



Hawk doesn't expect nervous mistakes

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, August 29, 2007

Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins took a seat Tuesday evening on a table adjacent to the practice fields his team uses, looking like a man at ease.

Those who know Hawkins know him as one who is never satisfied. But Hawkins might have allowed himself a moment of relaxation after a practice he called "offensively was one of the best we've had."

CU players and coaches are feeling confident about their ability to move the ball finally, nine months after one of the worst offensive seasons in the program's history. A lot of that confidence seems to come from redshirt freshman starting quarterback Cody Hawkins, the coach's son.

Dan Hawkins said he expects his son will make freshman mistakes Saturday in the season opener against Colorado State and throughout the season, just like any other player breaking in at the college level.

"But I don't think he'll make mistakes because he's nervous," Dan Hawkins said.

The coach then recounted a moment he experienced two years ago as head coach at Boise State in a game at Georgia in front of about 90,000 fans. The atmosphere at Sanford Stadium was electric and probably contributed to Boise State quarterback Jared Zabransky and the rest of the offense committing six turnovers in the game.

Dan Hawkins said at one point that afternoon he saw his son on the sidelines saying, "Man, I wish I could play."

"That might be the first time I thought, 'This kid has something,' " Dan Hawkins said.

Cody Hawkins attributed some of the newfound confidence to most of the players having a year or more under their belts in the system. He said the Buffs are just further along in the maturation process than they were before facing the Rams last year in Game Two of his father's era as coach in Boulder.

Cody Hawkins was asked Tuesday to compare what the CU offense was capable of doing at this time a year ago to what it is capable of now.

"It's probably like addition and subtraction and then going straight to calculus," he said. "... We've been able to put in a lot more things and understand a lot more concepts and that's definitely going to help us in this game."

J-Fly to have MRI

[Print page](#)[Close window](#)

Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, August 30, 2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 8/29/2007

Smith taking his time

Bufs receiver recovering from bruised kidney

By Patrick Ridgell

The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — Colorado receiver Josh Smith is going to be careful with his comeback.

Smith, who bruised a kidney during a scrimmage on Aug. 18, said Tuesday he has another MRI scheduled for next week. Beyond that, there is nothing set.

CU coach Dan Hawkins said earlier he hoped the freshman could play by Sept. 15, when the Buffs host Florida State in their first game at Folsom Field. Smith said maybe.

“We’re going to see how the kidney’s doing and how I’m doing mentally,” Smith said. “Still, it’s going to be a big decision for me as well.”

Smith shined during camp and established himself as a playmaker in an offense that craves them. The injury forced him to spend four nights in Boulder Community Hospital. He is not practicing, but he’s been watching from the sideline since Friday.

Smith said doctors told him he’s lucky his injury wasn’t worse. He added that it occurred when he ran into a wall in the southwest corner of Folsom Field while trying to catch a long pass. Smith jumped to his feet after a moment and resumed playing. He went to the hospital after the scrimmage ended.

“There’s pain you can feel now and again,” he said. “You can tell it’s there, but it’s not unbearable. The pain is pretty tolerable.”

Smith said he isn’t thinking about the chance he might redshirt in 2007.

“I’m going to just keep taking it week by week and see how things are going with my body,” Smith said. “I just want to make sure everything gets healed correctly. No one is putting any pressure on me about it. They just say, ‘If you’re ready, we’ll see.’”

He said his biggest pain right now is watching.

“It really hurts me because I want to play,” Smith said.

“The guys miss me, and I miss the guys. They make me still feel as a part of the family a lot. I want to be able to help the team as much as I can, that’s all.”

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com.

Freshman wide receiver Josh Smith said he will undergo a magnetic resonance imaging exam next week on his bruised kidney and hopes to be able to return to practices and play against Florida State in the third game of the season.

Smith, who suffered a bruised kidney in a Aug. 18 scrimmage, was hospitalized for four days and has been watching recent practices from the sidelines dressed in shorts and his jersey. He said being on the sidelines hurts.

"I want to be able to help my team as much as I can, that's all," Smith said.

Smith said he considers himself extremely lucky that he didn't injured a more vital organ. The product of Moorpark, Calif., had been burning his way to the top of the depth chart at wide receiver prior to the injury and had earned the nickname "J-Fly" from his teammates because of his speed.

Smith previously said he would consider a redshirt season if he misses too many games this year. Tuesday he backed off that stance a little.

"I'm not even trying to really think about that right now," he said. "I'm just taking it week by week. I know that I'm going to heal properly soon. "

Notable

Senior running back Hugh Charles was one of 51 players named as candidates for the Doak Walker Award given annually to the nation's top running back. ... Senior linebacker Jordon Dizon was named to the Butkus Award watch list on Tuesday. The award is given to the nation's best linebacker each year. It is the second straight year Dizon has been on the Butkus list. ... The Denver Buff Club will hold its annual CSU pregame luncheon and rally Friday at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Doors open at 11 a.m.



© 2006 Daily Camera and Boulder Publishing, LLC.

Colorado Daily.com

The Online Edition of the Colorado Daily

[Print Page](#)

All for one and one for all

By JEFF GRAHAM Colorado Daily Staff Writer
Wednesday, August 29, 2007 10:25 PM MDT

If you had to describe the CU tight end group in one word, it would be 'dynamic.'

Looking strictly on paper, Colorado's group of tight ends run the gamut of size and weight, but it's what they do on the field that lives up to that description.

When talking with both players and coaches, this group of tight ends could offer the most depth on this year's team, yet it's their diversity as a group which poses the most pressing issues for opposing defenses.

With CU's all-time leading freshman receiver Riar Geer back for his sophomore campaign, the obvious threat of a soft-handed, blocking tight end remains intact. Include the addition of senior linebacker - turned - tight end Joe Sanders, and the Buffs have two solid athletes for coach Dan Hawkins' many two - tight end offensive sets.

"We all just have our different strengths," Geer said. "So we can mix and match things and get new tight ends in for certain plays."

Some of those situational players who will also be getting their share of the usual reps as well are Tyson DeVree and Nate Solder. At 6-foot-8, Solder could potentially cause defensive nightmares in the red zone, and DeVree is an already accomplished receiver as he transferred from Western Michigan in 2005.

While at Western Michigan, DeVree was on the official 2004 John Mackey watch list and averaged 10 yards per catch. However since coming over to CU, he has been hampered by injuries and has only recorded a handful of catches.

Solder in recent weeks has proven his worth in the down - by - down situations as the tall tight end from Buena Vista, Colorado was thrown to more when Geer was sidelined with a sprained ankle after the first scrimmage of the fall. Geer said after Wednesday's practice that he is 90 to 95 percent healthy and will be ready for CSU.

Hawkins and position coach Kent Riddle both agreed all six of their tight ends will be utilized this season in a number of different capacities. And that's not it. If Hawkins and Riddle had it their way, they would have seven or eight guys to be able to contribute in that category of big receivers every year.

"We want a big crew of tight ends. Those guys for us in our offense play in the running back positions, they play tight end, they play wide receiver," Riddle said. "So we can get a bunch of them on the field at once."

Here is how the depth chart shakes out leading up to the annual Colorado State rivalry game on Saturday.

PROJECTED STARTER

#87-Riar Geer, 6-3, 245 pounds, Soph.

Currently listed atop the depth chart, Geer led the Buffs in receiving last year as a red-shirt freshman and was the first ever Buff frosh to do so, with 24 receptions for 261 yards. He started nine games last season and played in all 12 garnering second team All-America honors by The Sporting News and Rivals.com. Geer played quarterback and defensive line his senior year of high school at Fruita Monument High School.

#13-Joe Sanders, 6-3, 235 pounds, Sr.

Sanders originally recruited as a tight end out of Hillsboro High School in Nashville Tennessee begins his senior year second on the depth chart at the position. After playing the past three years at linebacker, Sanders figures to be a significant contributor to CU's many two-tight end sets on offense. His great grandfather played hockey and was the first African-American to play collegiate lacrosse at Springfield (Mass.) College during the early 1900s.

#84-Tyson DeVree, 6-5, 245 pounds, Sr.

A highly regarded transfer from Western Michigan in 2005, DeVree had only a handful of catches in a CU uniform in 11 games played last year. Listed third on the depth chart, he will also see increased involvement in Dan Hawkins' offense.

#92-Nate Solder, 6-8, 270 pounds, Fr-RS.

Solder had a breakout fall camp, taking over many of the reps left open after Geer went down with an ankle sprain in the first scrimmage of the fall. His tremendous frame holds 270 pounds of weight with only about 2.8 percent body fat, and could figure into CU's offense in many situations this year.

#33-Patrick Devenny, 6-3, 240 pounds, Soph.

Originally recruited as a quarterback in 2005, Devenny made the switch to tight end prior to the beginning of last year. Due to lack of depth near the end of the season Devenny dressed and practiced back behind center in case of emergency to save the red-shirt of current starting quarterback Cody Hawkins. He currently listed fifth back at tight end.

#88-Devin Shanahan, 6-5, 230 pounds, Soph.

Choosing CU over Ivy League schools like Penn, Harvard and Yale, Shanahan looks to remain healthy after completing knee surgery rehab this past year. Currently listed six on the latest depth chart.

"There is big play ability," Riddle said. "They have good speed, they have good hands, they are versatile they can do a lot of things. So we are counting on them to be a big part of our offense."

Coach Riddle said the single most important aspect of keeping a full stable of capable tight ends is their ability to keep defenses guessing on formations. With a well rounded skill level top to bottom this year, Riddle said he is not worried about losing effectiveness at the position in the case of injury or other situations.

"They all have the ability to do everything," Riddle said. "We can put any of the guys out there and run whatever we want."

[Print page](#)[Close window](#)

Longmont, Colorado
Thursday, August 30, 2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 8/29/2007

Hawkins' nerves in control

By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — Cody Hawkins doesn't do nervous.

Four days before he makes his first collegiate start, plays in his first college game, plays in a real game for the first time since the fall of 2005 and puts that 59-0 record as a starter on the line, Cody Hawkins resembled the same old person Tuesday he always is.

Colorado's redshirt freshman quarterback folded his arms and fielded question after question about what awaits Saturday when the Buffs face Colorado State in their season opener. He sounded like a coach, or at least someone older than his 19 years. And when the subject of nerves came up, Hawkins got downright dismissive.

"I'm not a big nervous guy," Hawkins said. "You might get butterflies every once in a while, but I'm pretty calm, and I know that if you work hard during the week, then why be nervous on Saturday? How many people get to play college football? There's no reason to eat yourself alive about it."

Hawkins said the last time he felt nervous was in January, before the year's first conditioning session. Christmas, apparently, had been a little too kind, and Hawkins sat in class wondering what strength coach Jeff Pitman had in store.

"You can tell by the guys who are still on the squad and the guys who aren't, that wasn't an easy thing," Hawkins said.

Head coach Dan Hawkins, Cody's father, strained to remember the last time he saw his oldest son nervous. He came up with one instance.

"It was in little league," he said. "We first moved over (to Boise) from Oregon and he had been on coach-pitch. And he came over right in the middle of the season, and they were on real-life pitching. That was 1998. He was 10 years old. That would be the last time."

In 2005, Cody accompanied his father's Boise State team when it played at Georgia. That day, Jared Zabransky threw four interceptions in the first half and the Broncos lost, 48-13. Cody, still in high school, did more than just pace the sideline.

"Seriously, he was looking at me and going, 'Man, I wish I could play right now,'" Dan Hawkins said. "And I'm looking at him going, 'Huh? That's a pretty bold statement.'"

"That was the first time I was really going, 'We must really have something right here, if he wants to go out there with those guys.'"

The coach said Tuesday he's confident his son will be OK Saturday.

"I think he'll be really good. I really do," Dan Hawkins said. "Hey, he's going to make freshman mistakes; that's evident. But I don't think he's going to make mistakes because he's nervous. He's been around it long enough he can put all of that into perspective."

Cody Hawkins talks like he has an abundance of perspective. And he expects CSU to try to rattle him.

"I think I've been preparing for that, and that's what you have to be ready for," he said. "If I was playing against a freshman quarterback, I'd bring the heat and smoke him and break his helmet and do everything I could.

"But my linemen are great. We have some young guys in there, but they're very well prepared. ... We have some great leaders on the line, and they're doing an awesome job with me, with the running backs, of communicating protections and then doing their assignments in the proper way. I think they're definitely going to be ready."

Extra points: Running back Hugh Charles was named a candidate for the 2007 Doak Walker Award on Tuesday. It honors the nation's best running back. ... Jordon Dizon is on the 2007 Butkus Award watch list. The award goes to the nation's best linebacker. ... Bernard Jackson did not practice Tuesday. ... Ralphie made a practice run across the field late Tuesday afternoon after the team had finished its work. It appeared she did just fine.

Patrick Ridgell can be reached at pridgell@times-call.com



Secondary seeks redemption: Colorado St. QB Hanie completed 20 of 23 passes vs. CU last year

By Kyle Ringo
Wednesday, August 29, 2007

File Ben Burney away under keys to the game. Heck, make that keys to the season.

No. 42 for the Colorado Buffaloes will start at cornerback Saturday when the 2007 campaign kicks off against Colorado State at Invesco Field in Denver. It won't be the first start of Burney's career with the Buffs — he made two starts as a sophomore safety last season — but it will be a new experience for the junior from Mullen High School.

Burney figures to get plenty of action coming his way as a greenhorn cornerback starting opposite Terrence Wheatley, a player Big 12 Conference coaches named first-team All-Big 12 last season.

Wheatley says he will be asked to shut down the opponents' best receiver each week, which means he won't always play one particular side of the field. It also means Burney will be expected not to allow the man he is covering to look like the best receiver on the field that week.

Burney believes he's up to the task.

"I do expect to be picked on," said Burney, the son of Denver Broncos defensive linecoach Jacob Burney. "So I've just got to step my game up and do everything I can to make sure I make those plays when they come my way, cause they are going to come my way."

Although half the CU secondary is new, the group enters Saturday's game and this season feeling like it has something to prove. The Buffs allowed opposing quarterbacks to complete 67 percent of their passes in 2006 and Colorado State quarterback Caleb Hanie was one of the worst offenders.

Hanie had a career day in terms of accuracy and decision-making last year, completing 20 of 23 passes for 233 yards and a touchdown. The Buffs feel like they made it easy on Hanie by making silly mistakes and by not knowing their play calls and responsibilities nearly as well as they needed to.

"We're like a human body," Burney said. "If one thing is out of whack, then it's not going to work."

There was more than one thing out of whack the last time the Buffs saw Hanie. It might have been the second game of the season, but the Buffs acknowledge they often were lost or completely clueless when looking to the sidelines for signals and calls in their 14-10 loss to the Rams.

CSU embarrassed the Buffs by successfully using the same bubble-screen on multiple occasions. The CSU offense wasn't able to score a lot of points but it held onto the ball for more than 34 minutes with a short passing game.

"It kind of sucks when you go out there and you don't know the defense and you're out there guessing," Wheatley said. "I think this year it will be a lot better just cause we actually know what we're doing. I was watching film the other day with coach and I couldn't figure out what we were doing half the time.

"I was like, 'I don't know what that call is. We don't have it.' That was cause we just made something up on the spot."

Wheatley said the CU secondary hasn't lived up to the hype it has received the past two years with a lot of veteran players returning. There is considerably less hype about the group this season, with most of the attention focused on Wheatley.

It's an opportunity for players such as Burney and starting strong safety D.J. Dykes to distinguish themselves. Free safety Ryan Walters said the Buffs are "leaps and bounds" ahead of where they were last time they faced the Rams, despite having less experienced depth overall than they did last year.

Walters said he isn't worried about how Burney or Dykes will perform because they know where they are supposed to be within the defense.

The Buffs go into Saturday's game knowing Hanie is capable of carving them up, but they also know the CSU senior is no Superman, even though they made him look the part. Hanie has a 6-11 record in 17 career starts. He has a 59.2 career completion percentage and has thrown 19 interceptions with just 21 touchdown passes.

"He's good," Wheatley said. "He definitely kind of sliced us up last year. So I definitely want to stop that."



© 2006 Daily Camera and Boulder Publishing, LLC.

Rocky Mountain News

To print this page, select **File** then **Print** from your browser

URL: http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/ncaa/article/0,2777,DRMN_23932_5684922,00.html

Cody Hawkins' health will rest in taped hands

Offensive line has back of Buffaloes' young quarterback

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News
August 29, 2007

BOULDER - He is a big guy who's very big on getting it right, and Saturday poses one of the largest challenges of Jeff Grimes' coaching career.

For the University of Colorado's offensive linemen every week, it will be Grimes' way or the wrong way. And if it's the latter, no one will suffer in solitude on college football's opening weekend.

Grimes' guys, a hefty and diverse blend of experience and budding talent, are charged with protecting quarterback Cody Hawkins, a promising redshirt freshman who can hear the clock tick-tick-ticking toward his first Division I-A start.

It comes Saturday at Invesco Field at Mile High against rival Colorado State, and anyone who has followed football for more than 24 hours knows the formula defensive coordinators instinctively dial up when facing young and inexperienced quarterbacks.

"They'll try to get him rattled," CU passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mark Helfrich said. "We're trying to prepare everybody for everything - various fronts, blitzes, coverages. . . . They'll try to confuse him."

If Hawkins is a bit of a game-day stranger to these tactics at this level, Grimes isn't. In his last coaching stop before joining the CU staff during the offseason, Grimes worked as Brigham Young's offensive line coach - the same position, plus running game coordinator, he holds now.

He remembers BYU's trip two seasons ago to New Mexico, a Mountain West Conference team that prefers an unconventional 3-3 stack defense "where they blitz and twist and every play is like chaos," he said.

Not satisfied his linemen were sufficiently prepared for countering the Lobos' lunacy at the line of scrimmage, Grimes took his troops into their hotel parking lot on game day for a 90-minute, eleventh-hour walk-through.

"They were sweating their butts off," he recalled. "But I said, 'Hey, fellas, I'm not going to let you go on the field for this game until *you* know you're ready.' "

The Cougars offensive line showed up on time and well-schooled for their first play from scrimmage. BYU won "and we got it right most of the time," Grimes said. "They thanked me afterwards.

"I'm going to do whatever it takes to make sure that I feel confident. If your players go on the field and they have questions - particularly the young guys - they're going to be hesitant. And if you play hesitant, you're dead."

By game's end, your quarterback doesn't feel so good, either. Hawkins' scrambling isn't fear-provoking, but he can move sufficiently and has conditioned himself superbly. Yet, at 5-foot-11 and 195 pounds, neither he nor his personal protectors want him body-slammed on a regular basis.

"Cody will be fine, and we will be, too," junior center Daniel Sanders said, adding that during last week's final four days of practice, Grimes had Sanders and his pals "working on any zone blitzing you can think of - I think he's even making up blitzes. We've been working on them nonstop during our individual periods."



Linda McConnell ©
The Rocky

Offensive linemen, front row from left, Edwin Harrison, Tyler Polumbus and Devin Head; and back row, tight end Riar Geer, linemen Daniel Sanders and Wes Palazzi, and tight end Joe Sanders. The big men up front will be protecting a valuable commodity-redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins.

Mostly a guard last season, Sanders now is charged with trying to recognize what defense the opponent is in, where a blitz might originate and relaying that information to his linemates.

If the tackles - seniors Tyler Polumbus (left) and Edwin Harrison (right) - detect something amiss or read an outside blitz key Sanders might not see, they prompt him.

Grimes' focus, though, usually hasn't been on Sanders, Polumbus and Harrison - all experienced hands - getting it right. CU is expected to open with two guards,, sophomore Devin Head and redshirt freshman Wes Palazzi, who count one start between them (Head's last season against Montana State).

Any guesses where CSU might try and channel most of its inside chaos?

Sanders said the Buffaloes' two new guards "were a little bumpy at first, but they're picking things up."

Since game planning for CSU began, Palazzi said CU's linemen have been shown "zone blitzes, boundary blitzes, field blitzes - the whole nine yards. We've practiced everything (the Rams) have shown on tape. . . . Come Saturday, I think we should be prepared for about anything."

And what if CSU zeroes in on him and Head?

"If they want to throw it our way, sure, go ahead. . . . We'll be ready for it," Palazzi said.

With three days remaining before kickoff, Grimes assures no defensive look will go unseen.

"Whatever it takes, midnight review sessions in the film room, whatever," he said. "I want them to be able to say, 'Whatever they give us, we're going to be ready for it.'"

"But, yeah, they're going to try and give us some stuff. They're a big zone-blitz team and they try to disguise where it's coming from. I'm sure they'll have a full arsenal of blitzes ready for a young quarterback and young (offensive) linemen. I'm sure they're going to test us early."

As certain as CU's coaches and players are about CSU's defensive intentions, they equally are confident in Cody Hawkins' abilities to cope with whatever is thrown at him - provided the line does.

"That's his strongest asset," Grimes said. "He can think his way through the game without becoming mechanical. Some guys start thinking their way through a game and overanalyze and can't make a quick enough decision."

"Cody kind of sees it all, but he's relaxed enough and poised enough that it never slows him down. I just think he's going to be great in that regard."

Passing game coordinator/receivers coach Eric Kiesau said Hawkins is a "very special young quarterback. He takes a very different approach (and) we've prepared him a lot."

And Helfrich's hope is "when the real lights come on, he's just who he is all the time."

Hawkins plans to be the same guy who seems unflappable in practice, sees the field and coverage in full and is setting the standard among CU quarterbacks for after-hours preparation and playbook time.

"One of this strengths is he's so smart and cares so much about the game, he'll get in and watch more film than anyone," redshirt freshman receiver and close friend Scotty McKnight said. "He's in his playbook more than anyone. That was his strength in high school football."

"They can throw some confusion at him, but for the most part, he's smart enough to handle it and break things down. He does a really good job of controlling the game."

For his part, Hawkins expects to be pressured and even expects the unexpected.

"Pressure is always a big deal, just because people want to see how you handle it. But we've done a good job in practice of

simulating it, and the (offensive) line has done an awesome job picking it up. We'll just keep working on it and definitely expect it on Saturday."

The only dissatisfaction Grimes & Co. will experience is if they're not able to handle it - which CSU's defensive minds are undoubtedly counting on.

Cody Hawkins' bodyguards

Pos Player Yr. Ht. Wt. Comment

LT Tyler Polumbus Sr. 6-8 300 Developed into formidable tackle

LG Wes Palazzi Fr.* 6-1 295 Swift camp ascension was surprise

C Daniel Sanders Jr. 6-3 310 Made huge strides at guard in 2006

RG Devin Head So. 6-4 295 Becoming one of line's vocal leaders

RT Edwin Harrison Sr. 6-4 300 Line's Iron Buffalo spring honoree

TE Riar Geer So. 6-3 245 Blocking catching up with receiving

TE Joe Sanders Sr. 6-3 235 Converted linebacker made impact

* Redshirt freshman

brooks@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5466

Copyright 2007, Rocky Mountain News. All Rights Reserved.

ColoradoDaily.com

The Online Edition of the Colorado Daily

[Print Page](#)

Catch by committee

By ELIOT DEMPSEY Colorado Daily Sports Editor
Wednesday, August 29, 2007 10:25 PM MDT

Cody Hawkins will be making his first ever start in a college football game this weekend against CSU. When he does, he will have a plethora of receiving targets to choose from.

The Buffs have redshirt freshman Scotty McKnight and junior Patrick Williams listed atop the depth chart as starters, but that term can be misleading when it comes to the CU wideout corps.

"We rotate a lot of guys in. We call it groupings, because we play the best six or seven guys," said second-year receivers coach and passing game coordinator Eric Kiesau. "There are two reasons why we do that. One is if you just label someone a starter, and you have twelve receivers and only two starters, then those other ten guys are thinking 'I'm not going to play unless one of those guys gets hurt,' so why try to include everybody. If a guy does something really well, then we want to make sure we can move him around so that he can do that one thing really well, so really it enables us to put our guys in the best situations to be successful, and it gets everybody involved."

With six or seven guys constantly rotating in, including three true freshmen, it would seem to cause a problem with quarterback / receiver chemistry. But according to both McKnight and Kiesau, CU handles it just fine.

"I think for the most part we are all getting a good amount of snaps," said McKnight. "I am in a fine rhythm right now catching the ball. As a corps, our offense is in a rhythm and as a whole, things are going well for us."

Things are going especially well for McKnight and Williams, who will line up out wide to start the game against CSU. McKnight broke his ankle on the first day of spring drills, but has recovered enough to prove himself a valued weapon. He showed his worth the old fashioned way, through plain hard work.

"He just worked extremely hard," said Kiesau. "He worked hard in the offseason, he made plays in fall camp. Even when that guy was tired and hurting, he just kept going, kept plugging and kept going through, and those are the type of guys you need. I was telling my guys, anybody can do it when they are fresh, but in the fourth quarter when you are tired, who can step up and make plays? Scotty is one of those guys, definitely."

McKnight, whose father played with coach Dan Hawkins at UC-Davis, has a strong relationship with Cody Hawkins, one that could prove to be of vital importance to the Buffs passing game.

"Me and Cody have been going to camps together since our sophomore year in high school, we met and worked out," said McKnight. "Right before our junior and senior years we went to a bunch of different camps, and then when we got up here, we were throwing everyday so me and him have a real good connection."

That connection had better produce more than the seven passing touchdowns that CU mustered in 2006, or 2007 may not be much better.

The Buffs will need production from not only McKnight and Williams, but a host of other receivers.

PROJECTED STARTERS

Wide Receiver Grouping - X

4, Patrick Williams, 6-2, 200, Jr - Williams played in twelve games last season, catching 19 balls for 242 yards and one touchdown. When coach Kiesau was asked about Williams' improvement as a player, he spoke glowingly about Williams' newfound catching ability.

? degrees. Totally different guy. We changed some of his catching mechanics in the offseason, trying to position his body in front of the ball a little more."

#83, Dusty Sprague, 6-4, 190, Sr 5 - Sprague led the Buffs in receptions in 2005 with 43 catches for 468 yards. He played in all 12 games last season, but managed only 11 receptions.

#48 Cody Crawford, 5-11, 180, Jr

#38 Chase McBride, 5-7, 160, Sr 5

#80, Jarrell Yates, 5-11, 200, Soph.

(#9, Josh Smith, 6-0, 180, Fr; INJR)

Wide Receiver Grouping - Z

#21, Scotty McKnight, 5-10, 190, R. Fr

#1, Stephone Robinson, 5-8, 195, Sr 5

#5, Kendrick Celestine, 5-11, 180, Fr - One of the trio of freshmen who impressed throughout fall camp. Should bring a measure of speed to the air attack.

#6 Marques Simas, 6-2, 195, Fr

#17, Alvin Barnett, 5-11, 195, Sr

Rocky Mountain News

To print this page, select **File** then **Print** from your browser

URL: http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/ncaa/article/0,2777,DRMN_23932_5685443,00.html

CU remembers back's punishing style

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News
August 29, 2007

BOULDER — Kyle Bell was noticeably absent last season, but it takes little to jog the University of Colorado defense's collective memory after its encounter with him in 2005.

"A guy that big — 6-2, 230 coming at you through a hole — it's kind of a rare sight," CU linebacker Jordon Dizon said. "I remember him knocking the snot out of me. It's good for their program to finally have him back."

Added cornerback Terrence Wheatley: "He runs downhill and if you're in his way, you'd better hope you took some aspirin. He's definitely a game-changer."

Bell sat out 2006 with a knee injury, watching the Rams' 14-10 win over the largely punchless Buffaloes. His right knee surgically repaired and apparently fully mended, he returns to the CSU lineup for Saturday's Rocky Mountain Showdown at Invesco Field at Mile High (10 a.m., FSN Rocky Mountain).

CU players and defensive coaches acknowledge the kind of impact Bell can have — if he's allowed to. In 2005, won 31-28 by CU, Bell ran 14 times for 66 yards, with 45 yards after initial contact.

Curiously, CSU seemingly strayed from giving him more carries when the outcome was in doubt. Two games later, in running 33 times for 183 yards against Nevada, he established himself as the Rams' go-to back and one of the most effective ball carriers in the Mountain West Conference.

In the 2005 season's final 10 games, he averaged 26 carries and 109 yards, finishing the season with 1,288 yards and 10 touchdowns. But as Bell begins his comeback, CU doesn't want him punching up rushing numbers anywhere close to those he produced down the stretch in 2005.

"Obviously, they're high on Kyle Bell and want to give him the ball," CU free safety Ryan Walters said. "(But) if we execute and do what we need to do on defense, I don't see how having him in the game is going to change the game."

CU's veteran players differ slightly on what Bell's absence meant for CSU's offense in last season's meeting and what the Rams might attempt offensively Saturday.

With Bell in the lineup, CSU's play-action pass opportunities should increase because CU would be forced to respect Bell's running presence.

Wheatley said CSU missed Bell "quite a bit" last season, while Dizon believes his return won't alter the Rams' fundamental plan.

The biggest thing, Dizon noted, is knowing "they've got someone special out there to run the ball. They're going to try and run it down our throats. We respect them for that. We've just got to take our Tylenol, strap up and expect their best. He's tough to tackle, but we're up to the challenge."

The Buffs run defense was respectable in 2006, yielding 112.4 yards a game (fourth in the Big 12 Conference, 30th in Division I-A). With three of four starting linemen (tackles Brandon Nicolas and George Hypolite, end Maurice Lucas) and two of three starting linebackers (Dizon, Brad Jones) returning, CU's defensive coaches believe there should be marked improvement this season.

"We feel like we gave up unnecessary yardage last season," linebackers coach Brian Cabral said. "We've worked an awful lot against the run. We believe we can be better."

Hypolite agreed, contending the Buffs run defense was inconsistent in 2006.

"We'd hold people to 11 yards rushing, then give up 120 (the next game)," Hypolite said. "This year, I feel like we're going to be more consistent. That's what our defense wants to do — stop the run. Establish the line of scrimmage a yard back, make it easier for the defensive backs to play defensive back."

In determining whether consistency can be achieved, the Buffs won't have the luxury of opening against a warm-up act. There's Bell, healthy, hungry and running behind an offensive line that returns three starters.

"You really can't go into the game saying, 'OK, he's coming off an injury, we're not going to pay attention to him,' " Wheatley said. "You definitely respect all parts of his game."

brooks@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5466

Copyright 2007, Rocky Mountain News. All Rights Reserved.