



Buff fullbacks should see increased time this season

Big backs aim to play big role in rushing attack

By Ryan Thorburn Camera Sports Writer
Thursday, August 30, 2007

The fullbacks at Colorado are going to get some Hawk love this season.

Bufs head coach Dan Hawkins, a four-year letterwinner at fullback during his playing days at UC-Davis in the early 1980s, has a soft spot in his heart for those who play the position.

And with Samson Jagoras, Maurice Cantrell and Jake Behrens all making strides in the second year of the offense, expect to see the fullbacks used frequently this season, especially in the running game.

"They're the ultimate drone in your beehive," Hawkins said after Wednesday's practice. "They're your worker bees."

Chris Brown, Bobby Purify, Cortlen Johnson and Marcus Houston made all the headlines in 2001 when the Buffs ran their way to a Big 12 title. And the offensive line, anchored by Andre Gurode, was dominant.

But a lot of that success on the ground would not have been possible without the unheralded Brandon Drumm doing the dirty work at fullback.

The current crop of fullbacks understands their CU football history and hopes to repeat it.

"Last year I felt like fullback didn't get used in the way it should have been used," Jagoras said. "We made a pact that we were going to make the fullback an impact position. And we pushed each other and made sure that we were going to get on the field and have an impact on this team."

Jagoras moved from third to the top of the depth chart after a solid training camp. That doesn't mean the coaching staff is unhappy with Cantrell and Behrens, who both gave Jagoras some grief for doing a rare post-practice interview.

"Our fullbacks have grown up and they understand exactly what's going on," running backs coach Darian Hagan said. "They're going to be on the field a lot."

Fans and the media might overlook the fullbacks and their role, but Colorado State had better be ready for them. If nothing else, there is confidence inside CU's huddle when it comes to establishing the running game this season.

"We're a different animal this year. We've got an attitude that we're going to run on you," Jagoras said. "Whether you know we're going to run or not, we're going to run on you."

And what about receiving? Any chance Hawkins will try to give his guys some more love in the passing game?

"That's all he talks about is getting the fullbacks involved," Hagan said. "He takes them one period every day and works with them on their run blocking and stuff like that. They've gotten better and now it's time to reward those guys and give them the rock in the open space and see what they can do."

Cantrell was the top fullback on last year's roster. He had two catches for 38 yards and did not carry the ball even once.

"They're the ultimate blue-collar guy," Hawkins said. "Because you basically block, block, block, block, block and then once every five games, 'Oh by the way, here's a football. Enjoy it while it lasts.'"

"And that's kind of how it goes with those guys."

Notable

CU still had about 3,200 tickets to sell from its allotment for Saturday's game as of 5 p.m. on Wednesday. ... The Buffs marching band added some pep to the afternoon practice as the notes from the school fight song rehearsal carried their way down from Folsom Field to the CU practice fields. ... Bernard Jackson was not at practice and it is still unclear whether he will be eligible to play his senior season. ... Defensive tackle Jason Brace is ready to go after missing a week of practices due to a concussion. ... Freshman defensive back LaMont Smith expects to find out by today whether or not he has been cleared by the NCAA Clearing House.



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Band of brothers

Hawkins boys find relaxation with music

By Kyle Ringo

Thursday, August 30, 2007

If the plan comes together the way it does in his daydreams, Cody Hawkins will play two sets on Saturdays — Folsom Field in the afternoons and Pearl Street pubs and bars at night.

The Colorado quarterback and his younger brother, Drew, want to form a band. Both brothers play the guitar and spend much of their time away from the football field practicing strumming six strings and sliding their fingers over frets.

Music means nearly as much to Cody Hawkins' as the sport that is paying for his education. Rhythms and rhymes have become a passion, despite a left ear that won't allow him to hear them as clearly as he would like.

Hawkins has an artificial eardrum on his left side after years of childhood ear infections and bouts with swimmer's ear, but it hasn't affected his ability to pick up onrushing defenders on the gridiron or the beats of his favorite tunes off it.

"If I wasn't playing football right now, I'd have a band started," Cody Hawkins said. "I'm still trying to start a band right now.

"I want to play a show at the Fox Theatre before I'm done. So we'll see if that happens."

Cody Hawkins has played a Fender P-Bass guitar for three years. He's been taking guitar lessons lately on a Yamaha acoustic, and he works on his singing voice in the locker room among his teammates and in his car. He's a practice-makes-perfect sort of guy and he's not even the most talented musician in the family.

Drew Hawkins, the senior starting quarterback at top-ranked Holy Family High School, has taken his guitar to the street corners of Boise, Idaho, in the past, playing just to entertain passersby.

"I've tried to push him more towards that than I did Cody with football," said CU coach Dan Hawkins, Cody and Drew's father. "I'm not kidding you. He can pick up a guitar and play stuff by ear. He taught himself to play the piano. The guy is unbelievable."

When Dan Hawkins comes home from long days on the CU practice fields, where he preaches a blue-collar approach to football, he opens his garage door to see a drum set behind a semi-circle of Rubbermaid containers. Footballs rest on top of the containers and two electric guitars, an acoustic guitar and a microphone are there, too.

What is more blue-collar than a garage band?

"I tease them that I'll be their tambourine man or something," Dan Hawkins said.

Cody and Drew haven't come up with a name for their band, but Drew has written the band's first song. It's called "Tonight is Alive."

It's no wonder the Hawkins boys are musically inclined. Their mother, Misti, is a talented flutist and their football-coaching, philosophy-espousing father used to play the saxophone. In fact, Dan Hawkins calls the day that his ninth-grade music teacher made him choose between football and the band "one of his few regrets in life." He wanted to do both, of course.

Cody Hawkins' has limited experience playing music in front of people. He and his good friend, Andrew Thomas, played "Minority" by Green Day in front of about 40 classmates in the eighth grade. Prior to that he played a snare drum around the house when he was 10 years old. His parents gave it to him when he told them he wanted to be a drummer.

"After about six months, everybody in the house realized that was enough of that," he said.

Cody Hawkins doesn't expect to be nervous Saturday in the hours leading up to the first game of his collegiate career, in part, because he knows his music will help him remain calm. But Hawkins also believes he has prepared himself well enough not to be nervous.

He's allowing for a minor case of the "jitters" simply because it's been nearly two years since he played in a football game, and back at Bishop Kelly High School in Boise, his team simply "out-athleted" its opponents.

Hawkins went undefeated in his high school career and is on a 59-game winning streak. His last loss came in a fifth grade flag football game against a team still etched in his memory — Meridian Blue.

"That's the thing, I've won 59 straight. I'm not 59-0," he said. "It means a lot, but you go down to Invesco and I guarantee you not one of those 76,000 screaming fans cares how many games you won in high school. You've got to win now. That's why I came to the Big 12 because you get those opportunities to play big games. What matters is now."

He's not a superstitious kid. There are no odd rituals to be performed, no lines in the sidewalk he can't touch, no foods he can't eat and no people he can't talk to. But Hawkins does have something resembling a pregame routine he will follow Saturday before the Buffs meet Colorado State in Denver at 10 a.m.

In those final hours between his customary bowl of cereal and the first time he takes a snap from center Daniel Sanders, he will have his game face on and the white cords from his ipod dangling from his ears.

He'll be thinking of CSU blitzes and its different defensive looks, and he'll likely be humming or maybe even singing along with Anberlin, All Time Low, Spill Canvas, Jack Johnson, Mat Kearney, Less Than Jake, Gym Class Heroes, Real Big Fish, Incubus or Blink 182.

"Listening to music really helps calm me down, makes me think and helps me focus a lot on what I'm doing," Hawkins said. "I like to throw on the headphones and go warm up and just relax and get ready to play football."

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cu football

CU's Herrod overcomes astonishing hardship

From homeless to home team

By John Henderson
Denver Post Sports Writer

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Boulder - For defensive end Marquez Herrod, there are few more simple pleasures in the life of a college football player than knocking a quarterback senseless.

These days, the Colorado redshirt freshman gets the same thrill from the training table every day. All the food he wants. All free. Then he goes home. He goes to the same off-campus house every day. He knows where he'll sleep. Every evening.

His teammates don't pick fights with him. He's reasonably assured none will try to murder each other in the middle of the night. Oh, how wonderful life is in Boulder.

You see, Herrod sees life a bit differently than the average blue-chip college prospect. Oh, sure. He was great in high school, too. PrepStar's All-West team. One of [Rivals.com](#)'s top 20 weakside linebackers in the nation and all that.

But the other players he shares the locker room with

never spent their first years in grade school living on the streets. While in junior high, they didn't bounce in and out of an orphanage tougher than some gang-

College Football

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patrolled neighborhoods. He doubts they came home after their senior seasons ended to find they were evicted from their homes, one of more than 20 he had.

For an idea of the childhood Herrod led, getting evicted was a good thing. At least he eventually found something to eat.

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"Clearly, that's a guy who's seen the other side," Colorado coach Dan Hawkins said. "But that being said, he has got much more vision for what he wants to be."

Herrod doesn't look much like a hungry kid from the streets. He has movie-star good looks and a 6-foot-2, 255-pound frame that tells you he enjoys that free food part of the athletic scholarship.

But when he talks he gives himself away. He has a street-smart maturity, a worldliness you don't find in freshmen. He's 18 going on 38.

"The hardest part was not knowing from day to day where you're going to be the next night," he said, sitting at a table after a recent practice. "Waiting in line to see if we could get a room or if we were going to sleep on a cot or sleep outside."

Surviving abuse

Herrod never knew his father, and his mother suffered from schizophrenia. That wasn't her biggest problem. It was the next guy she married. He showed no respect to her and even less respect for Marquez, who was on the receiving end of a few fists.

Said Herrod: "My mom basically got tired of him, and one day after a particularly bad incident she said: 'We're leaving. I don't care if we have to sleep in the streets. I'm not going to stay here with you.'"

And that they did. Her illness kept her from working, but didn't prevent Marquez from loving her despite her eerie contention that they were being watched. He believed her. She was Mom.

They bounced from park benches to shelters to San Diego trolley cars. They'd beg for food. A man who ran a burrito shop befriended them and occasionally slipped them a bean-and-cheese if their beggars' wages came up short.

By the time he reached seventh grade, his mother's condition had worsened to the point where the state took him away. They placed him in San Diego's Polinsky Children's Center, a fancy name for an orphanage aimed at abused, abandoned and neglected children.

"That was tough," Herrod said. "I'd never left my mom. I definitely cried a lot."

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It became tougher when he saw his thug cottagemates. He had frequent fights. Polinsky regulars didn't fear this man-child who was so big he skipped the eighth grade.

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One night, a kid became angry with another and strangled him unconscious with a bedsheet.

"He tried to kill him, and the staff came in," Herrod said.

When he wasn't defending himself, Herrod sat in the corner and read. Harry Potter books and "Lord of the Rings" launched him into worlds where hunger and anger didn't exist. During recreation time, he ran around the yard, did pushups and situps. The others didn't accept him. It turns out he was a lousy follower.

"Because of the situation I came from, I was more of an independent person anyway," he said. "There were a lot of times I was away from my mom like when she was out trying to get money or doing whatever she needed to do. I'd have to fend for myself."

New deal, more struggles

By the time he was a freshman, he settled in Escondido with another in a long list of foster parents. Ken Smokoska appeared ideal. He had a good job with a tire company, a big house, two cars, plenty of food.

He took an interest in Herrod. He even convinced this fledgling quarter-miler to go out for this sport called football at San Pasqual High.

But, like seemingly everything else in Herrod's life, it went south. He said Smokoska tried his hand at "get-rich-quick schemes" and only got poor quick. Herrod said money became short, and so did food.

"He said he really cared about us, and I genuinely believed him for a while, until I got to the point where it was like, 'All right, we don't have food in the house,'" Herrod said. "I can't even ask you for money."

As always, however, Herrod adapted.

"He always had a good attitude," said Tony Corley, his position coach his sophomore and junior years. "He spent all his time at school. He didn't want to go home. He had nothing to go home to."

Teammates and coaches would take him home for dinner. Kids' parents would help him with his homework. While his home life suffered, his football life blossomed. When UCLA sent him a letter, Herrod said: "Oh, my God! People are looking at me like I could actually do something!"

However, one day after Herrod's sterling senior season, with his grades improving, position coach Mark Salazar drove him back to the foster home and found a little surprise. A U-Haul was parked in the driveway. They had been evicted.

Salazar told Herrod he was going to his place. One moment, Herrod told him. After five minutes, Salazar went looking for him in the house.

"He was in a cabinet taking Cup-a-Soups, 20-25, and putting them into a bag," Salazar said. "I said, 'What are you doing?' He said, 'These are mine!' That's his survival instinct. To him, he'd been here before. Now it will ultimately work out."

And it did. Salazar eventually placed him with James

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and Mindi Arnold, friends from church, and they nurtured Herrod through the recruiting process in which he eventually decommitted from Oregon State when Hawkins left Boise State for Colorado.

Today, Herrod has gone from a homeless orphan to a guy Hawkins says is "a great motor, a tough guy" and a backup left defensive end behind junior Maurice Lucas.

Of course, coming to Boulder is a culture shock, too. CU students have their own problems. Well, sort of.

Herrod said: "People I've met tell me, 'I've had a hard life. I lived in this really crappy house. And my parents were not nice to me and they didn't give me a Jaguar to come to school.' It's hard because I'm on the other end of the spectrum."

Not anymore. After more than 20 houses, he has finally found a home.

Honors out of tribulations

A few things to know about CU defensive end Marquez Herrod:

- * Spent last season on scout team and received the defensive scout award from his teammates.

- * As a senior at San Pasqual H.S. in California, had five sacks and blocked two kicks; as a junior, had four sacks and blocked one kick.

- * Lettered four times in track; his 1,600 relay team had the fastest time in the country in 2005.

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CU defense readying for Bell

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder — Colorado senior linebacker Jordon Dizon isn't shy about giving Colorado State running back Kyle Bell some props before Saturday's season opener for both teams in Invesco Field at Mile High.

Bell's return, Dizon said, adds a different dimension to the CSU offense.

"You hardly ever see someone 6-2, 230, coming at you through a hole," Dizon said. "He's a big back, and he's a blue-collar guy who likes to bring his hard hat.

"We didn't play him last year, but the year before I remember him knocking me a couple of times. It's good for their program to finally have him back. He's going to be a whole heap to tackle, but we're up to the challenge."

Bell missed all of the 2006 season after suffering a knee injury in practice just days before the season opener. "You know when a team has somebody special back there, they're going to run the ball," Dizon said. "It's like Southern Cal when they had Reggie Bush, now CSU has Kyle Bell back and they're going to try to run it down our throats.

"We respect them for that. We've got to take our Tylenols and strap up. We have to expect their best."

Footnotes Dan Hawkins said senior Bernard Jackson will not play Saturday against Colorado State. But Hawkins did say Jackson's academic eligibility for the season still has not been determined and he has not been ruled out for the season. "We're waiting on a class," Hawkins said. Jackson was the starting quarterback in 2006 but was converted in the spring to a hybrid role that would primarily include receiving, rushing and kick returning. Jackson has missed most practices since fall camp began and did not practice Wednesday.

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mark kiszla

Painful seasons await big three

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post Staff Columnist

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How did college football in Colorado get in such a sorry state?

There's a reason the Buffaloes, Rams and Falcons are buckling those chin straps on tight.

It hurts.

Around here, football has become almost as painful to watch as the game can be to play.

While we dearly thank Sonny Lubick for all the happy memories at Colorado State, if the 70-year-old coach grows any more nostalgic for the glory days he might as well start coaching from a rocking chair.

New Air Force coach Troy Calhoun vows the Falcons must stop taking the field as if they were walking on eggshells and start playing like their hair is on fire.

Although Dan Hawkins seems to have found a solid quarterback under his own roof, an inspection of the thin talent elsewhere on the Colorado depth chart makes you wonder if the coach should have planned a bigger family.

How to describe the current state of college football in Colorado, from Hughes Stadium to Folsom Field to the Air Force Academy grounds?

Stink. Stank. Stunk.

In a proud football state, this is as bad as it has been in at least a quarter century.

Alums spoiled on success watched in disbelief during 2006, as CU, CSU and Air Force combined to lose 26 of 36 games.

It was the first time since 1981 that all three programs suffered through losing seasons in the same year.

The Buffs got flat bowled over with 10 defeats, while the Rams and Falcons couldn't stand up for falling down, with both Mountain West Conference schools begging for mercy.

For 24 straight football seasons, our state had sent at least one team to a bowl game. That long run of success ended last year with a chest-deflating thud.

And it might not get much better for the Falcons, Rams or Buffs this season, who could be bad to a degree never before witnessed around these parts.

An entire generation of college football fans was raised on the belief that the surest signs of autumn in Colorado were Aspen leaves turning gold and falling goalposts from Fort Collins to Colorado Springs, as we celebrated big victories.

Sure was fun while it lasted.

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But not nearly enough folks appreciated what we had until it was gone.

While the Broncos forever incite reactions ranging from mania and frenzy, too often college football success in Colorado has been met with a collective yawn.

Any fan who wonders why national prominence is so hard to sustain for state colleges should consider this: The Rams, Falcons and Buffs opened the stadium gates for 19 home dates a year ago. Despite too many empty seats, the three teams combined to attracted in excess of 700,000 paying customers.

Which sounds fine, until you realize that in seven home games, the Michigan Wolverines alone outdrew the total attendance of all three major programs in Colorado by nearly 50,000 fans.

Where have all the big-time players gone?

The pipeline that took Joey Porter and Clark Haggans from the Colorado State campus to NFL stardom has dried up.

After being disappointed by Colorado prep phenoms Marcus Houston and Craig Ochs, the Buffs gave up the pursuit of five-star talent for too long.

Linebacker Anthony Schlegel needed to leave Air Force to find Big Ten glory at Ohio State.

Until coaches can sell more talented players on the beauty of Colorado, the college football forecast could remain mostly cloudy.

Forget a return to dominance. Hush any talk of bowl trips for now. In the short term, Lubick, Hawkins and Calhoun must make a tough climb to mediocrity.

Since Air Force began playing varsity football in 1956, folks in this state have never been forced to endure two consecutive years in which all three local colleges finished with losing records.

Better buckle those chin straps.

I'm afraid this could be a record-setting season for pain.

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