



Helfrich knows ASU's Carpenter well

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, September 5, 2007

It would appear Colorado offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Mark Helfrich has a knack for spotting talent at the position he coaches.

Helfrich is in a strange situation this season because he will be coaching against two players he recruited to Arizona State during his five seasons as an assistant coach there. The Buffs will see one of those players this week in Sun Devils quarterback Rudy Carpenter. They will see the other in November when Nebraska comes to town with quarterback Sam Keller.

Helfrich also recruited Max Hall to ASU, but after Helfrich left for Boulder two years ago, Hall bolted for Brigham Young, where he is now the starting quarterback.

Carpenter, Keller, Hall and the player Helfrich coaches now — CU quarterback Cody Hawkins — combined to go 4-0 in the opening week of the college football season last week.

Carpenter and Hawkins will meet this week in Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, Ariz., and Helfrich sees a lot of similarities between the two.

Helfrich was asked what Carpenter's weaknesses might be. The junior has throw for 4,993 yards and 42 touchdowns in about two seasons as the starter.

"That's a good question. I don't know," Helfrich said. "Any time a quarterback gets hit, that's going to make any quarterback think a little bit more, but Rudy is a very good player. He's very sound player."

One of the top attributes Helfrich looks for in any player he recruits is whether or not the guy wins. Does he make winning plays. Helfrich said Carpenter won a lot of games in high school and showed a lot of toughness, too.

Carpenter completed 21 of 37 passes for 248 yards and touchdowns last season against the Buffs in Boulder. He also threw two interceptions.

Charles doubtful

Senior tailback Hugh Charles said he would like to play this week against Arizona State but he believes it's more likely he will return against Florida State Sept. 15.

Charles strained his left hamstring on the first series of the season against Colorado State and did not return to the game. He has been able to do some light jogging, but he was on wheelbarrow duty during Tuesday's practice.

Charles said he pulled his right hamstring at the end of his senior year in high school and was unable to run for three months. He said he is hoping to avoid the same thing happening during his senior year of college by taking it slow and making sure he's ready for action when he returns.

"Once I'm all better, I'll be out there doing what I do," he said.

Wheatley at wideout

CU cornerback Terrence Wheatley said Tuesday he has asked coaches to let him play some wide receiver against the Sun Devils. Wheatley is the team's fastest player and has worked periodically at the position over the past two years.

So what's his motivation for wanting to play offense this week? Wheatley said he wants to do all he can to beat ASU defensive coordinator Craig Bray, who served as secondary coach in Boulder in 2004 and 2005.

Bray and his Buffs butted heads back then.

Wheatley was a playmaker with the ball in his hands against CSU, returning three kickoffs for 135 yards. He was only in the game in that role because of the injury to Charles.

Coach Dan Hawkins said Wheatley will probably remain as the primary kick returner even if Charles comes back soon.

"I would say right now, T-Wheat would have the inside track," Hawkins said.

More T-Wheat

Hawkins raved about Wheatley when asked about how he has performed after two tough years with multiple wrist surgeries.

"The pro scouts come by and I just jump on the table for that guy," Hawkins said. "I think he's a very solid individual. ...I can see that guy, if he continues, being an All-American-type player."

Play or nay

Hawkins said he didn't necessarily go into the opener planning for all five starting offensive linemen to play every play, but he also is being careful about being fair with his young players.

"We're trying to be judicious about who plays and who doesn't play," Hawkins said. "We don't want to make a kid give up a year of eligibility, when, in fact, he plays the whole season and plays 25 plays. That's just a crime."

Old reliable

Hawkins said senior Chase McBride retained the starting punt return job this season because he hasn't dropped a ball since preseason practices began. Hawkins said studies have shown that when players fail to catch punts, they generally cost their team at least 17 yards of field position.

McBride came up with a key return in the fourth quarter against CSU setting up the game-tying field

goal drive.

CU's average starting field position was its 44-yard line. CSU's was its 34. The Buffs had 10 different players total 26 special teams points for tackles, assists, knockdowns, wedge breaks and return-springing blocks.

Cooler players prevail

Some Colorado players, mostly linemen, will wear Nike cooling vests Saturday. The vests are worn beneath a players pads and can be hooked up to a pumping station on the sideline. Cool air or water is pumped through the vest to cool players down.

The vests were developed by Nike at CU several years ago and have since been put to use by other programs around the nation. ASU does not use the vests.

Quotable

Coach Hawkins on the ASU offense. "They have no weaknesses there whatsoever."

Notable

CU place-kicker Kevin Eberhart was named the Big 12 Conference special teams player of the week after making three field goals, including the game winner against CSU. Former CU place-kicker Mason Crosby holds the Big 12 record for weekly awards, having been named special teams player of the week eight times over three seasons. ... CU officials said about 4,500 tickets remain for the Buffs' home opener against Florida State on Sept. 15. ... Fox Sports Net reported the CU-CSU game was its second highest rated college football game in history with a 9.6 rating, trailing the 2004 CU-CSU game which received a 11.3 rating.



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Brotherly love goes on hold: CU's Brad Jones, ASU's Preston meet Saturday

By Kyle Ringo
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It's been nine years since Colorado linebacker Brad Jones tackled his older brother, Preston, but his next chance is right around the corner.

The Jones brothers will likely meet on the football field Saturday night at Sun Devil Stadium when CU travels to take on Arizona State (8:28 p.m., FSN).

Brad Jones starts at outside linebacker for the Buffs and wears No. 40. Preston Jones is a reserve running back, who carried 13 times for 38 yards in the Sun Devils' victory over San Jose State to start the season. He wears No. 4.

"I love my brother to death. I think he's a fantastic athlete, but I also think that I can beat him at anything," Brad Jones said. "And I'm sure he thinks that he can beat me at anything."

The brothers grew up in East Lansing, Mich., before choosing to go west for college. They played on many of the same teams together as running backs in the same backfield on offense and as a linebacker and safety on defense.

Brad Jones said the last time he tackled his brother was in seventh grade when both played for a Pop Warner team called the Lansing Lions. He said coaches of that team used to do their best not to let the brothers get after each other during practices, but occasionally it was unavoidable.

He said those instances usually occurred during the Oklahoma Drill, which calls for a running back to get past a tackler in a confined space.

"I tackled him," Brad said. "I definitely tackled him. I got off a block and tackled him, but then the next time ... he shook me then. Don't tell him I said that. Don't ever tell him I said that."

Brad Jones is coming off a difficult game in which he was asked to cover Colorado State tight end Kory Sperry. He gave up three touchdown passes and left the field believing he had played horribly, despite the Buffs' victory.

After reviewing the film, he said he made one clear mistake on one of the touchdown passes, but Sperry made good plays on the other two. Defensive coordinator Ron Collins summed up Jones day this way.

"We felt like we really wanted to have Brad matched up with him, and there were times when Brad did play well," Collins said. "But that tight end is as good as anyone we'll see."

Brad Jones won't have to defend a tight end as good as Sperry this week, but the ASU passing game, led by quarterback Rudy Carpenter, will be a bigger test. Part of that test might mean defending his brother in pass coverage out of the backfield. Their parents, Don and Fawn Jones, will be in the stands Saturday waiting to see who wins the next go-around. The Jones, along with about 15 other family members or close friends, are traveling to Phoenix from the midwest.

They did the same thing last season when ASU beat CU 21-3 in Folsom Field, but there was much less family angst then because everyone knew the brothers wouldn't meet on the field. Preston Jones broke his ankle a year ago and missed much of the season.

"It is crazy. I wasn't very highly recruited out of high school, came here as a walk-on, earned a scholarship," Preston Jones said.

"Him, it was definitely a different story. He was a real highly recruited guy out of high school. He had his picks of where he wanted to go."

"We're real close, always proud of each other, always supporting each other. It's just a special thing. He was one of my best friends growing up. We were always together. Being able to do something like this is real special.

Brad Jones said he hasn't been able to get a straight answer from his parents when he asks who they will be rooting for Saturday. They tell him both teams. He said last season his father wore his CU jacket through the first half and donned an ASU shirt in the second.

In some respects the family will be happy once the game is over. The brothers will be able to get back to talking about football again.

"Sometimes it's a little weird when we talk," Brad Jones said. "It's like we're talking but no one wants to really give away anything or ask little stuff like, 'So how you guys doing?' or 'How's practices been?' I think in my head, 'Should I really answer him?' It's real general. We talk about school a lot."



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Colorado's Jones looks back, forward

By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — Brad Jones has seen the film, and he said it's not as bad as people might think.

The tape is the one of Colorado's 31-28 overtime victory against Colorado State on Saturday. And on three occasions, Jones, a CU linebacker, was the guy closest to Rams' tight end Kory Sperry when he was catching a touchdown.

"I made a couple of mistakes, but I don't think I played badly at all," Jones said. "When I first came out of the game, I thought I had played really badly. But I wound up watching the film and realized I didn't play that badly. I actually played pretty well."

The mistakes, Jones said, involved a couple of reads. He said on Sperry's second touchdown, a 4-yard reception, he stepped outside and released the tight end down the field.

"Somebody else ... messed up on that play also," Jones said. "But it was my stepping outside that really opened it up."

On Sperry's third score, a 37-yard pass during which he carried Jones for the last few yards, Jones said he also stepped outside and "messed it up." Asked if he was supposed to receive deep help from a safety on the play, Jones said, "I don't want to blame it on anybody else."

Jones also threw some praise at the CSU tight end that, in college at least, he'll never have to cover again.

"He's definitely a good tight end; one of the best I've gone up against," Jones said.

On a separate issue, Jones on Saturday at Arizona State finally gets to play against his brother, Preston, a reserve running back for the Sun Devils. He believes the last time he tackled Preston came in seventh grade Pop Warner football, when the two played in Michigan for the Lansing Lions.

Preston is a year ahead of Brad, but they were almost always on the same teams as kids, including two varsity football seasons at East Lansing High. In grade school, they excelled in soccer and basketball, but began pestering their father, Don, a former linebacker at Indiana, to play football when Brad was in third grade.

The two didn't face each other when Arizona State visited Boulder last year because Preston, now a senior, had a broken ankle. Preston ran 13 times for 38 yards last Saturday in Arizona State's win over San Jose State.

Brad said their recent phone conversations have stayed away from football so as not to tip the other to his team's plans for Saturday. Brad said 17 family members will travel to Tempe for the game.

"I love my brother to death and think he's a fantastic athlete, but I also think I can beat him at anything," Brad Jones said.

Hello, again: Cornerback Terrence Wheatley said he asked coaches this week to let him play some receiver against Arizona State.

Wheatley wants a chance to go against Craig Bray, CU's secondary coach in 2004 and 2005 who's now Arizona State's defensive coordinator. Wheatley said he worked at receiver some early in camp, but not much lately, and added he does not know what coaches have in mind.

Keeping cool: CU quarterback Cody Hawkins said the Buffs will wear cooling vests Saturday in Arizona, where the temperature is supposed to reach 104 degrees. According to Hawkins, the vests blow cool air through the pads.

"That's definitely an advantage for us," he said. "It's going to be hot, but that's just another obstacle that we're going to have to overcome, and it's definitely not going to be an excuse."

Weekly honor: CU kicker Kevin Eberhart was named the Big 12's special teams player of the week.

Eberhart kicked three field goals against the Rams. He tied it with 13 seconds to play on a 22-yarder, and won it in overtime from 35.

Extra points: Another member of the coaching staff at Arizona State is Matt Lubick, son of CSU coach Sonny Lubick. He's the Sun Devils' safeties coach and recruiting coordinator. ... Receiver Josh Smith had an MRI performed Tuesday. CU did not report any conclusions reached from the test. Running back Hugh Charles (hamstring) remains day to day. ... CU reported 4,500 tickets remained for its home opener, Sept. 15 against Florida State. ... Linebacker Jordon Dizon's tackle total from Saturday has been increased from 20 to 22. That's the most in a single game by a Buff in a decade.

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Buff's turn to youth

Redshirt freshmen playing prominent roles at Colorado

By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call

BOULDER — The fortunes of Colorado's offense lie in the hands of many people, and many of them are redshirt freshmen.

While trusting the scoring to inexperienced players makes coaches nervous, including CU offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich, the Buffs aren't alone in this endeavor. No. 5 Oklahoma, a team with national title aspirations that'll visit Boulder later this month, starts a redshirt freshman quarterback in Sam Bradford.

Sooners coach Bob Stoops doesn't seem to think it's a bad idea. He credited better high school coaching with making freshmen more ready to play.

"High school coaches are doing a great job," Stoops said. "Everybody is more aware of developing their bodies sooner with weight-training regimens and speed-training regimens. Some guys come in with, physically, bodies ready to compete."

Helfrich said geography has something to do with it.

"In certain areas of the country, football is year-round," he said. "That certainly is part of it."

"I also think it's just the parity of recruiting, and there are no hidden gems anymore."

CU guard Wes Palazzi, one of four redshirt freshmen who could start on offense Saturday at Arizona State, said his high school, Plano West (Texas), near Dallas, had four weeks of spring drills, in full pads. There was also conditioning that lasted all summer. He said this year, his old high school program went to two-a-days at fall camp.

Palazzi said CU's coaches wouldn't play anyone who wasn't ready.

"I think coaches know what they're doing and feel pretty confident of who we're putting in there," Palazzi said.

Scotty McKnight, whose 108 receiving yards are the most ever by a CU receiver in his debut, said his high school in Coto de Casa, Calif., based its weightlifting program on the one USC uses. The whole team lifted every morning at 6:15. McKnight said he spent summers in passing league tournaments all over California. His high school team did not use full pads in spring drills, but those drills still were intense, he said.

Veterans like cornerback Terrence Wheatley, a fifth-year senior, said there's no question the high school players who've joined the program in recent years are more prepared to play early than when he enrolled at CU in 2003. He pointed to two 2007 signees as proof.

"You look at a guy like Josh Smith," Wheatley said. "He could probably go out and beat most corners that I've seen. You really don't find that very often. And he's not the only one. ... A guy like Brian Lockridge — if we weren't so deep at running back, he'd probably be playing, too."

"It's getting kind of ridiculous."

Safety Ryan Walters suggested there's a different kind of thinking in the program now.

"They put the best athletes on the field and the best players on the field and give them an opportunity," Walters said.

"Early on in my career here, if you were young, you were pretty much going to play special teams or redshirt. There were few exceptions."

The redshirt freshman on whom many eyes are fixed at CU is quarterback Cody Hawkins. Asked what one area he needs to improve on the most in order to win Saturday, Hawkins gave two answers. He needs to take better care of the football — he threw an interception and fumbled a snap against Colorado State — and he must run the team better.

"When it's your first time out there and first time playing in front of 70,000 people, you have to be a little louder, a little more definitive with everything," Hawkins said.

Helfrich said for Hawkins, those abilities will come.

"The guy's played 60 snaps in his life of college football, and our guys ... are going to make mistakes," Helfrich said. "That's fine. It's just how they respond from that and learn from that and grow from that.

"But Cody has just got to keep playing and doing what he's doing."

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THE DENVER POST

cu football

Cody doesn't pass code on some plays

QB Hawkins has room to improve

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

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Boulder - As far as tough graders go, college football coaches must rank up there with law school professors and driving school instructors.

Coaches don't hand out many perfect scores, as Colorado redshirt freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins discovered after game tape of Saturday's 31-28 overtime win over Colorado State was graded by the staff.

Actually, Hawkins said he expected a critical review. Yes, the head coach's elder son made a headline-grabbing college debut by throwing for 201 yards and two touchdowns. But coaches pointed out Tuesday that Hawkins also:

- * Lost a second-quarter fumble when he didn't handle a low snap in the shotgun formation.
- * Threw a fourth-quarter interception on a flea-flicker that should have been thrown away.
- * Was almost intercepted in the end zone on the

third-down play before Big 12 special-teams player of the week Kevin Eberhart tied the game in regulation on a field goal with 13 seconds remaining.

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* Missed several open receivers with poorly thrown passes.

Offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich hopes Hawkins will make fewer errors Saturday night at Arizona State (1-0).

"Cody can play a lot better; he didn't play as well as he's shown in practice," Helfrich said. "He just has to keep playing. We have to realize he's taken only about 60 snaps in college football."

Coach Dan Hawkins pointed to the near interception near the end of regulation. If Cody had thrown the ball a few inches higher, it probably would not have been tipped by a CSU defender and might have reached tight end Tyson DeVree for a game-winning touchdown.

Coach Hawkins wonders if the potential reward was worth the risk. An interception would have sealed a CSU victory.

"Over time, you're looking for some experience

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there," Hawkins said Tuesday during his weekly media luncheon. "We talked to Cody before the play and said, 'It's either wide open,

Post Poll - CU-ASU

How will the non-conference football game between Colorado and Arizona State shake out Saturday?

or you're gunning it into the stands.'

"Great players totally think they can make plays. You have to be careful what you do with a player like that. I think Cody has some moxie and is a pretty accurate passer, so you don't want to squash that."

Former pupil

During his time as an Arizona State assistant (2001-05), CU's Helfrich helped recruit current ASU starting quarterback Rudy Carpenter, who threw for 197 yards and two touchdowns in a 45-3 season-opening win over San Jose State.

"Rudy is a great player," Helfrich said. "He's a tough

kid. He's smart. He understands football."

Helfrich also helped recruit former ASU quarterbacks Sam Keller (now at Nebraska) and Max Hall (Brigham Young). Helfrich deserves some credit for convincing Cody Hawkins to sign with CU rather than Boise State.

"Those guys went 4-0 last week," Helfrich said proudly.

Footnotes

Freshman wide receiver Josh Smith, out since late August with a bruised kidney, underwent an MRI on Tuesday, but results weren't known. He is out for Saturday's game. ... Sophomore linebacker Michael Sipili, who was suspended last month pending the outcome of assault charges against him from a June 16 fight with a CU student, still has not had his case decided.

Staff writer Adrian Dater contributed to this report.

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