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colorado 31, colorado state 28 (ot)

Eberhart boots CU past Rams

Senior finally gets his kicks, caps emotional rally

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Colorado tight end Tyson DeVree walked toward the tunnel wearing a grin that stretched nearly as wide as his shoulder pads. Another senior, cornerback Terrence Wheatley, could barely see through his tears. Wide receiver Patrick Williams said he wanted to cry for joy but got distracted by all the celebrating going on.

This wasn't a national championship game. It wasn't even an important conference victory.

But Colorado's 31-28 overtime victory over rival Colorado State on Saturday - capped by Kevin Eberhart's game-winning 35-yard field goal - unleashed emotions the Buffs and their fans haven't experienced for at least two seasons.

Following a disastrous 2-10 season, the comeback from an 11-point second-half deficit at Invesco Field had the feeling of a bowl victory.

"Last season scarred a lot of players," Williams said.

"We had a tough winter. We had a tough spring and a tough summer. But we came out today and showed that we can do this."

CU 31, CSU 28 (OT)

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A big reason they were able to was the play of redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins, who understands his father's keep-them-guessing offense and can make all the throws. Cody's impressive debut included 201 yards passing and two touchdowns, with one interception.

Cody Hawkins never was shaken, rattled or rolled by a CSU defense that wanted to take home his helmet as a souvenir. He led the rally with poise beyond his

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age.

"We have a quarterback back there who is very heady," Williams said. "He played like a beast. You would have never guessed that he was a redshirt freshman out there."

"I'm more tired than I thought I'd be, but that locker room is pretty crazy right now," Cody Hawkins said. "We've been talking this year about finishing strong. We've been talking all summer about beating the Rams. This is huge for the program."

Rams fans could say senior quarterback Caleb Hanie (20-for-27 for 229 yards and three TDs) outplayed



Colorado struck first with a touchdown pass from Cody Hawkins to wide receiver Scotty McNight (21) in the first quarter. CSU defensive back Klint Kubiak defended on the play. (Post / Karl Gehring)

Hawkins, but Hanie made one big mistake, an interception Wheatley grabbed that put an end to CSU's only overtime possession. On third- and-goal from the 9, Hanie scrambled to his right to avoid the rush, a tactic that had worked well all game. But this time his pass sailed, and receivers Kory Sperry and

Johnny Walker got tangled up in the end zone, allowing Wheatley to leap for an easy catch.

"The best thing, in hindsight, is he should have thrown it in the stands," CSU coach Sonny Lubick said.

Hanie agreed. "I probably should have thrown it out of the end zone but I scrambled out and I was actually trying to get it to Johnny and Kory was supposed to be in the corner of the end zone on that play, so I didn't expect him where he was and they ran into each other and that guy was there to make the play."

Needing only a field goal to win, CU played it safe by moving the ball 7 yards on two running plays and a short pass. Eberhart, a fifth-year senior who had been waiting for All-American Mason Crosby to graduate, then booted the game-winner.

Eberhart sent the game into overtime with a 22-yard field goal with 13 seconds remaining. The kick was set up by Chase McBride's 43-yard punt return to the CSU 34 and a fourth-down pass-interference penalty on Rams cornerback Joey Rucks.

Wheatley, who had 135 yards on three kickoff returns, said the emotion of the day was too much to keep in as he walked to the locker room with the CU fans hanging over him.

"To have all that pent-up aggression, all that anger and hurt, that you keep inside for the whole year, it's good to get a chance to let it out on the field," Wheatley said. "We showed people today that we have heart. You may knock us down, but we're going to get back up and we did that today."

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Colorado State tight end Kory Sperry (80) came down down with a touchdown after beating Colorado linebacker Brad Jones in the first quarter at Invesco Field at Mile High on Saturday. (Post / Karl Gehring)

LOWDOWN on the SHOWDOWN

PLAY OF THE DAY

Interference helps Buffs

Trailing 28-25, Colorado was facing a fourth-and-4 from the CSU 28 with just over a minute remaining in the fourth quarter. Cody Hawkins' pass down the sideline for Patrick Williams was incomplete and probably was going to be so under any circumstances, but CSU cornerback Joey Rucks was called for interference after waving his arm without turning around as the ball arrived. The call enabled the Buffs to retain possession, and they ended up kicking the game-tying field goal to force overtime.

HIT OF THE DAY

CU's Walters drills Sperry

CU free safety Ryan Walters nailed Rams tight end Kory Sperry over the middle in the third quarter, but it was indicative of Sperry's eight-catch day: He held onto the ball at the Buffs' 13-yard line, and the play went for 22 yards. Running back Kyle Bell scored on the next play as the Rams took a 28-17 lead.

KEY STAT

2.8

CSU averaged only 2.8 yards per rushing attempt. Kyle Bell finished with 135 yards but had 40 of the Rams' 56 carries.

THE BEST ...

Squib kick bounces right way for the Rams

Perhaps fearing another Terrence Wheatley return, the Rams caught a break on the squib kick. After their first touchdown in the third quarter, a squib kick ricocheted off CU's R.J. Brown, who was on the front line and turning back to get downfield, and into the arms of CSU's Jermaine Walters.

CU quarterback Cody Hawkins encountered CSU coach Sonny Lubick outside the interview room, and the two exchanged best wishes for the rest of the season. "See you next year, right?" asked Hawkins.

... AND THE WORST

CSU's special teams not so special against Buffs

CSU's special teams gave up 207 yards in

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returns, including 135 to Terrence Wheatley on three kickoffs and 62 to Chase McBride on three punts.

The fuss over the 10 a.m. kickoff was much ado about nothing — because kickoff came at 10:11.

COACH'S CALL OF THE DAY

Gutsy move

This took neither a rocket scientist nor Amos Alonzo Stagg, but some coaches would have passed on the chance to go for two points under the circumstances CU faced after scoring late in the third quarter, theorizing it might be too soon to start paying attention to charts. But when Demetrius Sumler scored from 2 yards out to close CU to within 28-23 with 34 seconds left in the third, the Buffs went for two - and got them, on a Cody Hawkins-to-Riar Geer pass.

POLICE REPORT

Crowd control

Denver police reported less public fighting Saturday than usual at this hotly contested game, though they recorded the usual excess drinking and dozens of resulting visits to detox.

Partisan crowds contributed an even dozen arrests for fighting, disobeying lawful orders and disturbing the peace; another six fans received summonses for public urinating and underage drinking.

Forty-six people were taken to detox, and another

14 to local hospitals for alcohol or other medical issues.

- Terry Frei and Denver Post staff reports



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cu football

Sumler responds with success

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 09/02/2007 11:20:37 PM MDT

Boulder - Depending how far he progresses in football, Demetrius Sumler may never forget the chewing out he received from Colorado running backs coach Darian Hagan. It could prove to be a turning point.

Hagan and other members of the CU staff had waited and waited and waited for Sumler, a redshirt freshman tailback, to show something during spring drills. Unfortunately, Sumler began the first few days of August camp in the same funk. Finally, Hagan decided he'd had enough. It was time to speak his mind.

"Coach Hagan said, 'You came here with all these statistics (5,696 rushing yards in four years at San Diego's Cathedral Catholic High), and I haven't seen it,'" Sumler recalled. "I took that personally. That gave me a little motivation, a little fire.

"I don't really know what the problem was. Maybe I was just too relaxed. Maybe I was too comfortable. I guess I needed to be challenged: 'OK, if he doesn't think I can play, I'm going to show him I can play.'"

Something clicked. Sumler starred in three intrasquad scrimmages and showed that was no fluke by taking over with a strong performance

Colorado Football

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Saturday in the Buffaloes' 31-28 overtime victory over Colorado State.

Becoming the No. 1 option in the running game when starter Hugh Charles pulled up with a strained hamstring during the game's first series, Sumler took charge with 85 yards on 16 carries.

He scored CU's final touchdown with a 3-yard run late in the third quarter. And his average gain of 5.3 yards per carry bettered that of CSU workhorse Kyle Bell, who averaged 3.4 yards on 40 carries. It was a promising college debut for Sumler, a 5-foot-10, 215- pounder called "my do-everything back" by Hagan because Sumler has the power to run inside and enough quickness and moves to make tacklers miss in the open field.

"I guess you could say it was a surprising day for me," Sumler said Sunday. "But the offensive line was opening up holes. I just tried to do what I could to help the team."

It's unclear when Charles will be ready to return, so Sumler might have to carry the load Saturday night at Arizona State. No other CU running back got more

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than three carries against CSU.

Charles did some light jogging Sunday and is listed as day to day.

"I'll be ready no matter what," Sumler said.

Footnotes

CU coach Dan Hawkins said it is possible Michael Sipili's legal issues could be resolved in time for the sophomore middle linebacker to play against Arizona State. Sipili was suspended indefinitely after a June off-campus fighting incident. ... Only two true freshmen saw action against CSU: wide receiver Kendrick Celestine and walk-on Tyler Cope, who handled kickoffs. ... Senior Bernard Jackson said after Saturday's game he is hoping to get academic clearance to play Sept. 15 against Florida State, but Hawkins said Sunday he wasn't sure if that will happen. ... After reviewing game film of the opener, defensive coordinator Ron Collins said "all mistakes (against CSU) are correctable. ... We only had two busts (in coverage)."

EYE ON ... THE SUN DEVILS

COLORADO AT ARIZONA STATE, 8:15 p.m., Saturday, FSN

For the record: Arizona State is 1-0.

Streaking: Some preseason publications say the Sun Devils could begin coach Dennis Erickson's first season 7-0 before facing California (an ASU home game), Oregon (away), UCLA (away) and Southern California (home) in succession.

Who's hot: Senior tailback Ryan Torain rushed for 123 yards and three touchdowns on 17 carries in a 45-3 win over San Jose State on Saturday night.

Who's not: Arizona State outgained the Spartans 520 total yards to 115, so it sounds like nit-picking, but punter Jonathan Johnson would like to improve on his two-punt average of 38.5 yards.

Key stat: The Sun Devils scored on six of their first seven possessions.

FYI: Despite the opener being a night game, the Sun Devil Stadium temperature at kickoff was 101 degrees.

Injury report: None reported.

Coachspeak: "Right now, it's a heck of a deal. (But) it's never as good as you think it is." - Erickson, on the blowout victory in his first game as Arizona State's coach, before he had a chance to look at the game tape

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woody paige

Flush with excitement, Buffs are better this year

By Woody Paige
Denver Post Staff Columnist

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Fourth quarter, and Colorado is losing to Colorado State in the Rocky Mountain Breakfast/Brunch Bowl, and Hawkins the Younger has just been intercepted, and Hawkins the Elder is precariously close to seeing his nonconference and overall records at CU fall to 0-5 and 2-11, and his 2007 season is in danger of being ... what's the word I'm looking for?

With 10:41 left, during a TV timeout, an extremely large toilet ran onto the field. Seriously. Two questions: How does someone sneak a 5-foot commode into the stadium, and how does a person dressed in a white toilet costume get onto the field?

After the toilet circled for a while, as Buffs and Rams players and a crowd of 60,000 watched, finally, a fake security guard chased the porcelain god 40 yards and tackled it, removed it and, apparently, arrested or scrubbed it. Game officials claimed the big bowl was part of a sponsor's ad campaign. Stupid toilet joke.

"Flushed" is the word I'm looking for.

Last year, coach Dan Hawkins' first in Boulder, the Buffs went in the tank in the opener against Montana State, then drowned against Colorado State and

Coming Monday, 9/10



Woody's World: Long-time Post sports columnist Woody Paige offers his unique perspective on the world of sports with a daily video and weekly mailbags and chats.

dropped out of sight in the Big 12.

This year the Buffaloes have won one in a row.

"We're back," Hawkins shouted and ran a gantlet of students, slapping hands along the way after the overtime win.

It's premature to announce that the Buffs are back as a legitimate contender in the Big 12 Conference, but if the Buffs can beat the other "States" and a Miami of Ohio on their schedule, they would play in a traditional postseason "bowl." So let The Hawk & The Buffaloes rejoice. It's been awhile.

Hawkins should invite Mr. Toilethead back for every

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game.

The Buffs tied the Rams at 28 in regulation, then won with an interception and a field goal in overtime.

CU actually is a fun and entertaining, and worthwhile, team to watch again on offense. They'll have to score big, like in 1994 (Bill McCartney's last season) and 1995 (Rick Neuheisel's first) when they were putting up large numbers (40 or more 11 times, including games of 66, 55, 51 and 50), because they may have problems stopping people.

The Buffs showed us a little of this - a flea-flicker - and a little of that - direct snap to the tailback, with the quarterback lined up at wide receiver - and a little of these - reverses and ends-around - and a lot of those - passes (32) - and some sleight-of-hand and fake-of-feet.

"A coach has to be like a musician. ... You got to play all the old favorites, but you got to give 'em some new stuff," Hawkins said.

OK. Dan and his all-Buff band were playing more Boise Ball on Saturday morning when they zipped and zapped in their first two possessions of the season 129 yards for a pair of touchdowns before the audience settled in. In 2006 Hawkins didn't have the athletes or the guts to pump up the volume. CU scored 15 points or fewer in eight games.

Hawkins is more proactive now. He can be "creative" with this bunch, led on offense by his son Cody, who started his first game and finished 18-of-31 for 201 yards and two touchdowns with an interception (on a gadget play).

"I'm really just a philosophical person," Hawkins said. THIS IS DIVISION 1 FOOTBALL. IT AIN'T INTRAMURA "There a few principals in philosophy that you have to adhere to become a champion. ... You have to finish. . .. You have to be able to lay it all on the line and let it happen."

It helps to have more talent, more skill personnel, more depth, an improved offensive line and a young quarterback who plays old. Hawkins the Younger has been hanging onto Hawkins the Elder's pants tails on the sideline of bowl games since he was eating Gerber's.

On Colorado's fourth offensive play No. 1 tailback Hugh Charles strained his hamstring and didn't return. But the Buffs adjusted their "groupings" (Hawkins' term), and used five rushers and seven receivers effectively.

Down by three with 1:16 remaining in the fourth quarter, Colorado was confronting fourth-and-4 at the CSU 28. First, CU tried the unoriginal "draw 'em off-sides" ploy and called a second timeout, then threw and drew a pass interference on the Rams. The Buffs kicked a field goal for a tie, then eked out the victory on another field goal.

The shame of the game between CU and CSU is that either has to lose, but the Rams will recover and become a factor in the Mountain West. The Buffs have Arizona State, Florida State and Oklahoma this month. Hawkins will have to be creative and philosophical and patient to win six and get to the Texas or Independence bowls.

But at least the Buffs aren't toilet bowl jokes

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anymore.

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csu-cu football

Kid Cool improves to 60-0

Cody Hawkins pads personal winning streak by making crucial plays

By John Henderson
Denver Post Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 09/01/2007 10:52:18 PM MDT

For you stats buffs mesmerized by Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak, the Miami Dolphins' 17-0 mark and the Boston Celtics' eight consecutive NBA championships, we present you with a streak nearly as impressive if not as well-known.

Colorado freshman Cody Hawkins swaggered into Invesco Field at Mile High on Saturday morning and won his 60th consecutive game as a starting quarterback.

"High school is over," Hawkins corrected after CU's thrilling victory. "I'm 1-0."

OK, so he's not a numbers guy. But how he built that astonishing run is one of the reasons he led Colorado back from an 11-point second-half deficit. He didn't have many close calls in leading Bishop Kelly High in Boise to consecutive Idaho state titles.

Saturday was one of the closer games he's had.

"There was a period there, in the seventh, eighth and ninth grade, where we weren't killing people but there weren't any nail-biters," he said, "partly

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because when you're in the eighth grade, you're like, "Well, what's the snack at the end of the game?"

The last loss he remembers came in sixth grade, but when he ran out onto Invesco Field he might as well have been back with the Tullis Electric Terminators.

But the kid in him loved chasing a 1,200-pound buffalo onto the field before the game.

"I was so excited," he said. "I'm not the kind of kid

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who goes out and gets nervous, because I just go out and play to have fun. I was running out there and I'm jumping around and listening to the weirdest music trying to have a good time.

"I'm running out of the gates behind Ralphie, and I'm like, 'Man, I'm already tired.'"

This is all good news for embarrassed Colorado fans who haven't had a whole lot of fun in recent years. This Dan Hawkins-Cody Hawkins team might not just be a warm and fuzzy father-son, coach-quarterback story. Dan Hawkins' lifetime devil-may-care philosophy has rubbed off on his son.

Here he was, in the first game of his college career, in the home of the Denver Broncos, trying to resurrect his dad's new program, and he played superb. He hit 18-of-31 passes for 201 yards and an interception.

"You never expect to go out and play mediocre," Cody said. "You expect to complete every pass. There were some situations where we had to throw the ball away and things didn't really go our way, but the way our coaching staff prepares you, you feel like you can go out and play."

"Everybody gets coached up and I just went out and it felt like practice to me."

Except in practice, when he faces a fourth-and-4 with less than 90 seconds left and his side down 28-25, 60,000 people and a press box full of wags aren't waiting to question your father's decision or your ability. His perfect fade-route toss to Patrick Williams produced a pass interference call on Joey

Rucks, setting up Kevin Eberhart's chip-shot field goal from 22 yards four plays later to send the game into overtime.

"I wanted to go for it, too," Cody said. "I'd rather not leave the game in a kicker's hands. It's up to us. I want to be on the field making plays as much as possible. We knew we had a play we could run and Pat would be there for us."

Before throwing that pass, CU tried to draw CSU offside by not running a play on fourth down before calling a timeout.

"It was pretty funny," Cody said. "When we had the no-play right before that, Dad looked at me and went, 'Don't screw it up.'"

Please excuse Dad if he forgets he is a dad out there. His debut season last year went 2-10, and beating CSU is a good way to forget the past and launch toward the future. And wouldn't you know it? His son is leading the charge, possibly for the next four years.

"He's been around this thing so many times," Dan Hawkins said. "I can't tell you how many times in games, whether we were at Georgia or at Arkansas or in the Liberty Bowl, and he's standing there going, 'You ought to do this! You ought to do that!' He's been on the bus. He's been on the big stage. To him, it was another day at the park. I knew emotionally he was not going to have a problem with it."

"And he's been around our family long enough. Certainly I coach this way and we parent this way, but again, you have to move out of this being afraid

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to fail."

And his son didn't fail. Again. For the 60th consecutive game.

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Starting on the right foot: Interception, Eberhart's FG lift Buffs past Rams in OT

By Kyle Ringo
Sunday, September 2, 2007

DENVER — It's the coach's mantra, and Saturday his players finally met the standard. The Colorado football team started its season by finishing.

After a nightmarish third quarter in which the Buffs relinquished their halftime lead and trailed by double digits, they rallied back behind a freshman quarterback to tie Colorado State at the end of regulation and beat the Rams 31-28 in overtime at Invesco Field.

Fifth-year senior place-kicker Kevin Eberhart did the honors, drilling a 35-yard field goal for the victory after senior cornerback Terrence Wheatley intercepted a pass in the end zone, ending the Rams' only overtime possession.

Eberhart's teammates hoisted the Broomfield High School graduate on to their shoulders and Wheatley walked off the field with tears streaming down his face as the Buffs vanquished memories of the first season in the Dan Hawkins era with a thriller to start Year Two.

"The Buffs are back," Hawkins screamed from a small stage at midfield where he and his players accepted the Centennial Cup from Gov. Bill Ritter with a little more than half of the crowd of 60,767 roaring in approval while those in green and gold streamed for the exits.

It was the Rams' eighth consecutive loss, dating back to last season, and it came in front of the smallest crowd to watch a game between these programs in Denver. The Buffs have won four of the past five in the series.

"Our guys are not going to give up," CSU coach Sonny Lubick said. "They are going to play."

But it easily could have been another somber CU locker room if Hawkins' bold strategy of going for it on fourth-and-4 with 1 minute, 16 seconds remaining in regulation hadn't worked out. His team was trailing 28-25 at the time.

At the CSU 28-yard line, Hawkins opted for a pass play — a fade route to Patrick Williams along the sideline — instead of allowing Eberhart to try a 45-yard field goal to tie the game. An official called a pass interference penalty on CSU cornerback Joey Rucks, giving the Buffs new life at the CSU 14.

"I want our guys to always go, 'Hey, we're going to play to win,'" Hawkins said, explaining his choice.

The drive stalled three plays later and Eberhart tied it with a 22-yard field goal to send the game into overtime.

The victory was the first for Cody Hawkins as a starting quarterback and it extended his unbeaten streak to 60 games, dating back to the fifth grade.

Hawkins performed well from the start. He led the Buffs to two quick touchdowns in the first quarter, connecting on touchdown passes with wide receiver Scotty McKnight and tight end Tyson Devree. He completed 18 of 31 passes for 201 yards, and gave his team a sense of confidence in the passing game it lacked all of last season.

Hawkins' worst mistake was throwing into double coverage on a flea-flicker play in the third quarter.

"They gave us a run for our money," Cody Hawkins said. "Both teams played fast and it ended up being a dog fight like it is every year. But our guys just kept saying, 'Remember last year.' We didn't run all summer, we didn't get in the weight room at 5:30 in the morning to come out and lose this game."

The Buffs won despite another rough day in pass coverage from the defense. Before CSU quarterback Caleb Hanie threw his interception to Wheatley in the end zone, he had connected three times with tight end Kory Sperry for touchdowns.

Hanie completed 20 of 27 passes for 229 yards in the game, and he was particularly effective on third downs, helping the Rams to convert 11 of 19 times. In his two games against the Buffs, Hanie has completed 40 of 50 passes for 462 yards and four scores.

Hanie and Sperry weren't the only Rams with big games in defeat. Tailback Kyle Bell carried the ball 40 times in his return to action after missing last season with a knee injury. He gained 135 yards and scored a third-quarter touchdown to give his team its biggest lead.

Bell's touchdown came after the Rams recovered a line-drive kickoff into the back of CU special teams captain R.J. Brown. It was one of few special teams mistakes in the game for CU, which struggled in the kicking game last year.

Wheatley returned three kickoffs for 135 yards, including a 68-yard effort.

"I was going to do whatever it took to win this game," Wheatley said.

Chase McBride returned three punts for 62 yards, including a 43-yard return that set up the game-tying 22-yard field goal from Eberhart, his high school teammate at Broomfield.

"On the sideline you really felt something," Eberhart said. "The team is so close to each other. I think when you're on a team that is that close and you're that committed to everyone that you're next to, I think the nerves just kind of go away."



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Woelk: Pushing the envelope pays off for Hawk

By Neill Woelk

Sunday, September 2, 2007

DENVER — "Play to win."

Since the day Dan Hawkins stepped on Colorado's campus, the CU football coach has promised to live by the philosophy he's followed for virtually his entire life.

Our advice to CU fans this morning? Buckle up. It promises to be a wild ride. The faint of heart and football conservatives may want to find another hobby — quickly.

Saturday afternoon, 60,000-plus folks at Invesco Field — including more than a few in the press box — were quite certain that Hawkins had lost his mind. Fourth-and-4, ball on the Colorado State 28, the clock ticking down in the fourth quarter, only a field goal needed to tie the game — and Hawk went for it.

"If you want your team to have a certain sort of swagger, and a certain sort of confidence, then they have to know that the coach has their backs," Hawkins said. "You have to deserve to be successful."

And so, Hawk and his team never blinked. Never thought about the consequences if the play didn't work. Never considered what might happen next if the Buffs failed to get a first down.

"It was going to work," quarterback Cody Hawkins said. "When we were talking about it (during a timeout), I kept saying go for it. No doubt, it was going to work. No question. ... How could you think anything else?"

Indeed. Cody Hawkins tossed up a pass to Patrick Williams, who caught the ball — out bounds. Incomplete. Game over.

Except there on the ground was a penalty flag. Pass interference against Colorado State. First down.

Play to win — and even the best gamblers need a little luck now and then.

Yes, the Buffs did eventually have to settle for a game-tying field goal to force overtime. And yes, they did win in overtime, 31-28, only after Caleb Hanie — who had been virtually perfect in eight quarters against the Buffs — threw an interception to end CSU's first OT possession.

But of all the wild moments and crazy sequences from Saturday afternoon, the situation that might define Dan Hawkins the best is the fourth-and-4 (but don't forget the two-point conversion after CU's third touchdown, a gamble that pulled the Buffs to within field goal range in the first place).

Play to win — and don't look back.

"If you're going to play not to lose all the time, then you don't deserve to be successful," Hawkins said. "If you keep pushing the issue, more times than not you're going to come out on top."

Of course, CSU fans will be questioning their coach this morning for exactly the opposite reason. After CSU built a 28-17 lead with a two-touchdown explosion to start the third quarter, Sonny Lubick turned conservative.

Tight end Kory Sperry, who had eight catches for 103 yards and three touchdowns after the third quarter, didn't catch another pass the rest of the day. Hanie, who had 181 yards passing in the first three quarters, had just 48 more in the final period and overtime.

And the Rams didn't score another point in the final 25 minutes of regulation play.

Not that such an approach hasn't worked plenty of times before for Lubick, who has won far more than his fair share of games at a school that was never previously known for its football success. Not that conventional wisdom hasn't served Lubick well in building a solid program. He has one of the best running backs in the nation in Kyle Bell, a horse CSU will saddle up and ride to plenty of wins this season. Normal thought would suggest that putting the load on Bell down the stretch was the way to go on Saturday.

But on this day, conventional wisdom and conservative football came up short.

Meanwhile, "play to win" had luck on its side.

There will be, of course, days when Hawk's gambles come up snake-eyes. There will be times when such moves as his fourth-and-4 risk don't pay off.

When that happens, he knows he will be a target for untold grief.

But that won't change his philosophy — and that philosophy kept up a team's confidence on Saturday when most other young squads might have checked it in.

The Buffs didn't quit when they were down 28-17. They didn't quit when CSU opened the second half and delivered two haymakers that most folks thought would be enough to put the Buffs on the mat for good.

They looked to their coaches and heard the same thing they've heard since the day the new staff stepped on campus.

Don't quit. Finish what you started. And play to win.

"You have to take shots," Hawkins said. "If you don't believe in the play or the kids don't believe in the plan, then you don't have anything."

"So, sometimes you're going to come up and sometimes you're not. But if you keep pushing the issue, you're going to come out on the plus end."

"Plus end" is not something these Buffs have heard much about in the last year.

But this morning, last year's record is officially history.

Today, the Buffs are 1-0 because they played to win Saturday afternoon. You can point to a handful of things that could have gone wrong — but they didn't.

So, Buff fans, get used to the unconventional. As we said before, buckle up and enjoy the ride — because that's who Dan Hawkins is.



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CU secondary struggles again against Rams' passing game

By Kyle Ringo
Sunday, September 2, 2007

DENVER — Whatever Colorado football coaches are trying to teach the defense about third downs and defending the passing game, it just isn't working.

The Buffs spent much of preseason practices, particularly the final week, saying they had made significant strides defensively in terms of knowing their assignments and understanding the defense. It didn't translate to success through much of Saturday's 31-28 win over Colorado State at Invesco Field.

Cornerback Terrence Wheatley, an All-Big 12 performer last season on a 2-10 team, made an interception in the end zone in overtime to end CSU's only overtime possession. And that was one of few highlights in the game against the pass.

CSU quarterback Caleb Hanie completed 20 of 27 passes for a 74-percent completion rate and threw three touchdown passes. It wasn't quite as good as his 20-for-23 performance against the Buffs in 2006, but it was proof the Buffs' woes against the pass last season have extended to this year.

CU gave up a 67 percent completion rate over the course of 12 games last fall.

"We had some issues there defensively that we've got to get fixed, and we will," coach Dan Hawkins said as he walked off the field.

Hanie's efficiency through the air contributed to the Rams' alarming success rate on third downs. The Buffs allowed opponents to convert 48 percent of the time on third downs last year and the Rams were successful on 11 of 19 third downs Saturday.

"We definitely need to get off the field when we force the offense into third-and-long," defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "It's fixable mistakes. We usually had guys in position. We just didn't make the plays."

Hypolite managed to sack Hanie once and combined with defensive end Maurice Lucas on another sack. But more often than not, the CSU senior had all the time he needed to throw.

While the defense struggled to stop the passing game, it held firm against a stout CSU ground game led by tailback Kyle Bell.

The Rams gained 157 yards on the ground, but they needed 56 attempts to get there. Bell carried the ball 40 times to gain 135 yards. He is only the fourth individual to rush for more than 100 yards against CU in the past 26 games.

Sidelined

Colorado senior Bernard Jackson watched Saturday's game from the sideline a year after making a surprise start against the Rams in the second game of the season.

Jackson went on to start the rest of the season for the Buffs in 2006, but made the switch to playing wide receiver and running back in spring practices. He has missed most of preseason practices taking care of personal matters and finishing independent studies courses.

Jackson said Saturday he expects to return to practices in another week.

Break-out day

Colorado received a standout performance from a freshman wide receiver after all Saturday. It just wasn't the freshman everyone thought it might be through most of training camp.

While Josh Smith continued to nurse his bruised kidney back to health on the sidelines, redshirt freshman Scotty McKnight enjoyed his first 100-yard receiving day.

McKnight, a walk-on, scored his first touchdown on a 24-yard pass from Cody Hawkins 2 minutes, 8 seconds into the first quarter. It was the fastest touchdown scored to start the season for CU since running back Eric Bieniemy scored just 1:15 into the 1989 season opener against Texas.

It was a rewarding day for McKnight, who broke his ankle on the first day of spring practices this year and spent most of the summer working to get back to full strength. CU's postgame notes featured a section about McKnight's day under the heading "Can I have a Schollie Now?"

"What I'm really proud of is that all of our offseason work showed late in the game," McKnight said.

Freshman contributors

Only two true freshmen made their debuts for the Buffs Saturday, and neither one was highly touted offensive line recruit Ryan Miller. Coach Dan Hawkins has predicted that a dozen or more could play this season.

Place-kicker Tyler Cope kicked off five times for CU and wide receiver Kendrick Celestine played but didn't get a catch or carry. Nine redshirt freshmen and two transfers also made their debuts

Oddity

Wide receiver Patrick Williams gained 24 yards on a reverse on the first offensive play of the year. It was the longest rushing play in CU history on the first play of the season. Williams also holds the record for the longest pass reception on the first play of the year. He caught a 42-yard pass from James Cox against Montana State to begin last season.

Notable

CU is now 4-4 in overtime games. ... Officials reported approximately 6,500 tickets combined between the schools went unsold. ... Tackle Tyler Polumbus served as the offensive team captain with Bernard Jackson out awaiting word on his academic eligibility. ... A total of 89 CU players dressed for the game.



Eberhart leads Buff special teams effort

Senior kicker nails game-winner in overtime

By Ryan Thorburn

Sunday, September 2, 2007

DENVER — Two years ago, Kevin Eberhart was just a face in the crowd when Mason Crosby lifted Colorado to victory over Colorado State with a field goal in the final seconds.

Saturday afternoon, the humble fifth-year senior was the last member of the Colorado football team to jog off Invesco Field after kicking the game-tying and game-winning field goals in the Buffs' 31-28 overtime win over the Rams.

Eberhart — who patiently waited in Crosby's shadow for four years — was conducting a television interview in the postgame spotlight while wishing he was in the locker room celebrating with teammates.

"Right now, Kevin is the greatest football player on earth," CU linebacker and special teams captain R.J. Brown said. "I knew the ball was going in before he kicked it. He's the hero and he should be the hero, because that's a lot of pressure coming in after Mason and having a kick to get us into overtime and make a kick to win it. That was awesome."

Believe it or not, Eberhart's best kick of the day was the 41-yard attempt he missed wide right. The future aerospace engineer made a simple miscalculation and lined up wrong.

"That was probably the best ball I hit all day. I just hit it straight and true," Eberhart said. "It's unfortunate when you hit the perfect ball and you just lined up wrong for what you thought."

Strange would be the best way to describe the special teams play in this opener.

It began with Byron Ellis fumbling the opening kickoff with the possible turnover landing softly and safely in Brown's arms after popping up in the air. The Buffs would take a deep breath and then march down the field in six plays and take a 7-0 lead on a 24-yard touchdown pass from Cody Hawkins to Scotty McKnight.

In the third quarter, the Rams seized the momentum on Kory Sperry's third touchdown reception of the game and then appeared to be in complete control when place-kicker Jason Smith drilled Brown in the back on the ensuing kickoff.

The loose ball was recovered at the CU 47 by Jermaine Walters. Kyle Bell would cash the special teams gaffe in for a touchdown to give CSU a 28-17 lead.

"Personally, I'm still in awe that happened," Brown said. "I guess you live and learn. It won't happen

again, that much I can tell you. That was tough to get over. ...

"The speed is what I was so blown away with. My reaction times aren't slow, and he really just cut that ball into me. Great kick, to his credit. I should have had my head on a swivel."

Smith was actually just trying to squib the ball down field, according to Sonny Lubick.

"At that moment, momentum was really flying our way," the CSU head coach said.

After the game, CSU special teams coach Dave Arnold was rushed to a Denver hospital to be treated for fatigue.

Walters was called for a running into the punter to give CU a first down. CU punter Matthew DiLallo placed both of his attempts inside the 20 and without a return. Terrence Wheatley had 135 yards on three kickoff returns.

And with the Buffs still needing a little magic late in the fourth quarter, Chase McBride returned a 36-yard punt 43 yards down to the CSU 34 with 2:08 remaining.

McBride, who was also a teammate of Eberhart's at Broomfield High School, was tackled by Rams punter Jimmie Kaylor.

"I felt bad putting Kevin in that situation because I only had one guy to beat and I didn't do it," McBride said. "I just thanked him for bailing me out. I knew he would. I had all the faith in the world in him."

But did Dan Hawkins? Facing a fourth-and-4 at the 28 and trailing by three points, the head coach decided to go for the first down instead of allow Eberhart to attempt a 45-yard field goal.

"Hawk has been preaching to us that the Buffaloes are a team that's going to win. And if we have an opportunity to go for it on fourth down and we think that we can make it, we're going to go for it," Brown said. "Other teams should know that because the Buffaloes are going to be winners. I think that's the message he's sending."

The Buffs did get the first down on a pass-interference call, but they were unable to get the win in regulation. Four plays later, Eberhart forced overtime by making a 22-yard field goal with 13 seconds left.

"You always want to kick it no matter what the situation is. You've got to trust in your coaches, and they made the right decision," Eberhart said. "I was disappointed not to kick it. But isn't that what you want? Everybody's disappointed when they don't get the ball. I mean, it worked out better than anyone could have asked for."

Wheatley intercepted Caleb Hanie in the end zone on CSU's overtime possession. Eberhart calmly ended the suspense and the game with a 35-yard field goal moments later.

"The feeling on that sideline was just electric. You get caught up in that and you don't get nervous," Eberhart said. "I just went out there and did what everybody expected me to do. Luckily Terrence and the defense really stepped up and made that possible. That was the really difficult part and the spectacular part was them making that interception to give us the opportunity."



Sumler steps up for injured Charles

Redshirt frosh finishes with 85 yards, touchdown

By Ryan Thorburn
Sunday, September 2, 2007

DENVER — Demetrius Sumler was being a little too patient during the practices leading up to the 2007 season.

The redshirt freshman seemed satisfied to watch and learn from Hugh Charles and Byron Ellis this year before climbing the depth chart in the spring.

That's not the attitude Colorado head coach Dan Hawkins — obviously not one to shy away from putting young players on the field for big games, including family members — is trying to instill in the program.

"I challenged him to do some things, and at first he was like a redshirt freshman and didn't want to outshine the seniors," CU running backs coach Darian Hagan said of Sumler. "I just challenged and asked him, 'What do you give us? You don't give us anything.'"

"Next day, the lights went on for that dude. And here we are."

And where the Buffs are this morning is a much happier place than they were a year ago, thanks to Saturday's 31-28 overtime victory over Colorado State at Invesco Field.

Although there were many heroes for CU, it was Sumler who helped save the day in the running game by grinding out 85 yards and a touchdown on 16 carries (5.3 yards per) after Charles pulled his hamstring and left the game for good in the first quarter.

Perhaps the most encouraging news for the coaching staff, especially if Charles is unable to return for to the lineup against Arizona State next Saturday, is that Sumler was anything but satisfied after the game.

"I have very high expectations for myself," Sumler said. "I'm not going to say I did great, I'm not going to say I did poorly. I'll say I did average. But we got the victory, that's all really that matters."

Colorado State's Kyle Bell lived up to all of the hype and did his best to carry the Rams back into the win column after missing the 2006 season with a serious knee injury. He finished with 147 yards and a touchdown, but needed 40 carries (3.4 yards per) to get there.

After Bell's 13-yard score gave CSU a 28-17 lead with 10:05 remaining in the third quarter, the Buffs were able to get back into the game when Sumler capped a 14-play, 86-yard drive with a 3-yard touchdown run. CU pulled to within 28-25 after Cody Hawkins converted the 2-point conversion on a pass to Riar Geer.

"The butterflies disappeared after the first snap. After the first snap I thought, 'OK, we're back and we're playing. Let's go,' " said Sumler, who had 40 yards on seven carries in the first half. "The coaches did a great job coming up with a blocking scheme, the offensive line was opening up the holes, so I did just my small job in finding the holes and running hard."

CU had Sumler in the game plan anyway, but the injury to Charles — who pulled up lame after making a 15-yard reception that might have gone the distance had his hamstring cooperated — thrust him into the role of featured back. Ellis had three carries for 4 yards.

Wide receiver Patrick Williams was second on the team with 24 yards rushing. He had a 24-yard gain on a reverse and was stopped for no gain on a similar play later in the game.

"No. 8 was up for the challenge and did a great job for us," Hagan said.



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Crosby survives final cut with Green Bay

Camera staff report

Sunday, September 2, 2007

Former Colorado placekicker Mason Crosby spent the day Saturday waiting to see if he would be included on the Green Bay Packers' final roster — and watching his former teammates beat Colorado State, 31-28 in overtime.

The day couldn't have turned out better. Less than an hour after Crosby watched former teammate and practice partner Kevin Eberhart kick the 35-yard game-winning field goal, Crosby got the call informing him that he'd made the Packers' final roster.

"It was good to have the distraction," Crosby said Saturday night. "Ever since the game ended on Thursday night (Green Bay's final preseason game), it's been a waiting game.

"So being able to watch some college football was a great way to keep my mind from wandering, and fortunately I found a restaurant across from our hotel that was showing the CU-CSU game. It was the perfect way to pass some time while my fate was decided here.

Crosby and Eberhart were practice partners at CU for four years.

"It was kind of weird watching the whole team playing and not being out there with them," Crosby said. "But I knew Kevin would come through. He's an excellent kicker, and he helped me to keep pushing myself my entire time at CU.

"It's a great way for him to start his senior year and as the full-time kicker, and I am sure he's excited about it. I'll probably give him a call (today) when everything settles down. I know how it is when you make a couple of kicks like he did, you want to celebrate with your family and enjoy it."

Crosby had a similar experience against the Rams in 2005, when he kicked two field goals in the final two minutes — including one with four seconds left on the clock — to produce a 31-28 win.

Saturday, he watched Eberhart send the game into overtime with a 22-yard kick, then kick the game-winner on CU's first overtime possession.

"When it was nearing the end and we were down 28-25, I knew in my heart that we were going to get the ball back," Crosby said. "Chase (McBride) had a really good (punt) return, and I knew that if we couldn't score a touchdown, Kevin would tie it up. I was happy to see him step up and take the reins and get after it. I knew he would do it and I am really proud of him and really everyone for coming back the way they did."

Crosby replaces Packer veteran Dave Rayner, who was cut Saturday. The Packers open the regular season Sept. 9 at home against the Philadelphia Eagles.

"I didn't know what was happening with me until about 3:45, that's when I got the news," Crosby said. "So it really was a great day, watching the old team win and a good friend coming through in the clutch, not once but twice, and topping it off by solidifying my spot on a new team. You couldn't script it any better."



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Interception ruins Hanie's solid day

Rams QB throws for 227 yards, 3 TDs in loss to CU

By Neill Woelk
Sunday, September 2, 2007

DENVER — For eight quarters, Colorado State quarterback Caleb Hanie was as close to perfect against Colorado as is humanly possible.

A year ago, he completed 20 of 23 pass attempts for 223 yards and a touchdown in a 14-10 win over the Buffs.

Saturday, he was 19-for-25 for 227 yards and three touchdowns in four quarters against the Buffs.

But his last pass on Saturday is one he'll never forget — and one he'd give just about anything to have back.

The last pass was supposed to go to Johnny Walker in the end zone. It was supposed to give CSU an overtime touchdown and hopefully set the stage for a CSU win.

Instead, Walker collided with teammate Kory Sperry (who caught all three of Hanie's touchdown passes on Saturday), leaving the ball to be picked off by Buff cornerback Terrence Wheatley.

Instead of a touchdown, it became Hanie's first interception in eight quarters and an overtime period against the Buffs, leaving his numbers against CU to read 40-for-50 for 462 yards, four touchdowns — and one interception.

The interception is probably the pass most folks will remember after it paved the way for CU's 31-28 overtime win.

"I probably should have thrown it out of the end zone," Hanie said in a quiet CSU locker room. "I was trying to get it to Johnny, and Kory was supposed to be in the corner of the end zone. They just ran into each other and that guy was there to make the play."

CSU coach Sonny Lubick also wishes Hanie would have thrown the ball out of the end zone.

"I guess he didn't get out of the pocket," Lubick said. "I guess the best he could do was throw it up in the stands. ... But after all the good plays he made, I certainly wouldn't even talk to him about that one."

The Rams had a decisive statistical edge Saturday, rolling up 386 total offensive yards to CU's 330. Along with Hanie's passing, the Rams also received 135 yards rushing — on 40 carries — from running back Kyle Bell. The 40 carries were a career high, and the most by a CSU running back since Steve Bartalo ran the rock 47 times for 152 yards in a 45-28 win over New Mexico in 1985.

Sperry, meanwhile, became the first CSU player with three touchdown catches since Dustin Osborn had three vs. Minnesota in 2005 — and he became the 10th receiver since 1994 to have at least 100 yards receiving against the Buffs. Sperry finished with eight catches for 103 yards.

But the numbers on the scoreboard overruled all the personal statistics.

"From where I was standing, that seemed like a hard-fought ballgame by two teams that seemed fairly evenly matched," Lubick said. "I'm proud of our football team."

Life now doesn't get any easier for the Rams. They play host to nationally ranked Cal next week, then have a pair of road games, at Houston and TCU.



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Knife-attack victim joins team in celebration

By Neill Woelk

Sunday, September 2, 2007

DENVER — The Colorado Buffaloes had a little extra inspiration in their locker room Saturday morning.

Michael Knorps, the CU student who was stabbed in an attack on campus Monday, was a special guest of the Buffs for Saturday's game against Colorado State at Invesco Field.

Knorps joined the team in the locker room before the game, was on the sidelines during the game — and then joined the team on the podium as the Buffs were awarded the Centennial Cup after their 31-28 overtime victory.

Knorps' family also attended the game as guests of the CU athletic department.

"It was fun — it was great," a grinning Knorps said after the game. "The whole team was really great to me. The coaches talked to me, the players, all of them. They were really neat."

The plan to invite Knorps and his family to the game was actually hatched late Monday after CU coach Dan Hawkins heard about the incident on campus.

"I just felt so bad for the kid, I thought we should do something for him," Hawkins said. "I mean, it's his first day of school, he's new in town. ... I mean, those are lottery odds that something like that happens. I just thought we should reach out to him and say, 'Hey, we're with you. You're a Buff. Every student is a Buff, and we want you to know that.'"

Hawkins and CU athletic director Mike Bohn then worked with CU Chancellor Bud Peterson's office to set up the details and extend the invitation to Knorps and his family.

"Immediately after the event, Coach Hawkins said we needed to do something to rally around him," Bohn said. "It was just about doing the right thing. I really salute Coach Hawkins for having the initiative to set the thing in motion. We think all of our students are part of our team, and we wanted him to know that he is part of that."

Hawkins talked to his players about having Knorps in the pre-game locker room. He said his players were on board with the plan.

"I told him that he was an inspiration to all of us," said defensive lineman George Hypolite. "Look at what he's been through and how he's bounced back. You could tell he's not a complainer. He's a guy that's going to battle back from the adversity he's faced."

Said linebacker Jordon Dizon: "We wanted him to know that we don't want him to leave CU. Coach Hawk talked to us about it, and we thought it was a great idea for him to be here. What he's been

through, and to come back like that ... that's what beating adversity is all about."

CU did not publicize Knorps' attendance. It wasn't until just before he joined the team on the podium that anyone from the media noticed his presence.

"This was about helping a young man," Bohn said. "I think what we did just embodies the spirit and cooperation around the community and university."

Knorps, who grew up in Illinois, has been a sports fan for most of his life. He attended high school with basketball star Michael Jordan's son, and once served as a bat boy for the Chicago Cubs for one game.

"But they lost that one," Knorps said. "I had a little better luck today."

Hypolite suggested that it might not be a bad idea to have Knorps around for future games.

"I told him if he keeps coming, we'll keep winning football games," Hypolite said.

Knorps smiled at the thought.

"On the sidelines for more games? Maybe I'll talk to Coach Hawkins about that."



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

Longmont, Colorado
Monday, September 03,
2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 9/2/2007

Plucky day

Young Buffs gut out OT victory over rival Rams

By Patrick Ridgell

The Daily Times-Call

DENVER — Shorthanded and inexperienced, the University of Colorado football program won a game Saturday at Invesco Field that it probably couldn't have won a year ago.

And in doing so, head coach Dan Hawkins proved he is a man of his word.

The Buffs defeated Colorado State, 31-28, in overtime, in the season opener for both teams. CU kicker Kevin Eberhart hit a tying 22-yard field goal with 13 seconds to play in regulation, and later won it from 35 yards after Buffs cornerback Terrence Wheatley intercepted CSU's Caleb Hanie in the end zone to end the Rams' only overtime possession.

The Buffs stormed the field after Eberhart's final boot, and left with the Centennial Cup.



CU kicker Kevin Eberhart is hoisted onto his teammates' shoulders after booting the game-winning, 35-yard field goal in overtime. **Times-Call/Joshua Buck**

TimesCall.com Slide Show

Bufs Beat Rams 31-28 in OT

A tough game to win grew more difficult when CU lost running back Hugh Charles for the day to a strained hamstring on the fourth play from scrimmage. Charles joined a list of key Buffs unavailable, including receivers Josh Smith and Bernard Jackson, linebacker

Michael Sipili, and defensive linemen Taj Kaynor and Chris Perri.

Others compensated, though.

Redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins made an impressive debut, going 18-for-31 for 201 yards and a pair of touchdowns. He weathered several hits from blitzing Rams and earned praise from CSU coach Sonny Lubick.

"I want to give credit to Cody Hawkins," Lubick said. "I thought he was pretty special."

Sure-handed receivers Scotty Mc

Knight, a redshirt freshman, and junior Patrick Williams combined for 13 catches and 165 yards. Demetrius Sumler, another redshirt freshman, ran 16 times for 85 yards and a TD.

CSU carved apart CU's defense until the middle of the third quarter, and running back Kyle Bell carried 40 times for 135 yards in his return.

But the Buffs' defenders suddenly awoke while CSU's play-calling seemed to go conservative late in the third to make enough plays late to give CU a chance.

"We probably were a C-minus," CU defensive tackle George Hypolite said. "We made a lot of mistakes, but it seemed like every time we needed a play, somebody stepped up and made a play and that's encouraging. That's the part that you can't teach, that you can't practice, that you can't rep and that you can't make up for in practice.

Said Dan Hawkins: "I totally believed we were going to win. I wasn't exactly sure how."

That's not entirely true. Dan Hawkins decided CU would win it by playing to win. And what's most memorable about this one is how the Buffs overcame a 28-17 deficit in the second half, and how they chose to go for a fourth-and-4 at CSU's 28 with 1:16 to play when a 45-yard field goal would have tied it.

After calling two timeouts and failing to draw CSU offsides, Cody Hawkins — according to offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich — called an audible at the line of scrimmage, changing Williams' route. Hawkins then lofted the ball down the sideline, and Williams drew a pass interference penalty on CSU's Joey Rucks. CU drove to the 5 to set up Eberhart's tying kick.

Dan Hawkins insists Eberhart can convert from 50, even though his work in camp did not reinforce that belief. The coach in recent weeks told writers that if he ever refused to go for a fourth down in such circumstances, he should be called out.

That, at least on Saturday, was not necessary.

"You'll have fun because you'll be able to make fun of me and criticize me for it, but I'm always going to play to win," Dan Hawkins said. "If you want your team to have a certain sort of swagger and a certain sort of confidence, they've got to know their coach has their back on that.

"It had nothing really to do with Kevin. You have to deserve to be successful. If you're going to play not to lose all the time, then you don't deserve to be successful."

Players echoed their head coach.

"We were all on the sideline going, 'We know he's going for it. There's no question,'" Hypolite said. "That's the way Hawk is; that's the way this team is.

"When our backs are to the wall and we need to make a play, we're going to die trying to win. We're not going to die preparing to lose."

Said offensive tackle Tyler Polumbus: "I wouldn't call him a gambler. He just has faith in this team."

Beating the Rams in this era is never easy for CU, and an experience factor heavily favoring CSU on Saturday didn't bode well.

If the Buffs had anything to lose, it was confidence, and they managed to gain a bit of it instead. With a trip to Arizona State looming Saturday and a visit from Florida State coming the next week, CU will need all the confidence it can get.

"We knew this was a must win," Wheatley said. "We've been saying since the beginning of camp.

"If I had to kick punts or field goals or whatever, I was going to do whatever. The whole team had that mentality. We never quit. With the offense, we knew if we could just hang on and give them a chance, the offense was going to do something. That was the mentality today."

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

Longmont, Colorado
Monday, September 03,
2007

DAILY TIMES-CALL

Publish Date: 9/2/2007

Inexperience hardly a hindrance for CU

By Brian Howell

The Daily Times-Call

DENVER — Demetrius Sumler had never played a college football game before Saturday, but he watched the University of Colorado enough last year as a redshirt to know the Buffaloes weren't too good in the fourth quarter.

Four times in 2006, the Buffs lost by nine points or less, and they never battled back from a fourth-quarter deficit to win a game.

TimesCall.com Slide Show

[Buffs Beat Rams 31-28 in OT](#)

Saturday, CU found itself down by 11 in the second half, and down by three in the final minute before pulling off a 31-28 overtime win against rival Colorado State.

"We would have never come back last season from a deficit like that," Sumler said. "(It's) just to show how much we've matured this offseason, and how much we've grown as a team."

Colorado graduated a load of seniors from the 2006 season, which ended with a dreadful 2-10 mark. This season, the roster is full of inexperience. Of the 104 players on the CU roster, 61 had never played a down in a college game before Saturday.

Seems the Buffs grew up by getting younger.

Saturday, CU's youngsters — especially Sumler, quarterback Cody Hawkins and receiver Scotty McKnight — were poised under pressure and led the Buffs to an important victory.

"I think it's huge for the program, and I think it's definitely huge for the fans," Hawkins said.

It was big for the fans in part because they had no idea what to expect from Hawkins, the son of CU head coach Dan Hawkins. He came into day with a 59-0 record as a starter since sixth grade, but he had never been on the field in a college game.

He began the contest with five consecutive completions, and wound up completing 18 of 31 passes for 201 yards and two touchdowns. He also put the Buffs in position to tie the game with a field goal with 13 seconds to go in the fourth quarter.

For Hawkins — who has said that nervousness isn't his thing — it wasn't a major surprise to play well in his first game.

"You never expect to go out and play mediocre," he said.

He wasn't the only CU freshman to step up.

Sumler came through in the backfield when senior Hugh Charles went down with a hamstring injury on the fourth play of the game, and wound up with 85 yards and a touchdown on 16 carries.

McKnight caught eight passes for 106 yards and a touchdown.

Less noticed but equally important was Wes Palazzi. Another redshirt freshman, Palazzi started at left guard and helped pave the way for the offense to average 4.6 yards per rushing attempt. Throughout the afternoon, the Buffs had several other players making their collegiate debuts.

Regardless of the outcome, Colorado sent a clear message to its fans Saturday that youth won't be an excuse. No question that youth is going to show at times, and it may even cost the Buffs a game down the road, but it won't be used as an excuse.

"We've really tried to push the envelope with those guys and say, 'Hey, you're not in a position where you can sit back and watch for a couple years and hang around,'" Dan Hawkins said. "'You've got to get ready to go, mentally and physically, and know what's going on because we're going to count on you.'"

Cody Hawkins was far from perfect. His fourth-quarter interception with CSU ahead by three could have been crushing. He also learned a valuable lesson before the game.

"I was running out there and jumping around (before the game) and listening to the weirdest music just trying to have a good time," he said. "Then I'm running out of the gates behind Ralphie and I'm going, 'Man, I'm already tired.'

"I'm probably going to do a better job next time in not getting so excited."

Colorado fans would be wise to do the same. CSU, after all, won just four games in 2006, so it wasn't as if the Buffs rose up and knocked off a national power.

The next few weeks, particularly Saturday against Arizona State and Sept. 15 against Florida State, figure to provide even tougher tests.

One game into 2007, however, the Buffs are already off to a better start than a year ago. And it appears they have maturity beyond their years.

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Injury ends Charles' day early

Tailback strains hamstring on Buffs' 4th play of game

By Brian Howell

The Daily Times-Call

DENVER — Hugh Charles got off to a good start, but his day quickly turned sour.

On Colorado's fourth play of the game Saturday, Charles caught a screen pass from Cody Hawkins and turned upfield for a 15-yard gain. In the middle of the play, however, CU's starting tailback pulled up lame with a hamstring injury.

His day was finished.

"Things happen, but I'll come back and recover and finish off the rest of the season," Charles said. "We've got a long season ahead of us, and I'll be back."

Redshirt freshman Demetrius Sumler filled in nicely, with 85 yards and a touchdown on 16 carries, but even he knows the Buffs need Charles.

"I like playing, but Hugh — he's a whole other part of our offense," Sumler said.

Charles has led the Buffs in rushing each of the past two seasons, with 842 yards in 2005 and 779 in 2006. He battled ankle and elbow injuries in 2006 but was healthy all through fall drills this season.

He came in with hopes of putting together his best season.

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[Buffs Beat Rams 31-28 in OT](#)

"It was disappointing," Charles said of getting hurt on his first touch of the season. "But we have backups, and that's what the backups are for, to run the game whenever somebody goes down."

Throughout the game, Charles stretched his legs and rode an exercise bike on the sidelines in an attempt to get back in, but it never happened.

CU considers Charles and Sumler on nearly equal footing, as far as their ability to be productive, so there wasn't much of a dropoff when Sumler took over. Still, offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich said his plans were altered with Charles' injury.

"It changed a lot," Helfrich said. "We had a lot of stuff from a lot of different personnel groups involving him."

Charles hopes to be back for Saturday's game at Arizona State. He said he was encouraged that he didn't pull his hamstring; he just strained it.

"It's just going to take a little bit to heal," he said. "I should be ready for Arizona (State)."

If he's not ready, the Buffs got a confidence boost with Sumler's performance. Prior to Saturday, he had never played



CU starting tailback Hugh Charles pulls up lame after straining a hamstring on a first-quarter screen pass. Charles left the contest after the play and didn't return. He is hoping to play in the Buffs' game this Saturday night at Arizona State. **Times-Call/Lewis Geyer**

in a college game.

“(Charles) went down and my number was called, so I just had to try to fill in and do what I could do,” Sumler said.

Kevin Moyd also played in his first game, getting two carries for seven yards. Byron Ellis had four yards on three carries.

“I’m confident Demetrius and Byron will be able to hold up, and Kevin Moyd will be able to spell them,” CU running backs coach Darian Hagan said. “Hopefully, Hugh is back. (But) we’re happy with the depth we have.”

Rocky Mountain News

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Eberhart kicks CU to victory

By B.G. Brooks, Rocky Mountain News
September 1, 2007

Kevin Eberhart's patience never wore thin, and early Saturday afternoon he wore it proudly.

After four years of living (and learning) in the long and illustrious shadow of former All-American placekicker Mason Crosby, Eberhart finally trotted to center stage for his turn.

It wasn't just any old turn.

With the annual Rocky Mountain Showdown tied 28-28 in overtime, the University of Colorado senior calmly drilled a 35-yard field goal to push the Buffaloes past the Rams 31-28 at Invesco Field at Mile High.

Eberhart's kick, the first ever overtime game-winner by a Buffs specialist, allowed CU its first victory in the series under coach Dan Hawkins, whose initial Buffs team lost 14-10 to the Rams last season and followed its downward spiral to a 2-10 finish.

"It's big," Hawkins said of the victory. "You can talk about progress, the indoor practice field, the locker room (improvements) and recruiting. But it's like, 'OK, what have you got to show for it?'"

"So people want to see (a win), and I think that is big for the fans to get back and get reengaged and get after it . . . I totally believed we were going to win. We had a few issues and stubbed our toe (but) I expected to win."

Fortunately for the Buffs, Eberhart's right big toe went virtually unstubbed. He finished his first game as Crosby's replacement with three field goals in four attempts and two extra points as the Buffs overcame an 11-point (28-17) third-quarter deficit and finally sent the game into overtime on Eberhart's 22-yarder with six seconds left in regulation.

One of Crosby's many bits of advice to his former teammate was to forget the errant kicks and move on.

"I would say it's easy, but you'd see on my face I'm a liar," Eberhart said of his 41-yard miss midway through the third quarter.

But when the time arrived for him to purge the bad memory and make the kick, Eberhart did. Twice.

His game-tying kick was set up by a 43-yard Chase McBride punt return to the CSU 34-yard line, giving the Buffs possession with 2:08 to play. CU muddled through three plays, gaining only six yards before Hawkins called for a fourth-and-four pass from his son, Cody, to receiver Patrick Williams.

Said Williams: "I don't even know where to begin. We always start out by visualizing; we started that last spring. Going into that fourth down, I felt like I've already made that play before, and it was just time for me to go out and do it."

The pass was complete for a first down, but Rams defensive back Joey Rucks also was called for pass interference, giving the Buffs a first down at the 14-yard line. Four plays later, Eberhart tied the game with his 22-yarder.

Of calling for the fourth-and-four gamble, Dan Hawkins said, "I'm going to tell my guys that we play to win. You have to take shots; if you don't believe in the play or your kids don't believe in the plan, then you don't

have anything.

"So, sometimes you're going to come up and sometimes you're not, but if you keep pushing the issue, you're going to come out on the plus end."

Eberhart's game-winning kick was set up by a Terrence Wheatley interception in the end zone that snuffed CSU's chances for points in its first overtime possession. As Wheatley trotted off the field, he passed Eberhart and said, "I set it up for you; you seal the deal."

Another four plays later, Eberhart did, setting off a wild celebration among the Buffs and their fans among the 60,767 who showed up for the earliest kickoff (10:10 a.m. MDT) in CU-CSU series history.

In taking a 17-14 halftime lead and overcoming their double-digit deficit in the third quarter, the Buffs received a strong performance from Cody Hawkins, who was making his first Division I-A start.

The younger Hawkins completed 18 of 31 passes for 201 yards and two touchdowns, with one interception on a flea-flicker early in the fourth quarter. He engineered scoring drives of 83, 46 and 86 yards – the last one a 14-play march that pulled the Buffs to within three points (28-25).

The score culminating that drive was by redshirt freshman tailback Demetrius Sumler, who played more than he expected after senior Hugh Charles suffered a pulled hamstring in the first quarter and was sidelined the rest of the afternoon.

Sumler responded with 16 carries for 85 yards and the TD, giving the Buffs the ground punch required to balance the passing game. CU finished with 330 yards of total offense, CSU with 386.

The Buffs lost two fumbles and an interception, while the Rams' only turnover was Wheatley's interception of Caleb Hanie, who completed 20 of 27 passes for 229 yards and the three TDs to Sperry.

"We knew it would be close," said Cody Hawkins, whose record as a starter since the sixth grade is 60-0. `` But getting the win and doing what we came here to do was what really felt good."

He said when the Buffs trailed by 11, he and his offense "just kept telling the defense to get us the ball back."

The defense finally responded, making critical stops in the second half. But this was after a first half that found the Buffs `D' appearing to have overslept.

"We improved as the game went on," inside linebacker/special teams captain R.J. Brown said.

But CU had game-long difficulty dealing with CSU running back Kyle Bell, whose career-high 40 rushing attempts gained 135 yards and a touchdown. Neither could CU contain CSU tight end Kory Sperry, who tied his career best with eight receptions for 103 yards and three touchdowns.

"We knew going in there that it was going to be a wire-to-wire bout and I thought we fought hard," Bell said. "But you've got to be proud with the way we stuck in there and the way we played."

CSU coach Sonny Lubick said he was "proud of our football team. They played hard. They did everything they could. In our business, it comes down to one false step, a little of this, a little of that.

"I just want to give credit to CU and to Cody Hawkins. I thought he was pretty special We had momentum in the third quarter, but just couldn't hold it."

Hawkins said his son "did OK. He would be the first to tell you he missed a few throws. But in general, not bad. I was more pleased with the overall team effort."

ETC.: CU now leads the series with its in-state rival 58-19-2 and has won four of the past five games. All have been decided in the final minute, even final seconds, and Saturday's game was the first in series history decided in overtime ... The Buffs are 74-39-5 in season openers...Offensive captain Bernard Jackson, whose eligibility remains in question, was on the CU sideline but not in uniform or even his game jersey...Walk-on CU receiver Scotty McKnight was in line for a scholarship, and Saturday's effort

underscored that intent. He caught eight passes for 106 yards and a score ...Bufs linebacker Jordon Dizon made a career-best 20 tackles. The total, however, is subject to change when coaches review game tape...Wheatley's 68-yard kickoff return was the longest by a Buffs player since 2003...CU players seeing their first game action included: true freshmen Kendrick Celestine and Tyler Cope, redshirt freshmen McKnight, Hawkins, Sumler, Marquez Herrod, Wes Palazzi, Jimmy Smith and Nate Solder, and sophomore Kevin Moyd...Because of academics, CU guard Erick Faatagi described his status entering Saturday's game as ``a question mark." Faatagi, listed as the Buffs' No. 3 right guard, said he hoped his situation was clarified for next week's Arizona State game...Definitely returning for the ASU trip will be defensive tackle Taj Kaynor, who was suspended for the opener...CU freshman Michael Knorps, the victim of a random campus stabbing earlier in the week, spent the game on the sideline as a special guest of Dan Hawkins and athletic director Mike Bohn.

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