

“He knows he’s not going to take that knee shot and he’s not going to take that ankle bite,” Smith said. “If you come in too low, he’s going over you. If you come in too high, he’s trucking you over. He has his plan. It’s as simple as that.”

Smith nearly missed returning a kick for a touchdown for the second week in a row in the third quarter. He fielded a punt near midfield and returned it to the Eagles’ 4-yard line.

Quarterback Cody Hawkins, who was intercepted for a touchdown in the first half, connected with true freshman tight end Ryan Deehan three plays later for a score. All told, Hawkins completed 28 of 38 passes for 261 yards and three touchdowns.

Hawkins led his team to a tying touchdown in the final minutes, completing four passes in a five-play drive, including a 2-yard touchdown pass to fullback Jake Behrens. Wide receiver Patrick Williams also came through with a clutch 36-yard grab on the drive.

“We had confidence,” Williams said. “We were shooting ourselves in the foot the whole time. We knew what we were capable of doing. We just had to go out and execute and play with pride and play with passion.”





# Woelk: CU's refusal to fold bails out ugly start

By Neill Woelk

Sunday, September 7, 2008

Didn't see that one coming, did you?

For the better part of 60 minutes Saturday afternoon, the Colorado Buffaloes seemed intent upon turning their season upside down before it ever really got into full swing.

Welcome to Boulder, Eastern Washington. Here's a turnover for a quick six. Here's another for six more. If that's not enough, here's a missed field goal, a raft of penalties and a boatload of missed tackles.

Anything else to make your stay more hospitable?

Hardcore CU fans will tell you the opening game of the Dan Hawkins Era still ranks as one of the more embarrassing moments in Buff annals. But Saturday, the Buffs came oh-so-close to relegating the Montana State debacle to mere mishap status. The list was about to be rewritten.

But somehow, someway, the Buffs pulled one out of the fire. An offense that had been mistake-prone and anemic for much of the afternoon suddenly became productive. A defense that had trouble tackling in the first half began to make plays and force turnovers.

And at the same time, the visiting Eagles woke up a little too early from their dream. With a win over a Big 12 foe firmly within reach, the Div. I-AA visitors disintegrated. After committing only four penalties in the first three quarters, the Eagles committed three in the final 15 minutes, each of them costly. After being almost perfect for 45 minutes, EWU quarterback Matt Nichols tossed a pair of interceptions -- including one that made the difference in the game -- in the final quarter.

And today, instead of wearing black in mourning, CU fans can return to the original game plan of wearing all black for the Sept. 18 matchup against West Virginia.

That wasn't a bullet the Buffs dodged. That was an implosion waiting to happen, the kind that can throw a season into a tailspin in a big, big hurry.

At his post-game press conference, CU's Hawkins was asked for some opening comments.

"Whew," Hawkins said.

That exhale of relief could be heard echoing throughout Folsom Field.

A quick word about the visitors: folks, those were some pretty good football players wearing EWU helmets on Saturday. Their defensive line turned CU's big guys up front inside out. Their receivers ran precision routes, and their quarterback throws a very good ball. The Eagles are a well-coached ballclub

who would beat Colorado's first opponent this season (Colorado State, if you're having trouble remembering) just about any day of the week.

And the Buffs? Yes, those were some warts exposed on Saturday. CU's offensive line had trouble protecting quarterback Cody Hawkins all day, and the Buff QB didn't help matters any by handing a pick-six to the visitors in the first half. Hawkins also overthrew a wide-open receiver down the middle in the third quarter, and by his own admission, "made a lot of mistakes."

But give the mistake-prone Buffs this much: they didn't fold, even when the opportunity presented itself.

Again and again and again.

"This team is resilient," said wide receiver Scotty McKnight, who led CU with six catches for 90 yards. "We just kept saying, 'Don't panic.' Each guy had to go out, make a play and do his job.

"The good thing about this game is that a lot of our young guys got some experience dealing with adversity. They learned that when you make a mistake, you don't dwell on it. You go out, make a play and make up for it."

While McKnight had the most catches, Patrick Williams had perhaps the biggest catch of the day. The Buff senior, who has been maligned throughout his career for dropping some big passes, came up with maybe the most important catch of his career when he brought down a 36-yarder in the fourth quarter to set up the game-tying touchdown.

"Make a play," Williams said. "That's all I could think about -- make a play."

The Buffs made enough to win. After a poor first half, QB Hawkins came back to lead the Buffs on two long scoring drives. On the first, he ran 16 yards for a first down on third-and-11 before tossing a 37-yard pass to McKnight. On the game-tying drive, he completed four passes for 55 of the drive's 57 yards.

All told, Hawkins completed 11 of his final 16 passes.

Now, the Buffs must turn their attention to a three-game stretch that has had everyone's attention since the schedule came out: West Virginia, Florida State and Texas.

Nobody is fooled by Saturday's effort. The Buffs know they got away with one against Eastern Washington. They also know they can't repeat those mistakes in any of their next three games -- not, at least, if they want to have a chance of winning.

"We have a lot to learn," Dan Hawkins allowed.

And not much time to instill those lessons.



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# Eagles lament missed opportunities

## EWU lets chance for win vs. Big 12 foe slip away

By Kyle McDaniel Camera Sports Writer  
Sunday, September 7, 2008

The Eastern Washington Eagles wish they could have the second half back from Saturday's game with Colorado.

After leading 21-7 at halftime, the Eagles looked like they might be the second FCS (formerly Div. I-AA) team ever to beat the Buffs. But Colorado made a turnaround in the second half, winning 31-24, and the Eagles were left guessing as to what they could have done differently.

"They're hurting right now," EWU coach Beau Baldwin said. "That's understandable. They believed they could win. We obviously proved that we could have won that game. They're hurting right now because we feel like one slipped away."

Eastern Washington was held to only a field goal in the second half after scoring three touchdowns in the first. Baldwin also said that in the third quarter the Buffs' defensive backs started to press against the Eagles' receivers better, which stalled the offense.

EWU junior quarterback Matt Nichols, who was 17-for-24 in the first half with 179 yards and a touchdown, threw two interceptions in the second half. The most costly came with 1:44 left to play in the game when Cha'pelle Brown returned the pick for a touchdown that sealed CU's win.

Baldwin said that if a play or two would have gone the Eagles' way on offense in the second half, things would have been different.

"It just came down to a few things," Baldwin said. "They did a few things pretty well in the second half - made some adjustments against us. We're just a play or two away from where we needed to be."

Nichols, who finished with 303 yards passing, said he felt a little more pressure from CU's defense in the second half.

"They started blitzing a little bit more, which we knew they were going to do," Nichols said. "Their guys really stepped it up in the second half once they were down 14."

Nichols also said that about a week ago, when Eastern Washington was preparing and watching film for its game with the Buffs, the team started to think it could walk away from Folsom Field with a win.

While Eastern Washington's season will depend on how well they do in the Big Sky Conference, Nichols said the loss to Colorado is tough.

"It's definitely going to hurt at least for the next week or so," Nichols said. "Being a competitive team, a competitive guy, I hate to lose in anything."

Defensive back Ryan Kelley, who led the Eagles on defense with 11 tackles, said Eastern Washington started fast but couldn't finish strong. On the defensive side of the ball for Eastern Washington, it came down to bad tackling in the second half.

"I wish that we'd have tackled better," Kelley said. "Their running backs are pretty good. They came through the hole powerful. They just had a few big plays. There was just too many."

As far as starting out 0-2 with losses to Texas Tech and Colorado, two Big 12 teams, Kelley said that the Eagles still took something away from those games.

"I can't say that we didn't start off the way we wanted to because two games, back-to-back Big 12 games, that's big for us," Kelley said. "That's big for the program. We played our hearts out. We played good last weekend. We played good this weekend. We didn't finish."



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# 'J-Fly' overcomes his early mistakes

## Playmaker tallies 184 all-purpose yards

By Joshua Lindenstein  
Sunday, September 7, 2008

"J-Fly" turned a little Jekyll and Hyde on Saturday.

Fortunately for the Colorado Buffaloes, the good outweighed the bad for playmaking receiver and return man Josh Smith.

One week after piling up 189 all-purpose yards in the Buffs' win over Colorado State, Smith compiled 184 more and his first career touchdown catch in Colorado's 31-24 come-from-behind win over Eastern Washington at Folsom Field.

He also got called for a block in the back penalty and fumbled on a punt return to set up an Eastern Washington touchdown that gave the visitors a 14-7 second-quarter lead.

"My game individually has been going up and down," said Smith, who also fumbled on a return last week that was recovered by CU. "I'm just trying to stay level, stay focused. I'm not trying to get excited about too many plays. I'm definitely trying not to get too down about others."

Smith continued to electrify in the return game, averaging 27 yards per punt return and returning one kick for 40 yards.

But his fumble proved a painful momentum changer. After a 24-yard punt return from his own 3, Eastern Washington's cover men stripped the ball from behind and recovered it at the CU 27 to set up a score six plays later.

"I looked over at (special teams coach Kent Riddle) and I said, 'Get him out,'" CU head coach Dan Hawkins said. "And then it was a long, long time before we had another punt return and so my temperature had gone back down there. He said, 'Are you sure, because that would have been a touchdown if he hadn't fumbled.' And I go, 'Well, okay.' And then he had a huge return."

His team trailing 21-7 in the third quarter and needing a spark, Smith fielded a punt at his own 45 and raced 51 yards down the left sideline to set the Buffs up first-and-goal at the 4. CU scored three plays later to start a 24-3 second-half run.

"There was still a lot more game left to be played," Smith said of the fumble. "So I felt like they've got to continue to punt me the ball, and the next time I get the punt I'm going to make sure they never want to punt me the ball again. That's all I was thinking."

Riddle said his return man no doubt needs to clean up the mistakes but also knew he wanted to stay with

Smith.

"I knew he learned," Riddle said. "You look at him and you know he's thinking, 'Geez.' But it's hard to give up that big play when you know you need one. And I think that punt return got us going a little bit. That was a huge play."

Smith has 314 yards and a touchdown on 10 returns in two games, including four returns for 40 yards or more.

"He's had some great plays and some bad ones," Riddle said. "We're going to work hard to eliminate the bad ones and keep him going on the other ones."

Smith's other top play Saturday came early on his 9-yard touchdown catch, an acrobatic grab in which he leaped for a Cody Hawkins pass in the back corner of the end zone and managed to get one foot down inbounds to tie the game 7-7.

The only thing was, Smith had run a fade pattern when he was supposed to run a post.

"So I mean that was great looking on Cody's part to anticipate and see, 'Okay, Josh ran the wrong route, but I think we can still have him over here in the corner.' He stuck with me.

"We've got to make sure those things don't happen even though it was a score."



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# Brown picks off win for Buffaloes

## Cornerback's interception return seals win

By Ryan Thorburn  
Sunday, September 7, 2008

All eyes were on Matt Nichols.

But no one at Folsom Field had a better view of the Eastern Washington quarterback's eyes than Cha'pelle Brown, who returned an interception 27 yards for a touchdown with 1:44 remaining to will Colorado to a 31-24 victory on Saturday in front of 46,417.

CU defensive coordinator Ron Collins, who had the secondary in zone coverage during crunch time, said Brown made the exact same play against the scout team in practice last week.

"That's what we're supposed to do. It's a nice play and I'm glad I made the play," Brown said. "It feels good. That's my job is to read the quarterback's eyes, so I just read them and went for it."

The Buffs (2-0) -- who were understandably getting tired of the Montana State flashbacks leading up to this matchup with a determined Big Sky opponent -- were reading more than the quarterback's eyes leading up to the game.

Posted and highlighted on the bulletin board outside the locker room in the Dal Ward Center was this quote from Nichols that appeared in ESPN The Magazine: "We're going guns-a-blazin', pulling every trick out of the bag. We can do things against any defense in the country."

Early on, Nichols was backing up the big talk. He completed 17-of-24 for 179 yards and a touchdown in the first half as the Eagles enjoyed a 21-7 lead entering the intermission.

EWU converted seven of 10 third downs before the intermission to keep CU's offense on the sideline and the crowd out of the game.

"This game is not very crazy," Buffs defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "Teams who run the spread, if you can tackle it you can stop it. But if you allow them to break tackles and get extra yards it's going to hurt you a little bit. And that's really what happened in the first half."

Nichols connected with Brynsen Brown for a 43-yard touchdown on a third-and-3 play in the first quarter.

After beating Jalil Brown for the catch, the 6-1, 210-pound receiver plodded his way into the end zone with the cornerback riding on his back to make the score 7-0.

After Josh Smith fumbled a punt return at his own 27, Nichols completed a 16-yard pass to Aaron Boyce

on third-and-8 to set up a 1-yard touchdown run for Toke Kefu to make the score 14-7 with 10:23 remaining in the second quarter.

"It was a case of just some guys settling down a little bit," CU head coach Dan Hawkins said of his defense's adjustments for the second half. "They hit us three times on third downs with a similar kind of route combination and we had to change up our technique based on what we were doing."

Shaun Mohler was having a brilliant game at weakside linebacker for the Buffs until suffering what CU officials called a shoulder bruise with 3:24 remaining in the third quarter.

Enter walk-on Bryan Stengel, who added to Mohler's nine tackles with two more in the fourth quarter.

"Being a backup is kind of tough, but you always have to have your head in the game and keep learning," Stengel said. "You never know what could happen. I feel really bad for Shaun, that's a tough break. I got the opportunity to play, but we're going to miss Shaun."

Jeff Smart, a former walk-on from Boulder High School, added seven tackles and a fumble recovery to help the defense rally.

"It's very gratifying because those guys have worked their way from the bottom all the way up," Collins said. "They're doing a great job for us."

When J.C. Sherritt returned an ill-advised Cody Hawkins pass 48 yards for a touchdown the Eagles seemed poised to make SportsCenter with a 21-7 cushion.

Some of the seniors, including safety Ryan Walters and Hypolite, were not happy about getting booed leaving the field at halftime and made speeches to encourage the younger players to rise up to the challenge.

They were determined to make sure Saturday's outcome was different than the infamous 19-10 loss to Montana State in the 2006 home opener.

"I got a little excited (at halftime)," Hypolite said. "I'm a guy who has been around a while and I've seen some things. I just wanted the guys to know how I felt and the passion I have for this program and for our team. I just wanted everybody to come out in the second half and not play tight."

If Hypolite was the bad cop, Walters was the good cop.

"I told everybody just don't worry, don't get too caught up in the moment, don't panic," Walters said. "You definitely have to have a sense of urgency, but we were OK. Everything they got was because of what we did wrong on defense and what we miscued on offense. I told everybody to just calm down and relax. Just go out in the second half and play football like we know how to play."

CU only allowed three points in the second half and sealed the victory when safety D.J. Dykes intercepted Nichols in the end zone in the final seconds.



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# Young CU offensive line struggles against Eagles

By Kyle Ringo

Sunday, September 7, 2008

Colorado's young offensive line figured to struggle at times this season with two freshmen feeling their way at the college level and sophomore tackle Nate Solder adjusting to his new position.

The Buffs struggled badly Saturday against an experienced Eastern Washington defensive front and allowed their quarterback to take a beating while the running game accounted for only 2.7 yards a carry and 90 total yards.

True freshman Max Tuioti-Mariner made the first start of his career at right guard and redshirt freshman Blake Behrens made his second start, in place of suspended junior Devin Head.

"We were miscommunicating and mental mistakes and just not playing up to our potential," senior center Daniel Sanders said.

Eastern Washington recorded 11 tackles for loss, two sacks and four quarterback hurries. Sanders said it's no longer acceptable to attribute the struggles to youth and inexperience two games into the season.

"You can't really put it on that anymore," he said. "They played last week. They've been playing all through camp. It's just another game you've got to treat it as. So everybody, including myself, has to come back in (today) and look at the film and take what we can from it."

Offensive line coach Jeff Grimes prefers to watch film before assessing a performance but he was willing to say Saturday that his unit didn't have a very good day. Grimes said credit should be given to Eastern Washington, but he was also left scratching his head by his players' struggles.

"I think a player can learn from any game if they're the right kind of kid, and I do think we have the right kind of kids," he said.

Right tackle Ryan Miller, who became a starter in the middle of last season, said the speed of the EWU defensive line gave the CU line trouble.

"It was definitely their speed," he said.

## Mohler injured

Shaun Mohler was playing well Saturday all the way up to the point when he suffered a shoulder injury that required a hospital visit.

Mohler underwent a magnetic resonance imaging test Saturday night and what was originally believed to be a broken collarbone was diagnosed as a shoulder bruise.

Mohler tied cornerback Jalil Brown for the team lead in tackles with nine and also broke up two passes and forced another bad throw with a quarterback hurry.

He is listed as day-to-day.

### **Penalty parade**

The Buffs are likely to be ranked among the most penalized teams in the nation this week after committing 10 infractions Saturday on top of the eight times they were flagged against CSU.

### **Making a mark**

True freshman tight end Ryan Deehan saw plenty of action in crunch time and contributed to the victory with his first career touchdown grab in the third quarter, a 1-yard pass from Cody Hawkins. Deehan became the first true freshman tight end to catch a touchdown pass since Jon Embree in 1983 against Missouri.

"We lined up and they changed the play," he said. "I noticed no one was over me and I was like, 'Wow, I might be wide open on this.'"

### **A top-10 guy already**

Cody Hawkins moved into ninth place on the school's career passing list with 261 yards in his 20th game, bringing his career total to 3,168 yards. Hawkins' three touchdown passes all came in the red zone. He has thrown 19 touchdown passes with just one interception in the red zone in his first 15 games as the starter.

Hawkins also threw an interception that was returned for a touchdown in the second quarter.

"I thought he made some good throws and some classic throws at times," Dan Hawkins said. "But when you throw a pick for a touchdown, the best thing you can do is shake it off and come back, and he did."

### **Hi V**

Colorado's live Buffalo mascot Ralphie V made her regular-season debut leading the Buffs on the field before both halves.

Ralphie V ran at the spring game earlier this year and got away from all of her handlers but one. She was tough to keep up with Saturday but not nearly as wild.

### **Notable**

After starting the season with five sacks against Colorado State, the Buffs managed only one against EWU, from senior Brad Jones. ... Rodney Stewart started at tailback, becoming the fourth true freshman to do so at CU in the past decade. ... Redshirt freshman offensive lineman Matt Bahr saw the first action of his career on special teams. Cornerback Jonathan Hawkins and linebacker Bryan Stengel also played for the first time as Buffs.

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cu football

## Bufs make point: Leadership wins

Seniors rally troops as CU avoids an upset, 31-24

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

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Cha'pelle Brown (29) sprints in the end zone with teammate D.J. Dykes in pursuit after scoring the winning touchdown. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post )

BOULDER — A coach never really knows about the leadership on his team until players face a crisis.

Even if Colorado coach Dan Hawkins had scripted the speeches, CU's seniors couldn't have rallied the

squad more effectively during halftime of Saturday's 31-24 victory over Eastern Washington.

Colorado (2-0) trailed the Football Championship Subdivision (formerly Division I-AA) opponent by two touchdowns at the break. Rather than talk about getting embarrassed by a small school or how silly the program might look later on "SportsCenter," the seniors tried to get everybody thinking ahead to the second half rather than dwell on the first half.

"I told all the guys to calm down," said CU senior safety Ryan Walters, a team

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Said senior defensive tackle George Hypolite: "I just wanted us to come out and not play tight, and not play to lose."

It worked. With the old Journey tune "Don't Stop Believin' " blaring from the Folsom Field loudspeakers, Colorado overcame a 21-7 deficit, scoring twice with just over two minutes to go in the fourth quarter. The Buffs (2-0) avoided a headline-grabbing upset similar to that of the 2006 loss to Montana State, another member of the Big Sky Conference.

"We always tell our guys not to get caught up with the decal on the side of the helmet," Dan Hawkins said. "(But) it's hard a lot of times when you have young guys."

Colorado pulled even, 24-24, for the first time since early in the second quarter after sophomore quarterback Cody Hawkins flipped a 2-yard touchdown pass to fullback Jake Behrens with 2:05 remaining.

Junior cornerback Cha'pelle Brown put the Buffs ahead for the first time when he returned an interception 27 yards for a touchdown with 1:44 to go. It was the first college TD for Brown, a full-time starter for the first time.

Eastern Washington junior quarterback Matt Nichols tried to hit a receiver in the left flat and admitted afterward that he lost track of Brown, who stepped in front of the intended target. Nichols, the 2007 Big Sky offensive player of the year, had a good day otherwise, with 32-of-51 for 303 yards.

"It was like it happened in slow motion," Brown said of the game-winning pick. "It was like the pass was meant for me."

Cody Hawkins wasn't as sharp as his statistics (28-

for-38 for 261 yards and three touchdowns) might indicate. He missed several open receivers. But Hawkins did find senior captain Patrick Williams for a 36-yarder down the left sideline to set up the game-tying score to Behrens.

"I wasn't doing a lot of things I needed to do," said Hawkins, who was sacked twice and under siege for much of the afternoon. "(The Eagles) were trying to double-team Josh (Smith) a lot. We thought if we could get them in the right formation, we would have a chance to hit Patrick."

A crowd of 46,417 had fallen almost dead silent when a 48-yard interception return for a touchdown by EWU linebacker J.C. Sherritt enabled the Eagles (0-2) to take a 14-point lead into halftime. Eastern Washington was not going to be intimidated by a Big 12 Conference team, having pulled to within 11 points of Texas Tech in the third quarter a week earlier.

"We will have to learn how to finish an opponent," EWU coach Beau Baldwin said.

Hypolite hopes it also is a lesson for the Buffs, who have an open date next week and extra time to prepare for a Thursday night game against West Virginia on Sept. 18.

"I just told our guys to make some tackles in the second half," Hypolite said. "I'm glad somebody was listening."

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## KEY STAT

3: Points allowed by Colorado in the final 37:29 of the game, after giving up 21 in the first 22:31

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## KEY PLAY

Cha'pelle Brown's interception return for a touchdown. Just when Colorado needed it most, the defense cashed in on the biggest play of the game. Tied at 24 late in the fourth quarter, Brown picked off EWU quarterback Matt Nichols and ran it back 27 yards for what turned out to be the winning score.

## QUOTE

"I don't like to talk bad about teams, but they aren't going to get that far in the Big 12. They aren't playing like a Big 12 team. They're playing like a Big Sky team." - Ryan Kelly, EWU defensive back, on CU

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cu football

## Bufs' Deehan ends drought for frosh

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Barb Roberts Quinlan rings in a new tradition with the introduction of the Spirit Bell at Folsom Field. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post )

**BOULDER** — The biggest smile outside Colorado's locker room following the come-from-behind victory Saturday over Eastern Washington might have belonged to Ryan Deehan.

With a 1-yard touchdown reception with 5:30 remaining in the third quarter, Deehan became the first true freshman tight end to score a TD for the Buffaloes in a quarter of a century. Jon Embree did it in 1983 against Missouri.

"That's pretty cool," said Deehan, a highly recruited

6-foot-5, 245-pounder from Poway, Calif., who picked CU over Oregon and Arizona State.

More important, Deehan said, was helping to kick-start CU's comeback. Colorado outscored Eastern Washington 24-3 after halftime. Deehan's score pulled the Buffs within seven.

"I was really excited," he said. "We were down, and that gave us a better chance."

### For whom the bell tolls.

With a ringing of a "Spirit Bell" for the first time Saturday, CU began what it hopes will become a tradition for home football games. The 1,800-pound bell, purchased by a booster from an Evergreen estate, is to be rung twice — 10 minutes before the team arrives on Colorado Avenue and 10 minutes before one of the school's live buffalo mascots is set to run onto the playing field. The bell will be located at Benson Field, near the CU alumni association tent.

### Footnotes.

CU linebacker Shaun Mohler, a junior college transfer, was taken to a Boulder hospital for an MRI after the game with a suspected fractured clavicle (collar bone), CU officials said. Tests were negative and he's day-to-day. . . . Colorado is 2-0 for the first time since 2005. . . . Rodney "Speedy" Stewart became the fourth true freshman running back this decade to start a game, joining Brian Lockridge (2007), Brian Calhoun (2002) and Marcus Houston (2000). . . . Ralphie V, age 23 months, made her regular-season debut Saturday. The elder Buffalo mascot, Ralphie IV (11 years old) did the honors in the season opener against Colorado State. . . . CU is already promoting a "Black Out" for the Thursday night, Sept. 18, home game against West Virginia, asking fans to wear black.

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cu football

## Adjustments pay off for CU

**Bufs finally get in sync with Eagles' passing game and fast-paced offensive style**

**By Chris Dempsey**  
*The Denver Post*

Article Last Updated: 09/06/2008 11:18:14 PM MDT



Eastern Washington quarterback Matt Nichols barely gets a pass away as Colorado linebacker Shaun Mohler bears down. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post )

BOULDER — Colorado's defense thought it had the Eastern Washington offense pegged. It took a quarter and a half for players and coaches to realize they were wrong and some real adjustments needed to be made.

Problem No. 1: Routes. The Buffs were ready to take away the deep ball. But Eastern Washington began hitting CU with shorter routes that helped sustain drives early. Eastern Washington scored on its first drive and then again on its fourth.

"But after that, I thought our guys did a great job of keeping the passes in front of them, rallying up and making tackles," defensive coordinator Ron Collins said. "We just felt like as long as we could do that and maybe create some turnovers, we felt good about the outcome."

Problem No. 2: No huddle. Colorado's defense sees it at practice, but EWU's was faster-paced, and that caused confusion.

"A lot of teams do a no-huddle where they just wait at the line, and that doesn't hurt anybody," safety Ryan Walters said. "But the first time they went: play, play, play, play. A couple times we had miscommunication, and it was difficult to get the call in because they were going so fast. We had to adjust to that, and I think Coach Collins did a great job of doing that in the second half."

Problem No. 3: Tackling. It was sketchy early.

"Missed a few tackles here and there, and those led to 8-yard gains instead of 3-yard gains," Walters said.

None of those, however, hurt Colorado in the second half. Eastern Washington had 206 total yards, nine first downs and 14 offensive points in the first half. In the second, the Eagles managed 144 total yards and three points.

Both of Colorado's interceptions came in the second half, and both were critical. Cha'pelle Brown picked off a pass and ran it back 27 yards for the game-winning touchdown with 1:44 left. Then D.J. Dykes

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made Brown's stand up with one of his own as time ran down.

"In the first quarter, we were really bad, like a (grade of) D," cornerback Gardner McKay said. "But as the game went on, we progressed: C, B, A. So when that fourth quarter came, we knew it was like us or nothing. And we got it done."

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woody paige

## CU's late plays save nail-biter

Contest was too close for comfort

By Woody Paige  
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 09/07/2008 12:09:50 AM MDT

BOULDER — The source of that sudden late-afternoon airstream across the Flatirons was 46,417 men, women and Buffaloes exhaling simultaneously at Folsom Field.

Gasp. It wasn't a breather.

Eastern Washington University, which plays in Eastern Washington and obscurity, was about two minutes, two interceptions and two major penalties away from achieving the biggest upset in the team's 100-year football history.

"Whew," said Colorado coach Dan Hawkins.

CU has to quit scheduling schools from the Championship Football Subdivision (the NCAA's fancy way of describing the former Division I-AA) or start playing more like a team from Division I in home openers — or Hawkins will be coaching intramurals.

In Hawkins' first game as the Buffs coach in 2006, he and they lost to Montana State 19-10. Saturday, Colorado was losing to Eastern Washington 21-7 in

the third quarter, and 24-17 with 2:06 to go.

Seldom was heard an encouraging word on a day that felt like autumn. And the Buffs were riding for the fall. They were booed as they departed for the locker room at halftime. At the end, with most heads bowed, the players looked as depressed as the guys from Cheney, Wash. The sizable crowd let the air out and went home unimpressed.

As did Eastern Washington defensive back Ryan Kelly.

"I don't like to talk bad about teams, but (the Buffs) aren't going to get that far in the Big 12. They aren't playing like a Big 12 team. They're playing like a Big Sky team."

Kelly could wind up as a sports columnist. The Eagles are from the Big Sky, as is the aforementioned Montana State, Sacramento State (which almost beat CSU on Saturday) and Northern Colorado.

The Buffs also should avoid UNC in the future.

This was supposed to be a cupcake-eating contest before the struggle with West Virginia — which had its own serious problems Saturday, being throttled by East Carolina 24-3.

But in the first half, it was Eastern Washington doing the cake-walking. The Buffs were outpassed by the Eagles (179-97) and outrun by the new Ralphie mascot (200-66).

The students and alumni who chose football-viewing over rock-climbing and tree-hugging gathered at intermission and wondered aloud why Colorado had two ugly turnovers, five ugly penalties, 163 measly yards, seven measly points and a senseless spike.

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Here's an example of CU nonsense Saturday:

With the clock running down to 1 minute in the first half, the Buffs picked up a first down on a Cody Hawkins pass play at the Eastern Washington 16-yard line. The clock is automatically stopped on first downs, but under a new rule, will be started again before the snap. Nonetheless, there was plenty of time for several pass plays.

But Hawkins, oddly enough, spiked the ball to stop the clock again, and wasted a play.

Maybe the Buffs believed the officials would give them a fifth down reminiscent of 1990. They didn't.

On second down, a pass was incomplete, and, on third down, a pass resulted in a 2-yard loss. The Buffs then missed a 35-yard field goal, and Eastern Washington got the ball — with 25 seconds still left.

If Eastern Washington is in the "Championship Football Subdivision," Colorado acted like it belonged in a Broomfield subdivision.

Sure, the Buffs won, but . . . "I told the players you don't get caught up in the decal across the side of the helmet," the elder Hawkins said. (Just for the record, Eastern Washington does have a weird helmet logo.)

## Submit Your Question



The Denver Post's  
Woody Paige

Post sports columnist Woody Paige fields your questions. Look for Woody's Mailbag every Thursday.

The Buffs don't play Central Washington or Western Washington next season, do they?

After several "buts" about it, the Buffs did win — on a Hawkins' 2-yard scoring pass to tie at 2:05, a 27-yard interception return by cornerback Cha'pelle Brown for the (first) go-ahead touchdown at 1:44 and an interception by safety D.J. Dykes in the end zone with 3 seconds to play.

In the second half, CU dropped as many as eight players in pass coverage, and Hawkins did end up completing 28-of-38 attempts for 261 yards, but the Buffs should have run it more often at the Eagles from the beginning, particularly with the freshman S's — Darrell Scott and Rodney Stewart. And the Eagles destroyed themselves with a ridiculous personal foul on their final field goal and an even more ridiculous unnecessary roughness penalty later — and the two ridiculous, foul, unnecessary interceptions.

"Fortunately, we came out with a 'W,'" Dan Hawkins said.

And rather fortuitously, too.

Breathe deep, Buffs.

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Longmont, Colorado  
Monday, September 08,  
2008

**TIMES-CALL**

Publish Date: 9/7/2008

## **Buffs rally to avoid red-faced loss to upset-minded Eagles**

*By Patrick Ridgell  
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Colorado Buffaloes insisted all week they'd get a game out of Eastern Washington.

They weren't kidding.

CU trailed almost the whole day, and the Buffs' offense frequently looked like a bumbling outfit that didn't deserve to win Saturday. But two fourth-quarter interceptions — including one Cha'pelle Brown returned 27 yards for the winning touchdown with 1 minute, 44 seconds to play — saved CU from the embarrassment of yet another loss to a Football Championship Subdivision program. In the end CU prevailed, 31-24, but the Buffs trailed, 21-7, at halftime and 24-17 with 3:52 left.

They tied it with 2:05 to go when Jake Behrens caught a 2-yard scoring pass from quarterback Cody Hawkins, who spent much of the afternoon fleeing unblocked Eastern Washington defenders.

Buffs' safety D.J. Dykes sealed the win by intercepting quarterback Matt Nichols in the end zone with 3 seconds to play.

The Buffs are 2-0 for the first time since 2005, and their mood following the win was more relief than elation.

The visiting Eagles proved they are capable of going toe-to-toe on the road with at least one Big 12 program. CU can heap all the praise it wants upon Eastern Washington, but the Buffs caused many of their own problems, and narrowly averted a loss that would have made them the butts of jokes nationwide.

At least one person wasn't afraid to say so.

"I don't like to talk bad about teams, but they aren't going to get that far in the Big 12," Eastern Washington defensive back Ryan Kelley said. "They aren't playing like a Big 12 team. They're playing like a Big Sky (Conference) team."

Some might read that and wonder who in the world is Ryan Kelley, whose 11 tackles Saturday led the Eagles. He might be the guy whose words prove prophetic as 2008 unfolds, or he could be the guy whose temerity coaxes more improvement out of the Buffs than anything this year.

Defensively, CU saw Nichols go 8-for-8 on Eastern Washington's opening drive that concluded on Brynson Brown's 43-yard scoring reception, on which he carried nickel back Jalil Brown for about the last 20 yards into the end zone.



Colorado cornerback Cha'pelle Brown sprints into the end zone after intercepting an Eastern Washington pass and returning it 27 yards for the game-winning touchdown in the fourth quarter Saturday afternoon at Folsom Field. **Lewis Geyer/Times-Call**

### **TimesCall.com Slide Show**

**Colorado over Eastern Washington  
31 - 24**

## **COLORADO 31, E. WASHINGTON 24**

**E. Washington**  
71403—24

**Colorado**  
07717—31

### **First Quarter**

EWas—Brown 43 pass from Nichols (Macias kick), 10:22.

### **Second Quarter**

Col—Jo.Smith 9 pass from C.Hawkins (Goodman kick), 14:01.  
EWas—Kefu 1 run (Macias kick), 10:23.  
EWas—Sherritt 48 interception return (Macias kick), 7:29.

### **Third Quarter**

Col—Deehan 1 pass from C.Hawkins (Goodman kick), 5:30.

### **Fourth Quarter**

Col—FG Goodman 32, 13:46.  
EWas—FG Macias 52, 3:52.  
Col—J.Behrens 2 pass from C.Hawkins (Goodman kick), 2:05.  
Col—C.Brown 27 interception return

From there, Nichols went 24-of-43 for 215 yards and the two key interceptions.

CU coaches told defenders to keep the Eagles in front of them, and that they did. Their tackling improved.

However, problems arose for CU when it had the ball.

Josh Smith's fumble on a punt return gave Eastern Washington field position at CU's 27 in the second quarter, and led to the Eagles second touchdown. Eastern Washington's J.C. Sherritt intercepted Hawkins and returned it 48 yards for the score that made it 21-7.

Eastern Washington defenders plowed through CU's line all day. CU averaged 2.7 yards a carry and totaled 90 yards rushing. Hawkins was hit early and often.

CU started two freshman guards, one true. Offensive line coach Jeff Grimes offered no explanation.

"We were not very good. I don't think we played very good as an offensive line in general," Grimes said.

Was he surprised?

"I don't know if I'm surprised, but I'm disappointed," he said. "I did not think we would struggle like that as an offense. One thing I have learned as a coach is typically when you look at the film it's not as bad as you thought. It's never quite as good as you thought. I hope that's the case because I don't think we played very well (Saturday)."

CU fumbled four times, committed 10 penalties, and was outgained in the first half, 206-163.

Halftime in CU's locker room saw seniors voice their anger.

"Our leaders on the team stepped up and said some things," linebacker Jeff Smart said.

Said senior George Hypolite: "I got a little excited, but I'm a guy who's been around for awhile, I've seen some things and just wanted the guys to know how I felt."

Immediate results did not come, though.

In fact, CU committed two penalties, fumbled once and allowed a sack before finally punting on its first possession after halftime. Fans booed loudly.

By the fourth quarter, though, CU's play had improved enough to tie it, setting up Cha'pelle Brown's heroics.

"I was just reading the quarterback's eyes," the CU cornerback said.

"Before that play, (head) coach (Dan Hawkins) said to go out there and score a touchdown, and that's what I did.

"It doesn't matter how you start, it's how you finish."

Said CU safety Ryan Walters, "Cha'pelle is so short, their quarterback probably didn't see him."

CU does not play again until Sept. 18, when ESPN and West Virginia come to Boulder. The eighth-ranked

(Goodman kick), 1:44.  
A—46,417.

EWasCol  
First downs  
1817  
Rushes-yards  
22-4733-90  
Passing  
303261  
Comp-Att-Int  
32-51-228-39-1  
Return Yards  
48135  
Punts-Avg.  
6-43.54-44.5  
Fumbles-Lost  
1-14-1  
Penalties-Yards  
7-6910-70  
Time of Possession  
29:2030:40

#### INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—E. Washington, Morris 14-36, Nichols 6-11, Kefu 1-1, Team 1-(minus 1). Colorado, Scott 13-39, Stewart 9-38, C.Hawkins 5-12, Jo.Smith 3-7, Sumler 2-0, Team 1-(minus 6).  
PASSING—E. Washington, Nichols 32-51-2-303. Colorado, C.Hawkins 28-38-1-261, Team 0-1-0-0.  
RECEIVING—E. Washington, Davis 9-73, Brown 6-90, Boyce 6-42, Overbay 5-48, Jimerson 3-23, Gant 1-24, Morris 1-3, Hart 1-0. Colorado, McKnight 6-90, Williams 4-54, Jo.Smith 4-29, Celestine 4-11, Scott 3-33, Stewart 2-19, Deehan 2-8, Devenny 1-8, Cantrell 1-7, J.Behrens 1-2.

Mountaineers (1-1) lost, 24-3, to East Carolina on Saturday, so they'll be grumpy, and probably not as forgiving as Eastern Washington.

Meanwhile, the Buffs will be doing what they do every week — trying to improve.

"It's the little shaving that make the difference in wins and losses, and our guys have to take stock in that," Dan Hawkins said.

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at [pridgell@times-call.com](mailto:pridgell@times-call.com).

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Longmont, Colorado  
Monday, September 08,  
2008

**TIMES-CALL**

Publish Date: 9/7/2008

## Count on more Buffs' feasts, famines

*By Patrick Ridgell  
Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — Here's the story behind Josh Smith's first career offensive touchdown.

The sophomore receiver caught a 9-yard pass in the corner of Folsom Field's north end zone in the second quarter Saturday from quarterback Cody Hawkins.

Smith later confessed he ran the wrong route. As it turns out, Smith was supposed to run a post patter and instead, ran a fade.

Wait. It gets better.

Hawkins, another sophomore, knew Smith was running the wrong route. And knowing Smith, he had a pretty good idea where Smith would run that wrong route, so he just chucked it in the general vicinity of where he thought Smith would end up. Remember, the vicinity where Smith ended up was about half a field away from where his route was supposed to take him.

The play worked like they had run it a million times.

The band played, players celebrated and everyone cheered until Smith ran to the sideline, where an offensive coaches greeted him with something like: "Nice job. Don't ever do that again."

"We have to iron those things out, too," Smith said.

Those crazy Buffaloes. Who knows what they're gonna do next?

What was clear Saturday in CU's 31-24 defeat of Eastern Washington — in which CU nearly fell to 0-2 against Football Championship Subdivision programs — is the Buffs are talented but still inexperienced, and unpredictability will abound.

Coach Dan Hawkins might age more than his fair share this year while he plows through an upcoming slate that pits the Buffs against West Virginia, Florida State, Texas and Kansas over the next five weeks.

He'll try not to let on, though.

"I never expect mistakes," he said. "We know that give our circumstances in certain areas that you have to be able to deal with it, and understand it."

CU was talented enough to rally past Eastern Washington on Saturday. Future opponents will be less forgiving.

The Buffs claimed all week they wouldn't overlook an FCS team, but something wasn't right for the first 30 minutes Saturday.

Was it that CU started two freshmen guards, and has a two-deep with inexperienced players everywhere?



"Coming into the game we knew they were going to be a good team," junior linebacker Jeff Smart said. "I think some of the younger guys weren't ready for that."

CU is 2-0 for the first time since 2005, but inconsistency is a concern. Smith epitomizes that. On one play he can be electric, and the next he can blow a fuse.

His talent is undeniable, and his 51-yard punt return set up CU's second touchdown. His second-quarter fumble gave Eastern Washington the ball at CU's 27. The Eagles scored six plays later.

Smith already has four returns of 40 yards or more already this season, including three on kickoffs. He also has two bad fumbles.

Smith has played football for four years and still appears as raw as that figure suggests.

Smith said he'll be more aware of defenders trying to strip the ball, especially when he's in traffic or his feet stop. That's when he gets in trouble.

Fumble or not, he has a flair about him that won't likely be doused soon.

"They have to continue to punt me the ball, and the next time they punt, I want to make sure they never want to punt me the ball again," Smith said.

Few Buffs have that sort of bravado, which will bode well. When they take their lumps in the Big 12, they'll need that sort of confidence to rebound.

Games like Saturday's might be one way to grow up quickly. That was what a few Buffs were saying after they finally stopped sighing with relief long enough to start breathing again.

"We're not a young team anymore," senior safety Ryan Walters said. "Two years ago we were a young team and we couldn't come out of it."

Said Cody Hawkins: "I think if we sit back and think about it, we'll say we got a lot of young guys and we don't have a whole lot of experience. We're going to have a bunch of bumps and bruises along the way, and we have to keep overcoming that.

"We can't use youth as an excuse. It is tough to put that aside. If you want to be a great football team, you can't really think about it."

There are going to be times in 2008 the Buffs wow their fans. Darrell Scott's 22-yard run that featured a hurdle over a tackler was one Saturday.

At other times, they won't. Most of Saturday's effort would qualify as an example.

Everyone will just have to deal with this.

That's what Dan Hawkins said he's going to do.

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Longmont, Colorado  
Monday, September 08,  
2008

**TIMES-CALL**

Publish Date: 9/7/2008

## CU gets good news on Mohler's injury

Starting linebacker has a bruise, not a break as first feared

*By Patrick Ridgell*

*Longmont Times-Call*

BOULDER — The Colorado football program received some good news late Saturday night.

X-rays on the shoulder of starting linebacker Shaun Mohler came back negative, CU reported. Team trainers feared Mohler had fractured a clavicle after suffering the injury in the third quarter.

CU reported Mohler merely has a severe shoulder bruise, and he'll be listed as day to day.

Despite not playing the fourth quarter, Mohler still had nine tackles, two pass break-ups and a quarterback hurry. The 6-foot-3, 225-pounder earned the starting job at the will spot at the end of camp.

Without Mohler in the game, walk-on Bryan Stengel played well in Mohler's absence. He jarred a reception free from Eastern Washington's Brynsen Brown on a third down in the fourth quarter when CU trailed, 21-17.

The only other injury CU reported was to left tackle Nate Solder, who has a sore elbow.

Defensive tackle George Hypolite had to be helped off the field in the fourth quarter after he said he was hit on the knee by an opponent's knee brace. He returned to the game.

Tight end Riar Geer (knee scope) is expected to return Sept. 18 when CU hosts West Virginia in its next game.

Cornerback Jimmy Smith, who said he is not playing due to back spasms, said he expects to play against West Virginia, as well.

**LINE WORRIES:** Offensive line coach Jeff Grimes called the line's play, "not very good," but said he did not know what the problem was.

Senior center Daniel Sanders offered a couple answers.

"It was either miscommunicating, or mental mistakes, or not playing up to our potential," Sanders said.

CU started two freshmen at guard, including true freshman Max Tuioti-Mariner, and both tackles are sophomores.

Solder was a tight end last year. Sanders said youth and inexperience cannot be excuses.

"They played last week and all through camp," he said. "This is another game.

"Everybody, including myself, has to go in (today) and look at the film and take what we can from it and get better



Colorado's Shaun Mohler and Cameron Ham pressure Eastern Washington quarterback Matt Nichols during Saturday's game at Folsom Field. Mohler, a starting linebacker, was forced to leave the game in the third quarter with what was later diagnosed as a severe shoulder bruise. **Lewis**

**Geyer/Times-Call**

from it.”

Sanders and quarterback Cody Hawkins had one bad snap that Sanders said both were to blame for. On the play, Hawkins picked up the ball and ran 17 yards for a first down.

Hawkins said CU's problems on the offensive line were because of Eastern Washington.

“I think the Eastern Washington guys did an awesome job mixing stuff up,” Hawkins said.

“The quarterback is going to get hit sometimes, depending on the protection.”

Hawkins was hit many times, and the Eagles finished with four quarterback hurries and two sacks. Hawkins said he felt fine.

**BIG CATCH:** Tight end Ryan Deehan became CU's first true freshman tight end to catch a touchdown pass since Jon Embree had one in 1983 against Missouri.

“They lined up and they changed the play and I noticed that no one was over me,” Deehan said. “I was like, ‘Wow, I might be wide open.’”

**EXTRA POINTS:** The Keller (Texas) Citizen reported CU commit Jarrod Darden suffered a broken bone that required surgery to repair and he'll miss the rest of the season. The article did not specify which bone he broke. ... Stengel, offensive lineman Matt Bahr and cornerback Jonathan Hawkins made their CU debuts. Rodney Stewart became the fourth true freshman running back to start this decade. ... CU said approximately 3,000 tickets remain for West Virginia on Sept. 18, Less than 1,000 remain for Texas on Oct. 4. ... Ralphie V made her regular season debut Saturday, and CU also started what it hopes to be a new tradition, which includes ringing a bell 10 minutes before the team walks into the stadium on game day, and 10 minutes before Ralphie runs.



# Bufs rally late to avoid major upset

By B.G. Brooks

Saturday, September 6, 2008

BOULDER — The Colorado Buffaloes on Saturday avoided what could have been another embarrassing dose of the Big Sky blues. Like Montana State, a dangerously ambitious member of the Big Sky Conference that ruined coach Dan Hawkins' 2006 CU debut, Eastern Washington initially gave the Buffs more than they could digest.

But this time, CU outscored its lower-division visitor 24-3 in the second half and won 31-24 at Folsom Field, giving Hawkins his first home-opening win in three seasons. The victory, though, required a "don't panic, just play" halftime message by a handful of Buffs seniors, then an interception return for a 27-yard touchdown by cornerback Cha'pelle Brown with 1:44 to play.

Asked to make an opening postgame statement to the media, Hawkins simply said, "Whew," before adding, "I told you guys they were a good football team, and they are. We always try to tell our guys not to get caught up with the decal on the side of the helmet. (But) it's hard a lot of the time when you have young guys."

First-year Eastern Washington coach Beau Baldwin, whose team lost 39-24 last week at another Big 12 Conference stop, Texas Tech, said CU was "taking us seriously. We have a good team, and we were making more plays (in the first half)."

Brown's score, the first of his college career, and Aric Goodman's extra point gave the Buffs (2-0) their first lead of the afternoon and an anxious crowd of 46,417 a reason to exhale.

Finally.

"It's not how you start, it's how you finish," Brown said, noting he read Eastern Washington quarterback Matt Nichols' eyes and found himself in the right spot to make his game-turning pick.

"No doubt I was going to score," Brown added. "Some way, some how, I was going to get it in."

At halftime, with CU trailing 21-7, senior defensive tackle George Hypolite said, "I got excited . . . I've got passion for this program, I play to win."

Essentially, that's the message that Hypolite and fellow seniors such as safety Ryan Walters, a 2008 captain, delivered. Said Walters: "I told everybody, 'Don't worry, don't panic. We need a sense of urgency, but we'll be OK.' "

To be OK, though, the Buffs had to make defensive adjustments to slow Nichols (32-for-51, 303 yards, one touchdown, two interceptions). And they needed a smoother second half from their own

quarterback, Cody Hawkins, whose first-half interception was returned for a touchdown and helped put CU in its early hole.

“Our guys are resilient,” said Cody Hawkins (28-38, 261 yards, three TDs, one interception). “That was impressive, but equally unimpressive was how we did in the first half . . . in the second half we did what we had to do.”

Unable to slow the Eagles’ hurry-up offense and passing attack, the Buffs found themselves in an early hole as Eastern Washington marched 84 yards on its opening possession and took a 7-0 lead.

After converting on two consecutive short third-down attempts, both on passes by Nichols and a sign of things to come, the Eagles faced another short third down and Nichols again delivered.

Only this time, it was for a 43-yard touchdown. He hit receiver Brynson Brown with a 10-yard toss across the middle and he did the remaining work, carrying groping nickel back Jalil Brown into the end zone. No wonder CU fans were gulping: Nichols hit his first eight passes for 88 yards and the score.

Felipe Macias’ PAT gave the Eagles their 7-0 lead, and the Buffs quickly were on their heels – a position they would assume for most of the half.

On its second possession, CU gave its fans a shot of relief, driving 65 yards in 12 plays for a touchdown. The march was highlighted by freshman Darrell Scott (13 carries, 39 yards) hurdling an Eagles tackler, then carrying a couple of other defenders on a 22-yard run to the Eastern Washington 9-yard line.

On the next play, Cody Hawkins found Scott’s uncle – sophomore receiver Josh Smith – in the left corner of the end zone, giving Smith the first touchdown reception of his career. Goodman’s extra point tied the score at 7.

Then, the Buffs imploded.

CU’s defense finally forced an Eastern Washington punt, but while trying to get extra yards, Smith had the ball stripped on the punt return – the second time in two games he’s fumbled on a kick or punt return.

Six plays after Eastern Washington linebacker Marcus Walker recovered at the CU 27-yard line, 240-pound fullback Toke Kefu rammed in from the 1-yard line, and with Macias’ extra point, the Eagles surged ahead 14-7.

A series later, Cody Hawkins was intercepted in the right flat by Eagles linebacker J.C. Sherritt, who returned the pick 48 yards for a touchdown. Macias again converted, and the Buffs suddenly were trailing 21-7.

After Walters forced an Eastern Washington fumble in the first half’s final minute and linebacker Jeff Smart recovered, the Buffs had a chance to cut the deficit to 21-10. But Goodman’s 37-yard field goal attempt slipped wide left, and the Buffs left the field in a silence broken by a smattering of boos from their home crowd.

Eastern Washington amassed 206 total yards (179 passing) to CU’s 163 (97 passing) in the first half. The Eagles’ most impressive first-half stat: 7-of-10 third-down conversions to the Buffs’ meager 3-of-8. The final third-down conversion ratio: Eastern Washington 11-of-19, CU 8-of-17.

The Buffs opened the second half unconvincingly, drawing a pair of penalties and punting, then having a similar lack of success – minus the penalties – on their second second-half possession.

But with the offense misfiring, Smith – aka, J-Fly – atoned for his first-half fumble. After he returned Fritz Brayton's second punt of the half 51 yards to the Eastern Washington 4-yard line, Cody Hawkins hit freshman tight end Ryan Deehan for a 1-yard touchdown – the first of Deehan's college career and the first by a CU freshman tight end in 25 years.

Goodman's conversion pulled the Buffs to 21-14, and 5 ½ minutes later, the third quarter ended that way. But CU crept closer as Goodman's 32-yard field goal on the fifth play of the fourth quarter cut the deficit to 21-17.

The Buffs drove to the Eagles' 22-yard line midway through the fourth quarter, but instead of having Goodman attempt a field goal on fourth-and-3, Dan Hawkins elected to go for the first down.

Cody Hawkins' pass was incomplete, and Eastern Washington marched to the CU 35-yard line, where Macias kicked a career-long 52-yard field goal to push the Eagles ahead 24-17.

After a 15-yard personal foul penalty was assessed on the kickoff, the Buffs took over on their own 43-yard line, with 3:48 left to avoid another Big Sky upset. Hawkins opened the drive with a pair of completions to Smith (13 yards) and Patrick Williams, whose 36-yard reception gave CU a first down at the Eastern Washington 9-yard line.

On third down, Hawkins hit fullback Jake Behrens with a 2-yard scoring pass, and Goodman's PAT pulled the Buffs even at 24-24.

Eastern Washington had 1:57 to respond, but Cha'pelle Brown answered first. The Eagles marched as far as the Buffs' 30-yard line before safety D.J. Dykes intercepted Nichols in the end zone with three seconds to play.

Dan Hawkins called winning despite afternoon-long adversity “a great sign. We're seeing some of that over the last three or four games with this team, having resiliency, and we're going to need that down the road.”

**ETC.:** With their next game not until Sept. 18 against West Virginia (6:30 p.m., Folsom Field, ESPN) the Buffs have altered this week's practice schedule. They will take their usual off day on Monday, then practice Tuesday-Friday, taking next Saturday off . . . CU's most serious injury was to linebacker Shaun Mohler, who suffered a bruised collarbone, which was not as serious as originally feared, but his status for the West Virginia game has not been determined. . . Buffs freshman running back Rodney Stewart (9 carries, 38 yards) made his first start . . . CU has three known verbal commitments for its Class of 2009, and one of them – receiver Jarrod Darden, of Keller, Texas – recently suffered a broken ankle in practice that required surgery. Central High School coach Bart Helsley told *The Keller (Texas) Citizen* that Darden, a 6-foot-4, 211-pounder, was out for the season . . . CU unveiled what it hopes will become an appealing game-day tradition. A massive bell, measuring 4 feet in diameter and weighing 1,800 pounds, was rung twice before kickoff – the first time about 2 ½ prior to kickoff, the second 10 minutes prior to the traditional running of Ralphie, the buffalo mascot. The bell was donated by long-time CU supporter Barb Roberts Quinlan in memory of her late husband, Dwight Roberts.

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