



70,000-plus crowd no lock anymore for CU-CSU game

CU, CSU combined have more than 9,000 tickets left for Saturday's game

By Kyle Ringo
Tuesday, August 28, 2007

Playing the Colorado-Colorado State football game at Invesco Field in Denver could be losing its luster.

Officials from both schools confirmed a significant number of tickets remained at the close of business Monday for the 79th edition of the rivalry. If sales remain sluggish, it could lead to Saturday's crowd numbering fewer than 70,000 for the second consecutive season — something that hasn't happened in the seven previous years in Denver.

Colorado State, which receives 45 percent of the allotment, or about 33,000 tickets, has approximately 5,000 tickets remaining. It has sold approximately 28,000 total tickets, including its allotment of 10,000 student tickets.

Colorado receives 55 percent of the allotment, or about 39,000 tickets. It has about 4,100 tickets remaining. CU had sold more than 34,000 tickets, including nearly all of its allotment of 12,000 student tickets.

"It's actually a little better than last year at this point," CU athletic director Mike Bohn said. "We have four full days left to go. Hopefully, it will get closer to that sellout number."

The Denver Metro Sports Commission and some Denver Broncos season ticket holders also figure into the allotment of tickets at 76,125-seat Invesco Field.

The schools began playing their annual grudge match in Denver in 1998 in front of a crowd that numbered 76,036. All but two games in the series have been played in Denver since, including last year's contest in which CSU beat CU 14-10 in front of the smallest crowd (65,701) to see the series in Denver.

Last year's contest was a CSU home game. CU is the home team this year.

Officials from both schools said they were optimistic that fans would buy a significant number of tickets in the final four days leading up to the game. They also acknowledged the game never has attracted a large number of walk-up purchases on game day.

A variety of factors could have fans shying away from spending \$55 or more to attend the game this year. The fact that both teams are coming off sour seasons is at the top of the list.

The Buffs went 2-10 last season — only the third 10-loss season in school history — in coach Dan Hawkins' first year coaching the team. The Rams went 4-8 and lost their final seven games, leading a few to wonder if coach Sonny Lubick's best days in Fort Collins are behind him.

Another factor possibly contributing to slow sales is the 10 a.m. start time. The schools agreed to play early this year to attract a national television audience on Fox Sports Net. Playing nationally televised games puts extra revenue in athletic department coffers.

Gary Ozzello, senior associate athletic director for external operations at CSU, said those issues really amount to excuses.

"I think you have several reasons that people will choose to hide behind, but I still think there is a tremendous excitement for the game from CSU fans," Ozzello said. "I think it's on par with previous seasons.

"To be honest, when we've had night games, you have people who say, 'Oh, that's too late.'"

Colorado officials chose to bring the game back to Boulder in 2004 and 2005 in part because of fans who said they prefer the game to be played on campus. The crowd of 54,972 at the 2005 game in Folsom Field was the largest crowd for a home game on campus in CU history.

Officials said they don't believe large numbers of unsold seats this year will lead to renewed calls to return to Boulder or Fort Collins. CSU hasn't hosted the Buffs in Hughes Stadium since 1996.

"I feel like our marketing and advertising efforts for exposure have been strong in the past month leading up to the game," Bohn said. "I'm hopeful we can accomplish our goal of a sellout."

Notable

Bohn said CU has sold out of more than 4,000 combination passes for students. The passes allow students to attend every home football and men's basketball game this school year. ... The Buffs had Monday off for the first day of fall semester classes. They practice today, Wednesday and Thursday in advance of Saturday's game. ... There are 620 schools participating in some level of NCAA football in 2007, an increase of four over 2006, according to the Football Writer's Association.



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college football

This time, CU screening Hanie

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder — Colorado State quarterback Caleb Hanie connected on his first 14 pass attempts last year in CSU's 14-10 victory over Colorado, a completion streak that still sticks in the craw of CU junior safety Ryan Walters.

Walters vows that won't happen again when the teams meet Saturday at 10 a.m. at Invesco Field at Mile High.

"(Hanie's) numbers were good, but it was because they ran the screen efficiently," Walters said this afternoon.

"I know they had one long passing play late in the game (a 32-yarder to Johnny Walker on the final possession) and that was because of blown coverage," Walters added. "Other than that, it was the screens that hurt us.

"I think we've got that all worked out. I think our pass defense is going to be far more effective than it was last year."

Walters said the screen pass took CU's defense by

surprise. Hanie finished with 20-of-23 passing for 233 yards.

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"I don't think we were really expecting the screens last year," Walters said. "And once we figured out they were running it, we had problems getting it covered.

"I'm not worried about the screens too much this year. If we play our game and we do what we're supposed to do on defense, we'll be fine."

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Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, August 30, 2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

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Hawkins relives bad memory

By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

This probably isn't advice Colorado coach Dan Hawkins enjoys giving.

But Monday, during the first Big 12 coaches teleconference of the college football season, Hawkins received questions from people who wondered if he might have some hints for Texas A&M, which opens its season Saturday with Montana State.

Montana State beat the Buffs in Hawkins' debut as CU coach last season, 19-10, in a game that set an ominous tone. When A&M coach Dennis Franchione chose Sunday to warn his players about CU's plight from last year, he had little trouble grabbing their attention.

"There's no doubt ears perked up (Sunday) night when we talked about that game and read the comments from Colorado players and coaches about how tough Montana State played," Franchione said.

What was Hawkins' advice?

"One, don't have a new staff," he began. "Two, don't have a new quarterback. And three, don't have a bunch of true freshmen playing for you.

"If you can avoid some of those things, you're all right."

Hawkins said the loss was more of an issue to people outside the program. He added that it was hard to say exactly what its effect was, because CU followed that loss with five more.

"I don't care if you're a Division III team or NAIA or I-AA. I've been on that side of the fence ... and Montana State has some players," Hawkins said. "Typically in I-AA, it's not that you don't have the players. It's you don't have the depth. That really wasn't a shocker to me."

Division I-AA Montana State had a rough offseason. Coach Mike Kramer was fired in May after the program came under scrutiny when former players were arrested on drug charges. In seven seasons, Kramer went 40-43, the third-highest win total in school history. He attracted to the program some high-profile players who signed with Division I programs out of high school but sought new beginnings when things didn't work out.

"We don't take any early-season game for granted," Franchione said.

"Montana State, we know they're a I-AA school and have gone through a lot of change. But they're still the program that beat Colorado pretty soundly last year."

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CU coach Dan Hawkins doesn't like to talk too much about last season's loss to Division I-AA Montana State. **Times-Call/Lewis Geyer**

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cu football

Buff's see rush job with revamped defensive line

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder - A year ago, Colorado's defensive line put plenty of pressure on Colorado State quarterback Caleb Hanie. It wasn't enough, however, as Hanie picked apart CU, completing 20-of-23 passes for 233 yards in the Rams' 14-10 victory.

With former CU sack specialist Abraham Wright now wearing Miami Dolphins gear, the Buffs' hope to pressure Hanie in the season opener Saturday rests on a revamped line.

"You see some guys get a little nervous when there's pressure, but other guys (like Hanie) have nerves of steel," CU defensive line coach Romeo Bandison said. "I thought we did a pretty good job of getting pressure on him, but I didn't see him get startled at all.

"You can never really count on the quarterback getting rattled. We just have to do our jobs. We have to know what each other is doing and take care of our responsibilities."

In addition to Wright, who sacked Hanie three times

last year, CU had to replace its other starting defensive end, Walter Boye-Doe, who also had a sack in last year's game.

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"Those guys both did things on the field that were spur-of-the-moment," junior defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "You can't replace something like that. This year we're not about one dominant player. We're four very good players who can make a lot of plays. It's more 'by committee' this year."

Bandison's new-look front four has performed well

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enough in fall camp that CU coach Dan Hawkins calls it a strength of the team. Hypolite's pal inside, former Notre Dame transfer Brandon Nicolas, also is back for his junior year. Making Bandison's life easier is having two experienced players to slot in at defensive end. Alonzo Barrett, a 6-foot-3, 235-pound senior, and Maurice Lucas, a 6-4, 260-pound junior, bring eagerness and athleticism. Both have patiently waited their turns.

"I can improve on everything, but I try to be around the ball always, wherever it is on the field," Barrett said.

Lucas, a former All-Colorado pick from Rangeview High School, was one of the most highly rated CU signees in recent years. He played in eight games in 2005 as a true freshman and earned CU's top newcomer honors.

Big things were expected of Lucas a season ago, but chronic tendinitis in both knees slowed him.

"Things are going good so far," Lucas said. "I feel like I'm getting better every day."

Bandison views Lucas as a player ready to bust out.

"With some guys, you draw it on the board one time and they've got it," he explained. "Other guys need to walk through it to learn. Maurice is the kind of guy that needs that muscle memory."

"There's nothing wrong with that. I used to be the same way. I tell Maurice, if I didn't practice well that week, I didn't play well."

After three weeks of practicing against teammates, Bandison believes his group is ready for another shot at CSU.

While focused on pressuring Hanie, Colorado's defensive line must also contend with CSU running back Kyle Bell, who missed last year's game because of a knee injury. In 2005, Bell ran for 1,288 yards.

"It's a trick to do both," Bandison said of defending against the pass and run. "That's why you watch film. That's why you want smart players. Fortunately, I think we have that."

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cu football

Tight ends offer quality, quantity**Bufs brim with potential grandmasters**

By Tom Kensler
 Denver Post Staff Writer
 The Denver Post

Article Last Updated:

Boulder - The way Dan Hawkins looks at it, college football is a lot like a chess match - with grass stains. It's all about gaining a piece- by-piece advantage with mismatches, which explains why Colorado's coach likes the tight ends.

An athletic tight end can be too quick for linebackers and a load for safeties. Although tight end appears to be the deepest position on the Buffaloes' roster, going four or five deep, Hawkins can't seem to get enough of them.

"I hope down the road we get to the point where we have seven or eight," Hawkins said. "You can do a lot with tight ends. We had many years (at Boise State) where the fifth tight end got a lot of plays."

In Saturday's season opener at Invesco Field at Mile High, Colorado State's defense can expect to see CU offensive formations that include two or three tight ends. On occasion, Colorado even used a set with four tight ends a year ago.

In addition to their usual spot next to an offensive tackle, Hawkins likes to have his tight ends occasionally split out as wide receivers or set up as a fullback or H-back.

"We can line up, spread out, manipulate it any way you want to benefit the team," said Joe Sanders, a 6-foot-3, 235-pound senior who converted from linebacker in the spring. "I'd say we're one of the best, if not the best, tight end corps in the country. As far as blocking, catching, running deep routes, running short routes - you name it, we can do it."

Sanders is listed second team behind sophomore Riar Geer (6-3, 255), a former high school quarterback from Fruita Monument who caught a team-high 24 passes for 261 yards and three touchdowns.

The third-teamer, Tyson DeVree (6-5, 245), might be a starter on some Big 12 Conference teams. DeVree is a former transfer from Western Michigan, where he was a second- team all-Mid-American Conference honoree in 2004.

Listed fourth on the depth chart is one of the most intriguing talents on the roster. Nate Solder, a redshirt freshman from Buena Vista, is 6-8 and 270 pounds. He has the speed to get downfield and make 5-10 defensive backs look helpless.

"Each one of us offers something different that we can throw at the defense," DeVree said. "We're definitely going to be complex in what we do. We can mix it up."

Special-teams coach Kent Riddle said he wouldn't hesitate to use sophomores Patrick Devenny (6-3, 240) or Devin Shanahan (6-5, 230) if need be. The position is that deep.

"What we're doing now is matching up the personnel to make sure all those guys are getting opportunities to do different things," Riddle said. "We don't want opponents to think that every time a certain tight end is in the game it's going to be a run, or if somebody else is in it's going to be a pass."

"We want to maximize their strengths. But the good thing is, they're all capable in every area."

Geer began last season third on the depth chart and led the team in receptions.

"After playing quarterback in high school and moving to tight end, people didn't expect me to pick it up so fast," Geer said.

Colorado has developed a reputation for producing NFL tight ends in recent years, including Christian Fauria, Daniel Graham, Joe Klop- fenstein and Quinn Sypniewski.

CU coaches believe the team's current crop of tight ends could produce more pros.

"It's a rich tradition that we're certainly all very aware of," Sanders said. "We want to keep that tradition going."

Footnote

CU senior linebacker Jordon Dizon was named Tuesday to the Butkus Award watch list. "Those preseason things, they're an honor," Dizon said after receiving the news. "But when you win something after the season, that's when you know you've made it."

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Walk-on nears job

Freshman Cope vying for CU's kickoff duties

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Exactly when Colorado decides who will kick off Saturday when the Buffs open 2007 against Colorado State (10 a.m., FSR, Invesco Field) has yet to be determined.

CU coach Dan Hawkins joked the call might be made during pre-game warmups. That's unlikely. With kickoffs now coming from the 30, the play promises to be one of college football's most important in 2007. And Hawkins did offer a glimpse into some of his thoughts on the walk-on who might do the honors Saturday.

"I think Tyler is totally ready to go and good to do it," Hawkins said. "We'll see."

Tyler is Tyler Cope, from Portland, Ore. He talked to Michigan, Boise State, Purdue and Oregon before accepting CU's invitation. Cope said he has five or six uncles and aunts who graduated from CU's engineering program, and he's now entering it to study mechanical engineering.

Special teams coach Kent Riddle got to know Cope through kicking camps over recent months. He convinced Cope to visit campus.

"We were fortunate to get him," Hawkins said.

Cope said his high school coach steered him toward CU because he liked the program's direction.

"Everything I heard about the program here, football and academically, was just great," he said. "Plus you can't beat the mountains."

Cope handled most of the kickoffs in CU's second scrimmage of camp. He said coaches have not indicated who'll handle the duties once the season starts. He also said coaches have addressed the importance of kickoffs in 2007 and how they'll increase the pressure. Cope doesn't seem to mind.

"I'm enjoying it. I can't not enjoy every minute of this," Cope said. "This is great.

"It's just cool having to perform 100 percent every single time."

Hawkins said Cope's kicks have been consistently longer, but senior Kevin Eberhart, who's expected to handle the placekicking in 2007, boots it higher.

"So you've got a tradeoff there," Hawkins said.



Freshman Tyler Cope hopes to be the Buffs' kickoff specialist when the season opens Saturday. **Times-Call/Bradley Wakoff**

“The other side is if you can kick it out of the end zone, it doesn’t matter what your hang time is. Moving it back five yards and still being able to get a touchback, that’d be huge.”

Hawkins also suggested coaches might let Eberhart, who backed up Mason Crosby most of the past four years, kick off in the opener to let him get reacquainted to game pressure.

“It might be one of those things where opening game, you let Kevin go a little bit just to let him look around the stadium and figure out it’s still a football and you still kick it the same way,” Hawkins said.

Extra points: Hawkins said Monday on the Big 12 teleconference that he had “no idea” when Bernard Jackson’s situation will be resolved. Jackson has missed practice time due to academics and other demands. Hawkins said over the weekend that it’s “highly doubtful” Jackson will be part of the CSU game plan. Jackson was listed third at quarterback on the depth chart CU released Sunday. ... Hawkins, predictably, also was asked Monday by other media outlets within Big 12 cities about his son Cody being the starting quarterback. He said he “probably” removed himself from the process of choosing a starter “a little bit more,” and he continued to downplay its emotional aspects. ... About CSU, Hawkins said the Rams return a “bunch of experience” and are a “very sound football team” that makes few mistakes. “When you have experience coming back, those guys know how to compete,” he said.

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