



Longmont, Colorado
Wednesday, September
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DAILY TIMES-CALL

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Hawkins changing tune on freshmen

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Colorado coach Dan Hawkins is trying to decide if the kids are ready.

The issue of playing true freshmen came up once again Tuesday during his weekly news conference. Hawkins said in August many would play, but through two weeks, only two have — walk-on kicker Tyler Cope and receiver Kendrick Celestine. The coach talks now like fewer will see the field in 2007.

“You always have to balance how much do you need them, how much do they bring to the table, the risk/reward benefit, being able to get them meaningful plays,” Hawkins said.

“Kids always want to play right away, but you always have to sit down at the end of the season and say, ‘You played, but how much did you play?’”

The most likely place where a true freshman, or two, will debut Saturday against Florida State (8:10 p.m., ESPN), is on the offensive line, where Hawkins said Ryan Miller, Kai Maiava and Mike Iltis are close to being ready. The offensive line had a bad game Saturday at Arizona State, and coach Jeff Grimes said he might expand its rotation against Florida State.

Others Hawkins called “close” are tailback Brian Lockridge, defensive end Conrad Obi, linebacker Nate Vaiomounga, and safeties Anthony Wright and Anthony Perkins.

Hawkins said there are physical, mental and emotional phases to being ready, and he does not want to put any true freshman in a game too early.

“I think we are seeing some of those younger guys who are closer to being ready,” Hawkins said. “We may see that a little bit in this game on Saturday.” CU started four redshirt freshmen on offense at Arizona State. The offense mustered 204 yards and one offensive touchdown.

Miller was the most decorated freshmen in CU’s 2007 class. Miller said he rotated with starting right tackle Edwin Harrison at practice on Tuesday. He said he thinks he’s physically and emotionally ready, but the mental aspect requires more work.

“It’s knowing the plays, knowing the adjustments that I have to spend more time on,” Miller said. “I’ll do whatever I have to do to help the team, whether it’s redshirt or play. I just want to help the team out.”

Said Hawkins: “Like we said a long time ago, the biggest thing he had to learn was how to pass block, because obviously he’s a horse coming off the ball.”

Wrong number: CU quarterback Cody Hawkins revealed Tuesday his cell phone has been ringing frequently with calls from ASU students.

Hawkins said some former classmates from his days at Bishop Kelly in Boise, college students who now attend ASU, distributed his number throughout the student section Saturday night.

“The funniest thing is people would call you and tell you their name like you’re supposed to know them, and they were pointing out the whole 60-1 thing,” Hawkins said.

The 60-1 thing is his record as a starting quarterback since sixth grade Pop Warner. The loss came Saturday.

Hawkins said he has no plans to change his cell phone number.



Ryan Miller (73) is one of few true freshmen that could see playing time in the immediate future for the University of Colorado football team. **Times-Call file photo/Joshua Buck**

No Jackson: Bernard Jackson said Sept. 1 he planned to play Saturday against Florida State. That appears less likely with each passing day.

Hawkins said there's no timeline for Jackson's return, but said the fifth-year senior must complete an independent study course and wait for the grade to come in before he can be eligible.

Hawkins said Jackson is enrolled in night classes, which means he can only practice for the first hour each day. For now, Jackson is out of the picture, until something changes, Hawkins said.

"We talked about he and Hugh being our two threats," Hawkins said. "That being said, after being in it for 25 years and knowing kids and how this whole thing works, sometimes it doesn't pan out for a variety of reasons.

"I would never close the door, but ... you lose with potential and win with achievers, so you have to go with what you have.

"He needs stability, which, unfortunately, in this world, does not happen for some kids."

Hawkins said he tells Jackson to visit him every day in office to discuss what's going on in his life. Jackson was not at practice Tuesday afternoon.

Familiar voices: Long-time public address announcer Alan Cass will miss Saturday's game while he recovers from pneumonia. Cass hasn't missed a CU home game in 25 years. That's 155 straight games.

KOA's Alan Roach will fill in for Cass.

Extra points: FSU's starting tailback, Antone Smith, suffered a concussion in the third quarter of the Seminoles' win over UAB on Saturday. FSU coach Bobby Bowden said Smith is expected to play against CU. ... Ten to 12 recruits will make official visits to CU this weekend, Hawkins said. ... As of Tuesday morning, about 3,000 tickets remained for the game. There were about 9,000 left for Miami-Ohio on Sept. 22 and about 6,000 for the Big 12 opener against Oklahoma on Sept. 29. The start time for the OU game is expected to be announced Monday.

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Help on the way for Buffs

Colorado welcomes Charles, Smith back to practice field

*By Patrick Ridgell
The Daily Times-Call*

BOULDER — Hugh Charles and Josh Smith may have varying degrees of soreness as they try to return to the Colorado Buffaloes' offense. But their return to practice on Tuesday was a sight for sore eyes.

Charles, CU's leading rusher in 2006, strained a hamstring in the season opener against Colorado State and spent a quiet weekend in his apartment watching the Buffs lose at Arizona State. Smith, who excelled in August camp, injured a kidney in a scrimmage and hadn't practiced in more than three weeks.

After ASU stuffed the Buffs on Saturday, holding them to 204 yards and one offensive touchdown, and with the specter of facing Florida State looming Saturday (8:10 p.m., ESPN), CU craves all the playmakers it can find. Charles and Smith might be its best.

"Definitely, it always helps," CU quarterback Cody Hawkins said about their return. "Even if it they were 'Joe Schmo,' it's just another guy to have competing and getting reps at practice. But as you guys know, those guys aren't 'Joe Schmo.'

"Josh is a great player, and it's going to be awesome for him to get back in the mix. Hugh is a leader for us and a very dynamic back, so he'll give us the ability to do a lot of good things."

Charles said he pushed his hamstring as hard as he could Tuesday and added he'll be "full go" by Saturday. Aside from trips to the dry cleaners and to get some food, Charles spent Saturday in his home, where he watched golf and tennis during the day and clicked over to the Buffs' game at night.

"I was a hermit crab. I didn't go anywhere," Charles said.

"It just was a bad feeling. I didn't feel like I should be (home), and I didn't want to be seen out in public. So I just stayed at home and watched the game."

Smith was less committed to playing. The freshman receiver said he felt good Tuesday but still wanted to see how he felt today and rest of the week before he's definitely in.

"I want to keep practicing and do better each day," Smith said.

Wide receiver coach Eric Kiesau said Smith looked better than expected.

"He looked pretty good. He was in a lot better shape than I thought he was going to be," Kiesau said.

Kiesau also was unsure of exactly how CU could use Smith against the Seminoles.

"We have multiple sets and multiple groups going in, so it's just a matter of where he fits in and what he can do for us and what he can remember," Kiesau said.

Kiesau said he wants to see Smith take a hard hit today in practice so he can reacquaint himself with the feeling. Kiesau said he put Smith in for two live plays at Tuesday's practice, but on both, Smith fell down early.

Charles also excelled in camp, after a summer of watching old Eric Bieniemy tapes and hearing running backs coach Darian Hagan tell him to run tougher. He suffered his injury the first time he touched the ball in 2007. But he said knowing a long season remains made waiting easier.

"It's frustrating for any back, working so hard during the summer and camp," Charles said. "We have a long season ahead of us, and

cu football

Charles to be "full go" against Florida State

By Tom Kensler
Denver Post Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 09/11/2007 11:13:45 PM MDT

Boulder - Left at home last weekend to heal a strained hamstring, Colorado senior tailback Hugh Charles was so antsy he couldn't stand to watch football Saturday until the telecast of the CU-Arizona State game came on that evening.

"I watched Tiger Woods (play in a golf tournament) and I watched U.S. Open tennis," Charles said Tuesday after returning for full contact work for the first time since he suffered the injury in the opener against Colorado State.

"I feel real good about it," Charles said after the practice. "I did a lot of work that I didn't think I could do. I'll be full go this Saturday."

Freshman wideout Josh Smith also returned to practice, ending an even longer absence. Smith, the talk of the early fall camp, suffered a bruised kidney when he ran into a retaining wall at Folsom Field during an Aug. 18 scrimmage. He practiced Tuesday with protective padding around his lower back.

"It felt the same (as before the injury)," Smith said. "I think I did pretty good. That was a lot of time off for me, and I wanted to see if my fundamentals were

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- Visit [Tom Kensler's CU blog](#)

OK. I was excited to be back."

Wide receivers coach Eric Kiesau made sure Smith was in some live drills.

"Josh actually looked pretty good; he was in a lot better shape than I thought he would be," Kiesau said.

When asked what Charles and Smith can add to the offense for Saturday night's home game against Florida State, CU coach Dan Hawkins replied with a single word: "Speed."

Jackson update

Hawkins sounded as though the college career of former starting quarterback Bernard Jackson may be over.

Hawkins said Jackson, who converted during spring drills to a run/catch/return hybrid role, needs to complete an independent study class to become cleared academically. This is Jackson's final season of eligibility.

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"I would never close the door," Hawkins said. "But I'm also realistic. He is (out of the picture), and he has been. So until something else changes, that's his status.

Jackson could not be reached for comment.

Footnotes

Hawkins, on the Seminoles: "Yeah, they can all run. Particularly when you look at them on defense, their front four can all motor. They've always had great speed among their skill guys." ... CU freshman offensive tackle Ryan Miller, a former prep All-American from Columbine, worked with the first team.

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In search of a signature win

By JEFF GRAHAM Colorado Daily Staff Writer
Tuesday, September 11, 2007 9:17 PM MDT

Joking about the possibility of making this weekend's game with Florida State a breakthrough win, Colorado coach Dan Hawkins said Tuesday that consistency better indicates the anatomy of a signature win.

Hawkins has continually talked about playing top tier teams and the significance of what a breakthrough win can do for a program, but chuckled when asked if he had experienced it at CU yet.

"Well considering we have had only three in the last two years," Hawkins said.

But in all honesty, with two vastly different performances in their opening two games, Hawkins hopes Saturday against Bobby Bowden and the Seminoles (8 p.m. kickoff) that his team can find that common thread that leads to victory.

"I think you have to achieve some consistency and then there has to be one of those times where that gets the ball rolling," Hawkins said. "To be a flash in a pan and then regress or whatever, I don't know if that is what we are after."

Since taking over a relatively bare cupboard of talent, Hawkins has never been able to string along two wins in a row at CU. After last week's eerily similar flashback to last season, a 33-14 loss to Arizona State, the Buffs are trying to find out how their maturity level directly relates with their consistency.

Senior cornerback Terrence Wheatley said Tuesday was the best practice he had seen all year and said he spoke to some of the younger players about how to deal with the adversity of the college game. Wheatley agreed with the signature status of this high profile game, but reiterated that it is not about the decal on the side of the helmet but how the Buffs can respond as a team.

"This week you want to have that kind of streamlined 'I'm confident no matter what,'" Wheatley said. "As a team we have to have the mentality that there will be those ups and downs. If you drop a pass or you blow a coverage, if you miss a tackle-who cares. You just pay them back next time."

Prior to Colorado's season opening win against Colorado State, 61 players on CU's roster had not played a down of collegiate football; nearly 59 percent of the team.

A lot of that inexperience can lead to confidence and consistency issues, but Hawkins said Tuesday that considering where much of the team's talent lies that number could likely go up.

"We are still looking at that number," Hawkins said. "I think a lot of it is being ready; having guys that are ready."

Hawkins said that those closest to contributing are offensive lineman Ryan Miller, running back Brian Lockridge, defensive lineman Conrad Obi along with a few others. It is still not known which of those players will actually see time this year, but Hawkins made it clear that before anyone one of them stepped out onto the field at Folsom they had to be ready mentally, physically, and emotionally.

"And what you don't want to do is put somebody out there that is not ready in one of those categories," Hawkins said.

Perhaps the best news in terms of consistency is the return of senior running back Hugh Charles and freshman wide receiver Josh Smith from injury. Charles sat all but one play of the last two games after straining his left hamstring early against CSU. Smith has been out since mid-August after bruising his kidney when he collided with a wall in a CU fall scrimmage.

The two figured to be integral parts of this revamped CU offense and will be a welcomed addition Saturday. Hawkins said that win or lose the Buffs took a lot of good things out of the loss in Tempe and expects this team to be ready for FSU.

"I think we are learning to compete at a higher level and play at a higher level," Hawkins said. "There are some things particularly with our young guys and our new guys that we need to continue to develop their mentality."

PRACTICE NOTES:

In an effort to enliven new traditions at CU, Hawkins will have his players be dropped off in front of Libby Hall across the

way from Folsom instead of unloading at Dal Ward. The players will then be led by members of the CU band across the grandstand through the plaza between Folsom and MCDB (biology), touching the bronze buffalo along the way. The initial Buffalo Roundup will take place approximately two hours and 20 minutes prior to kick off.

Also an effort is being made by CU students have an official "Blackout" for this Saturday's game against Florida State. Students have started a Facebook webpage encouraging all fans to wear black to the game. The same thing was pulled off this past weekend at Penn State. So far nearly 4,000 students have signed on to the webpage.



More freshmen may debut vs. FSU

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, September 12, 2007

Colorado football coach Dan Hawkins said during the summer that he expected to play as many as a dozen true freshmen this fall.

It hasn't panned out in the first two games — only two have played — but an already young team is likely about to get younger.

Hawkins said true freshmen Ryan Miller, Brian Lockridge, Nate Vaiomounga, Conrad Obi, Kai Maiava, Mike Iltis, Anthony Wright and Anthony Perkins all are close to being ready to play and some of them could make their debuts this week when Florida State comes to Folsom Field for a Saturday night game on ESPN (8:10, p.m.).

True freshman wide receiver Josh Smith also will play, provided he remains healthy this week during practices.

Hawkins said coaches walk a fine line in deciding whether or not to use players in their true freshman season. He said it comes down to what the player can offer the team, how badly he is needed, being able to give them meaningful plays and whether each player is physically, mentally and emotionally ready to be on the field.

"What you don't want to do is put someone out there who is not ready in one of those categories," Hawkins said.

Hawkins said playing early is always popular among players, but they can be robbed of a year of eligibility in some cases for a handful of plays. He recalled a talented offensive linemen coming to Boise State as a true freshman and playing on 12 field goals in his freshman year.

Sounds of the game

Fans won't hear the familiar voice of longtime CU stadium announcer Alan Cass this week. Cass, who has been the announcer since 1981 and has seen 155 straight games, will miss this week's contest as he recovers from pneumonia.

Cass also has served as the Denver Broncos stadium announcer for years and had done 256 straight Denver games prior to this preseason. KOA radio's Alan Roach will fill in for Cass. Roach was the long-time Colorado Rockies stadium announcer until this season.

Final word on ASU

CU quarterback Cody Hawkins told reporters Tuesday that old acquaintances of his from Boise, Idaho, who are now students at Arizona State, shared his cell phone number with a large number of ASU students after the Buffs lost last week.

Hawkins said most of the calls he received were people taunting him over the first loss of his career and his first loss since he was in fifth grade. It was a run of 61 games in which he went 60-1.

Hawkins was a good sport and said he won't be changing his phone number.

"The funniest thing was people would call you and tell you their name like you're supposed to know them," Cody Hawkins said. "And they were just playing up the whole 60-1 thing."

Empty seats

CU officials reported about 3,000 tickets remained Tuesday for the FSU game. Dan Hawkins said he spoke with fans who traveled to see the Buffs play in Arizona but planned to stay home and watch this week's game on television.

"I think it has to do with the way we've played, the way Florida State has played," Hawkins said. "Some people don't view it as a marquee matchup. It might have to do with the time of day, the fact that it's on TV."

Hawkins said regardless of whether the stadium is sold out Saturday, he still believes it's worth it to bring a team like FSU to Boulder as opposed to playing a lower-tier program.

"I think that's part of the allure of playing football at this level," he said.

Sucking wind

Hawkins said he expects the altitude to have some effect on the Seminoles, but he also believes sometimes it isn't as big a factor as some might believe.

"It's not like you're running a marathon or a 10k and that's a big, huge issue," he said.

New faces

CU has added five new walk-ons to the roster. They are linebacker David Goldberg, a transfer from Penn State who is originally from Aspen; tailback Warrior Jennings, from Colorado Springs; linebacker Greg McCudden, from Niwot; defensive tackle Daniel Modrovsky, from Park City, Utah; and place-kicker Justin Simmons, from Memphis, Tenn.,

Notable

Between 10 and 15 recruits are expected on campus this weekend. ... Workers were putting the finishing touches on a short hallway outside the Buffs locker room on the way to the field. Coach Dan Hawkins calls the area the "Thunder Chute." There is a Buffalo head mounted on the wall in the chute, which is equipped with a better sound system than is in the stadium, Hawkins said. It also features lights, smoke and a large, flat-screen television. ... Freshman linebacker Nate Vaiomounga did not practice in pads Tuesday but was not listed on the injury report. ... CU coaches did not give out weekly awards for offense, defense or special teams after the ASU loss.



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Bufs must counter FSU speed

Visiting Seminoles have plenty of big, fast players

By Kyle Ringo

Wednesday, September 12, 2007

Colorado students are encouraging every football fan who attends Saturday's home opener against Florida State to wear black to the game and help "blackout" the stadium.

Colorado players and coaches meanwhile are spending this week trying to find an answer for the electricity the Seminoles bring to Folsom Field.

Much was made last week in a loss at Arizona State about the Buffs' overall lack of speed compared with the Sun Devils. There is a grain of truth in there, but there were also plenty more reasons that led to the Buffs' giving up 33 unanswered points.

After all, Colorado wide receivers Patrick Williams and Kendrick Celestine weren't exactly plodding along when they beat coverage only to drop possible touchdown passes in the first half.

CU coach Dan Hawkins said the difference in overall team speed will be much bigger this week when Bobby Bowden, the winningest coach in major college football history, brings his program a mile high for the first time to the foot of the Flatirons.

"They can all run, particularly as you look at them on defense," Hawkins said. "Their front four can all motor. They've always had great skill guys with speed, and they still do have that. You look at all 11 guys on defense and they all can run."

The Buffs are expected to add a little speed this week with running back Hugh Charles and wide receiver Josh Smith returning to practice Tuesday. Both are expected to play in the nationally televised ESPN game. But those two players will only help level the playing field a little when it comes to speed.

CU coaches will have to game plan against the Seminoles' athleticism as much as possible. Hawkins said the best way to counter speed is to execute all the small details of each play call.

Quarterback Cody Hawkins grew up rooting for the Seminoles because he liked their uniforms and they won all the time. This week he gets a chance to beat them.

Hawkins said the Seminoles have provided a lot of homework for him with the number of defensive looks they have offered up in their first two games this season — a loss to Clemson and a win last week against Alabama-Birmingham.

Going back to last year's film is only so much help because Bowden hired four new assistant coaches during the offseason. Those coaches have added entirely new approaches in some schemes and subtle wrinkles in others.

Cody Hawkins said the Seminoles' speed allows them a lot of freedom. He said on film he has seen them use six different defenses against one particular offensive formation already this fall.

"They're athletic enough to do pretty much anything they want," he said.

The Buffs need to be able to run the ball or beat teams deep when they load up to stop the run — "pound it and launch it" as coach Hawkins likes to say. That was the idea against Arizona State as well, but when Cody Hawkins launched it, his receivers didn't make the plays.

Cody Hawkins said he expects the Seminoles to gang up against the run just like the Sun Devils and make him beat them through the air.

"If I was a defense, I'd definitely want to come out and see what the freshman quarterback kid could do cause, I mean, I look like 95 percent of the guys on campus," Cody Hawkins said. "I, of all people, probably am Joe Schmo playing quarterback."

The CU defense is probably much better equipped to handle the Seminoles speed with players such as linebacker Jordon Dizon and cornerbacks Terrence Wheatley and Ben Burney.

But speed can still cause the Buffs problems if they allow the Seminoles into open space. That's a problem the Buffs have had this season. They stop teams two of three times or four of five times and then give up a big play.

"They're definitely a very fast team," linebacker Brad Jones said. "If you give them an opportunity, they're going to take it. Any mistakes you make, they're going to capitalize on your mistakes."



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Tuesday Practice Report

Smith cleared to play Saturday

Stirling Wade, for the Camera

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CU wide receiver Josh Smith practiced in pads Tuesday for the first time in more than three weeks after banging into a wall at Folsom Field during a preseason scrimmage on Aug. 18. Smith, who had been one of the team's biggest surprises during fall camp, missed the first two games of the season while nursing a lacerated kidney but is expected to be back for the Buffs game Saturday against Florida State.

Head coach Dan Hawkins stated on separate occasions earlier this week that he believes Smith will be ready to go Saturday. Smith was positive while speaking to reporters after Tuesday's practice.

"I'm feeling good. I'm trying to catch back up. I had this job halfway done and now I'm back at square one, but it's OK," Smith said. "The guys were excited that I was back out there, and I was excited as well."

Smith was donning a protective wrap in order to protect his kidney. Even though Smith appears ready to come back sooner than most expected, the freshman from Moorpark, Calif. believes his wrap will keep him comfortable.

"I was worried that (the gear) would feel weird, but it was fine," Smith said. "I didn't really get touched much today, but I felt good."

Following practice, CU wide receivers coach Eric Kiesau had Smith running some extra sprints in order to help him catch up on his conditioning. After spending four nights at Boulder Community Hospital following his injury, Smith was under severe restrictions as to what he could do physically.

Kiesau said Smith's level of involvement with the offense this Saturday is yet to be decided.

"We found out a little bit today, we'll find out a little bit tomorrow and we'll see where he fits in and what he can do for us," Kiesau said. "I can't give him too much and then he panics and makes a lot of mistakes."

Smith's return will be coupled with the return of senior tailback Hugh Charles. Charles, who pulled his hamstring during CU's season-opening drive against Colorado State, practiced Tuesday and is also expected to be back in the lineup this weekend.



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Woelk: Tough schedule double-edged sword for CU

By Neill Woelk

Wednesday, September 12, 2007

For years, Colorado's football schedule has been a source of pride for the program.

It started in the Bill McCartney era, when Mac annually lined up quality opponents for the nonconference portion of the schedule. From Miami to Tennessee to Texas (then in the Southwest Conference), from Ohio State to Stanford and Notre Dame, every year the Buffs played one of the tougher schedules in the nation.

It's a tradition that hasn't changed — but the downside can be seen in the lean years. In those times, the schedule can be a confidence killer rather than a momentum builder.

Some schools prefer the safety of the latter, and they schedule accordingly.

In the Big 12, four programs this year have nonconference slates that do not include a single game against a BCS conference opponent (since you asked: Texas, Texas Tech, Kansas, and Baylor).

Five have one game against a BCS foe, and the remaining three — Colorado, Nebraska and Missouri — each play a pair of BCS schools.

It's a double-edged sword.

Players like it. It means television exposure and a chance to play against a "name" opponent. And, tough schedules are a good recruiting tool when coaches are in a high school player's home.

"I wouldn't have it any other way," CU linebacker Brad Jones said Tuesday. "I like to play the top-echelon programs."

But tough schedules are also tough on coaches whose jobs depend upon win-loss records — and those who are looking to save their jobs often go the opposite way.

Kansas' Mark Mangino will likely head into the Big 12 portion of the schedule with a 4-0 record this season, two-thirds of the way to bowl eligibility. It won't matter to KU's fans — or the administration — that his four early wins came against Central Michigan, Southeast Louisiana, Toledo and Florida International.

Colorado's Dan Hawkins, meanwhile, woke up every day last summer knowing that Arizona State and Florida State were on the horizon.

Hawk has never publicly flinched at CU's schedule. He knows such a lineup can help convince recruits to choose CU, and he knows it can also mean national exposure.

"Good players want to play against good teams," Hawkins said Tuesday. "But that being said, you've got to beat some of those teams once in a while."

Indeed. Colorado is still looking for that "signature win" under Hawkins, that ESPN moment that turns heads around the nation.

Such an opportunity exists again this week when Florida State pays a visit to Boulder. A victory over the Seminoles,

who started the season ranked in the Top 25 and are still recognized as one of the nation's premier programs, would be a significant step forward.

Confidence doesn't appear to be an issue with the Buffs. They are now at the point that they believe their mistakes are their biggest obstacle.

It's a major improvement over last year.

"The guys feel like it's much more on us," Hawkins said. "They're feeling that if they play like they can play, they can compete with anybody."

Still, the Buffs' margin for error is razor thin. Mistakes are magnified because they don't have the depth — or firepower — to overcome their errors.

There's no better example than Saturday's loss to Arizona State, when two or three costly errors cost the Buffs anywhere from 14 to 21 points.

No doubt, there are days when Hawkins would probably love to change the schedule.

But, as he says repeatedly, "It is what it is. We'll play 'em."

Still, as Hawkins also said, you need to beat some of those teams once in a while.

Otherwise, the value of such a schedule diminishes rather quickly.



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