

July 25, 2006



An Interview With:

COLORADO COACH DAN HAWKINS

PETER IRWIN: Welcome to Coach Hawkins from Colorado. Welcome to the Big 12, and if you'd like to make some opening comments.

COACH DAN HAWKINS: Okay. I'm a rookie. I've been asked since lunch is right after this to keep it short. So I'll try not to go too long with the answers.

I'm extremely proud and excited to be here. I really am. Somebody asked me yesterday, you know, how does it feel to know you're going to play Texas and Oklahoma and Nebraska, some of those teams, and is there a little bit of you that's a small kid and a little bit of a fan? And, yeah, there is. When you grow up loving football and dreaming about football and you are lucky enough to be involved in football to make a living, to be able to be in a conference like this that has so many premiere teams, has teams that have won national championships and expect to win national championships, is certainly exciting. And it's a great thing to be a part of.

And I'm excited to be here. I always thought at some point I've been kind of a West Coast guy for my whole life, and for a guy that's kind of raised in the dirt, it's great to get out and see some other parts of the country and go see some cities and towns and stadiums and be part of the great tradition of the Big 12. And we're very excited. Somebody asked me how has your transition gone? And I said, Well, if you've seen the movie Saving Private Ryan when they're trying to get on the beach, that's me.

It's been great. It's been wow. It's been exciting. Every day is a new adventure. And I'm excited to get going. And I hope I never reach -- I told my wife, I said, I'll never ever have a doubt of when I'm supposed to hang it up, because I always reach a point where that light switch sort of goes on. And you know July is kind of a coach's vacation month, but I got really probably about two

or three days and then about July 5th I kind of looked at her and said, I'm ready to go right now.

And so I'm very excited to get going and there's so many new things out there, and we're excited to be a part of it.

Q. Coming in to the (inaudible), what is perceived to be the biggest personnel need that you're going to have to deal with and is that still your (inaudible)?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: You know, it's interesting, because we were banged up in the spring in so many areas. Banged in the O line, banged up in receiver, and James Cox, the back-up to Joel last year, wasn't able to get many reps. So a whole number of those issues, and hopefully we'll get rectified, will be healed up a little bit through the spring and be able to hit the fall camp running.

Q. Before you opened, what's the biggest change you would like to see in this team?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: Well, I think somebody -- is my Tulsa World guy in here? Did he leave? There he is. He was asking me about when I was at Boise State and played Tulsa, had a mini rivalry there, and I think the difference between our team and their team, our guys, they were very steely-eyed and a little bit more mature along the process.

But we have sort of have to find ourselves, find our mission, have some resolve and coming out ready to go. And hopefully over time that's changed. Obviously spring ball is a whole new thing for them, and for us, and I just remember the first day seeing guys in pads and seeing them run around, going, hey, that guy is not bad, he's pretty good, because you don't know.

But we have to become steely-eyed and develop a mentality and be able to come out in the opening game and get going in a fast way.

Q. Coach, what's the difference between going into some of these places that you say you're anticipating, like Lincoln or

something like that, and saying, golly, gee whiz, it's great to be here, what's the difference in the attitude with a loaded team as opposed to a team you're not sure of?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: Well, I think everything is uncertain. You're not sure how teams are going to handle the crowd, the travel, the weather, the quality of the opponent, and you have a lot of those uncertainties. But at the same time I think you have to develop a certain sort of mentality on your own that you're able to counteract some of those things. I think too many times when you sit back and you're just reactive to what happens -- one of our players asked me yesterday about plane issues and layovers. And every team has them. Every team has travel snafus and things don't go right in your preparation and you have to sort of develop a mentality how you're going to handle that beforehand because you know it's going to happen.

So I think that's a lot of it is to be able to get through some of those situations together, develop a certain sort of mentality, certain sort of protocol to going into those places and how we handle ourselves.

Q. Coach, how comfortable are you in the team's grasp of the new offensive system going into the Bowl?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: We're a long ways away, especially coming from the place that I was where we were basically eight years in the system, and you can really -- I talked to people about you're in a place where you develop a space shuttle where there's a lot of buttons and knobs you can use to fly your ship. And we've got to continue to work to add those buttons and knobs and features on our ship.

And, you know, the nice thing that I think about the way we do things is things can be sort of segmented. I don't know that a person has to grasp the entire play book to be functional in the offense.

But we'll continue to add as we go along, and we'll continue to adapt as our players are able to handle those things and operate at a high level.

Q. Coach, what was your biggest obstacle as far as mental goes, with your team, as far as getting out of last season and moving forward?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: I just kind of came in and it was sort of a little bit of an awkward

introduction, because as I was introduced they were getting ready to play the championship game. And I just said, Guys, hey, I'm not here to reinvent the wheel. I'm not the -- I wasn't the greatest coach in America. We need to build this thing together. So I didn't try and come in make any assumptions about what did or didn't go on. I just said, Hey, here's how we do things and here's what we're going to do and this is how we're going to do it. The great thing is the players were awesome about jumping on board and buying into what we were saying and believing and have been great about that the whole time.

So it's not like we had to really hammer away or change or do things differently, because they adapted so well. Our strength coach then came on in the summer. His first comment was, Man, these guys really work hard.

It's not -- Gary did a lot of awesome things in Colorado. You guys know because you've been around him, you've seen him. Colorado has had a good football team. It's not like we're trying to bring a team up the ladder that hasn't won games and doesn't do things right.

So there hasn't been a whole lot of reforming and breaking that. Just a little bit of tweaking. But they've been great about jumping on board, saying, Hey, you're our coach, we're your team, let's go.

Q. Coach, when you went into the Boise State, how long of a time frame -- you mentioned you know the uncertainty of getting the relationship, players and all that sort of thing. How long did it take where you felt they really got it, they didn't know it, they didn't know and now they know some things?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: Yeah, when I first came there, with Dirk Koetter now at Arizona State -- when I first came with Dirk in '98, it did take a while, it really did. And probably took the better part of that first year really for it to all sort of sink in.

You know, Phil Jackson talks a little bit about having those break-through moments and you never know exactly when they're going to come or how they're going to come. We had sort of a dramatic come-from-behind win against Utah. That helped us a lot with that team.

Then, of course, Dirk left and I was there. And same sort of thing. I think it took a little bit of time for those guys to say, Okay, did these guys

know what they're doing? And when we were able to beat Fresno on ESPN on the Thursday night game when they were ranked eighth in the country, that was kind of a break-through moment for us then.

And hopefully we'll have some of those moments, you know, early on, we'll definitely push the envelope and do whatever we can and make those things happen. But there are those synergistic moments where coaches and players look at each other and go "aha," and we need to have that moment early. Because obviously we don't have a lot of warmup time.

Q. Dan, when you decided to take the job, did you have any preconceived notions of what you were going to find at this program given all that it had been through and did that change any actually after you got there?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: Not a whole lot. And I tried -- and I told the team this when I first met with them. Like I said, I just -- I tried not to get into -- and I told them, I said, Guys, we're going to do things a certain way because that's the way we do them. That's the way we've always done them. It has nothing to do with what did or didn't happen here before.

And we have a certain sort of protocol, certain sort of way we do things, and that's just -- that would be no matter where we went. It has nothing to do with the institution. So did not try to dwell on a whole bunch of that. And like I said, I think the biggest, greatest surprise was just how willing they were to jump on board and say let's go. And for them to trust, when really in a sense, I mean, honestly, there's the records and some of those championships out there that had a little bit of credence, but we've all been football players. Unless that guy can come to your place and get it done, all that doesn't mean very much.

But for those guys just to jump in and say, Hey, I'm good with it, let's roll, the players sincerely have just been tremendous and all our coaches have felt that and our strength coach has felt that. And that's been great. And that was probably a little bit of a preconceived notion that I had that, okay, it's going to take a little time to win these guys over, but they were great from day one.

Q. What's the difference between Boise and Boulder?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: Well, one you're on the eastern side and one you're on the western side.

The wind almost never blows in Boise, but there were a few times in Boulder it blew pretty good. You definitely get the thunder storms roll in when it's -- you know, Boulder is a little bit more of a college town. Boise is the capital. So you have a little bit of a differentiation there. You've got the Metroplex of Denver that's half an hour down the road that's a tremendous resource.

You've got an institution in Colorado that's been there certainly a lot longer than Boise State, so you have a tremendous amount of alumni. And you have the Nobel laureates and you have the astronauts and Supreme Court justices and you have all those people in your database in your history that, you know, you don't have at a young school like Boise State.

Q. Which one suits Dan Hawkins better?

COACH DAN HAWKINS: It's a matter of adapting. One of the things that I've always tried to pride myself a little bit, and part of the reason that I am at the University of Colorado is I don't want to ever be one of these guys -- a lot of people seek comfort and luxury, and they want to sit there and they want to ride the same horse all the time. And I just have been always trying to adapt and grow and improve and mature. And I'm one of those guys that -- you know, I talked to my guys about throwing over the -- throwing out the cliches, but, you know, I would say it's not the house, it's the people in the house. And I'm sort of that way.

I've had great times and experiences at every place I've been. Every place has been different. Every place has had different strengths and weaknesses and requirements. And for me it's great to just get up every day and have to adapt and have to change and have to mold and have to grow. And that's part of life and that's a great thing for me.

PETER IRWIN: Okay. Coach, we appreciate your comments and answers. Welcome to the Big 12.

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