



Influential People & Moments



FRED FOLSOM

Fred Gorham Folsom was a 21-year old pre-law graduate from Dartmouth College, where he was an outstanding football and baseball player. Considered the finest end to play at Dartmouth to that point, he had led the Big Green to two straight league championships as a player-coach, a position which was common prior to the 20th century.

CU's 1895 captain, William Caley, formed a group to find CU's second coach and quickly zeroed in on Folsom. One problem, though, was the fact that Folsom was ticketed for the University of Michigan, where he planned on enrolling in law school. CU assured him that he do both, attend law school and coach the Silver & Gold (one of CU's early nicknames, though the football teams of that era actually wore red jerseys and stockings). His love for the game of football won out and he headed west.

It was one of the first turning points in CU history, as landing Folsom immediately led to the program becoming a regional power. And Folsom would put permanent roots in Colorado, sans a short time when he returned to coach his alma mater, as he became a leader in athletic, university, legal, civic and state affairs until his death in 1944. That same year, Colorado Stadium, which had been built to replace Gamble Field in 1924, was named for him.

Accounts referred to him as being a stern disciplinarian when it came to football, one who could install his schemes quickly and constantly tweaked them with innovative plays from his creative football mind. Away from football, one of his trademarks was possessing a keen sense of humor.

Folsom coached CU for 15 seasons (still a school record), and his 77 wins stood as the most in school history for 78 years, until Bill McCartney surpassed the total in his next to last season (1993). He did earn his law degree from Colorado and eventually taught at the school (earning a chair on CU's faculty), and had a distinguished career as a jurist.

BYRON WHITE

Byron Raymond "Whizzer" White first made a name for himself while playing for the University of Colorado's undefeated 1937 football team.

The first All-American at Colorado in football and the second in any sport, he led the nation in rushing that season with a record-breaking total of 1,121 yards (in eight games) and amassed 122 points. Those marks were erased only after colleges went to 10- and 11-game schedules. He was known as a "60-minute performer," excelling on defense as well as offense.

White led that 1937 team to Colorado's first-ever bowl appearance, facing Rice in the '38 Cotton Bowl on New Year's Day in Dallas. Though Rice won, 28-14, "Whizzer" left them talking. He threw an 8-yard touchdown pass to Joe Antonio and then returned an interception 47 yards for a touchdown to put Colorado up 14-0 in the first quarter before the Owls battled back. He rushed 23 times for 54 yards in the game, and had 166 all-purpose yards including returns.

Denver sports writer, Leonard Kahn, gave White's nickname to him. Kahn labeled White with this name because "he seemed to whiz by people."

White was also a .400 hitter on the baseball team, and a standout on CU's basketball squad that made the N.I.T. in 1938. His off the field performances were just as impressive as the ones on it. In 186 hours of undergraduate work, White earned 180 hours of A, and 6 hours of B. He was the student body president, a Rhodes Scholar, and Phi Beta Kappa.

After his time at Colorado, the Wellington native went on to play professional football for the Pittsburgh Pirates (now known as the Steelers). White was Pittsburgh's first pick in the 1938 draft, and would lead the league in rushing with 567 yards that year and was named All-Pro. White left professional football to attend post-graduate school at Oxford College in England. After Oxford, White played one more season of football with Detroit, and again led the league in rushing with 514 yards and was again All-Pro. In the off-season, White attended Yale Law School.

During World War II, White was an officer in naval intelligence, serving most of his duty in the South Pacific. During his time of service, White earned a Bronze Star, and formed a friendship with John F. Kennedy.

Following the war, White returned to Yale Law School where he graduated first in his class

in 1946. After a successful career as a corporation lawyer, White entered the political sphere in 1960, heading a pre-convention Kennedy movement that helped the soon-to-be president win the state of Colorado. White later served as deputy attorney general under Kennedy.

On March 30, 1962, White was appointed an associated justice of the U.S. Supreme Court at age 44. He served for 31 years, and retired in March, 1993.

The honorable Byron R. White was the first athlete inducted into the Colorado Sports Hall-Of-Fame in 1965. He was also inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame, the National Football Foundation's College Football Hall of Fame, the GTE Academic Hall of Fame, the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference Hall of Fame, and was the inaugural inductee into CU's Athletic Hall of Fame in 1998. He was selected to CU's All-Century Team in 1989, marking the school's first 100 years of football, and his football number, 24, was the first retired by the university.

White left an indelible mark on the field and in the classroom at the University of Colorado. Born June 8, 1917 in Fort Collins, Colo., he died from complications of pneumonia in Denver at the age of 84 on April 15, 2002.

FRED CASOTTI

In 1952, one of the school's all-time great personalities arrived on the CU scene. Fred "The Count" Casotti was hired as sports information director, and he would begin a five-decade love affair with his alma mater. A '49 graduate in journalism, the SID job opened up in the summer and athletic director Harry Carlson took a chance on the sports editor with CU ties from a small newspaper in Iowa.

Casotti served 16 years as SID, another 20 as associate athletic director, and then 14 more as the school's historian until his death in 2001. As creative as they came, he penned poems and limericks in his weekly news releases that helped garner CU national attention; the press couldn't wait to see what prose he included in his latest mailing. Casotti wrote three books on Colorado football, including the classic Football CU* Style, the asterisk defining CU as "Casotti Uncensored."

He was inducted into the CoSIDA Hall of Fame in 1996 and posthumously into the state of Colorado Sports Hall of Fame in 2002 and CU's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2006.

He passed away the night before a big game against Texas A&M in CU's 2001 Big 12 title run, and a mysterious Aggie fumble and subsequent CU recovery and return for a score saved a 31-21 win. It prompted assistant coach John Wristen to say postgame, "You know that fumble at the end ... (glances upward) ... Thank you, Fred."

THE "BUFFALOES" ARE BORN

Prior to 1934, CU athletic teams usually were referred to as the "Silver and Gold," but other nicknames teams were sometimes called included Silver Helmets, Yellow Jackets, Hornets, Arapahoes, Big Horns, Grizzlies and Frontiersmen. During the summer of 1934, Colorado's 45th season of intercollegiate athletic competition, the Silver & Gold, the student newspaper at the time, decided to sponsor a national contest to select a permanent nickname and mascot. A \$5 prize would go to the author of the winning selection; remember, this was during the Great Depression, and five dollars was a good amount of money to most people. Over 1,000 entries arrived from almost every state in the union. Athletic Director Harry Carlson, graduate manager Walter Franklin and Kenneth Bundy from the newspaper were the judges.

Local articles first reported that Claude Bates of New Madrid, Mo., and James Proffitt of Cincinnati, Ohio, were co-winners for the prize as both submitted "Buffaloes" as their entry. But 10 days later, the newspaper declared Boulder resident Andrew Dickson the winner, after a follow-up revealed his submission of "Buffaloes" had actually arrived several days before those of originally deemed to be the winners. Through the years, synonyms which quickly came into use included "Bisons," "Bufs," "Thundering Herd," "Stampeding Herd," "Golden Avalanche," and "Golden Buffaloes."

The live buffalo mascot also first appeared in 1934, three weeks after the contest that declared Buffaloes the new nickname. For the final game of the season, a group of students paid \$25 to rent a buffalo calf along with a real cowboy as his keeper. The calf was the son of Killer, a famed bison at Trails End Ranch in Fort Collins. It took the cowboy and four students to keep the calf under control on the sidelines during the 7-0 win at the University of Denver on



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THANKSGIVING

Live buffaloes would make appearances at CU games on and off over the next 30 years, usually in a pen on the field or sometimes driven around in a cage. In the 1940s, the school kept a baby buffalo in a special pen at the now-defunct University Riding Academy. The first named buffalo was "Mr. Chips," who appeared for the first time at the 1957 CU Days kickoff rally, as supporter Mahlon White donated him to the school, and it was cared for by a men's honorary. Mr. Chips wasn't around for all that long, and several years would pass before one of college football's most entertaining and thrilling traditions would be born.

RALPHIE

A live buffalo mascot, Ralphie, leads the Colorado football team out on the field both at the start of the game and second half. It is truly one of the special sights that exist anywhere in college or professional sports, and is oft recognized as such. Its beginning is traced to 1966, when John Lowery, the father of a CU freshman from Lubbock, Texas, donated to the school a six-month old buffalo calf.

For a while, she was billed as "Rralph," but the origin of the name remains in doubt. Some say it was given by the student body after sounds she allegedly made while running and snorting; others say it was named for Ralph Jay Wallace, the junior class president at the time; and the original handlers will tell a third version. Regardless, an astute fan soon discovered that the buffalo was in fact a female, thus the name alteration to Ralphie.

The initial tradition was for CU's five sophomore class officers to run the buffalo around the stadium in a full loop.

They would run her for two hours to tire her a bit to help keep her under control by the time the game started. At the conclusion of the run, the fans would break into the "Buffalo Stomp," which would literally shake the stadium in deafening fashion as the team took the field. But CU officials soon had the tradition stopped because of the actual physical damage it was causing.

Around that same time, head coach Eddie Crowder was approached with the idea the charging buffalo running out on the field before the game with the team behind right her. Crowder thought it was a great idea, and the debut of this great tradition took place on October 28, 1967, CU's homecoming game against Oklahoma State. Though OSU won the game, 10-7, the tradition was here to stay, though those who had some training in such an endeavor as working with a wild animal eventually replaced the sophomores.

Ralphie achieved nationally celebrity status, and was even kidnapped in 1970 by some Air Force Academy students as well as being named the school's 1971 Homecoming Queen at the height of the anti-establishment era.

Ralphie II replaced the original Ralphie following the 1978 season, and Ralphies III and IV served the school well; Ralphie V was CU's latest live buffalo, debuting in 2008 at the annual spring game and retired after the 2019 season.

TIMEOUT / FROM 1 TO 25,000 (Darley to Spruce)

It took exactly 125 seasons for Colorado to go from scoring its first point on the gridiron to its 25,000th ... over the course of 1,190 games.

The first were hard to come by, and came on defense in the fourth game of the school's history. Sophomore tackle George Darley recovered a Colorado Mines fumble and returned it 65 yards for a touchdown — worth four points at the time — but Mines prevailed, 50-4 on December 13. They were the only points scored in 1890 by the Silver & Gold, as CU finished its inaugural season with an 0-4 record, outscored 217-4. The first points on offense wouldn't come until the season finale in 1891 (CU's second touchdown also came on a fumble return by Harry Layton in the '91 opener against Mines in Boulder). After three straight shutout defeats, CU scored its first points on offense, a touchdown by quarterback Pat Carney, in what was also its first win, a 24-4 verdict at the Colorado Springs Athletic Association on November 26.

The Darley name is peppered throughout campus, Boulder and state history. George graduated from CU in 1893, and his nephew, Ward Darley, would eventually serve as CU's

president from 1952-56. The tallest residential buildings in Boulder bear the family name, the Darley North and South towers at Williams Village, as does a major side street in south Boulder. George's father, George Marshall Darley, and his uncle Alexander were the first non-Catholic ministers to hold a service on then Pacific Slope of Colorado (now referred to as the Western Slope), and built the Presbyterian Church in Lake City (about 25 miles east of Telluride).

Fast-forward 12-plus decades (or 45,214 days) to September 27, 2014, and scoring wasn't a problem that day. The Buffaloes entered its Pac-12 Conference opener at California with 24,964 points, with the 36th point that day scored by junior wide receiver Nelson Spruce, who caught a 6-yard touchdown pass from Sefo Liufau with 3:23 left in the game. It gave CU a 42-35 lead at the time, but the Buffs would succumb in double overtime, 59-56.

NATIONAL PLAY OF THE YEAR

In 1992, Nu Skin International and CoSIDA started sponsorship of "The National Play-of-the-Year," honoring the most outstanding play annually in college football. Notre Dame won the inaugural honor in 1992, but the University of Colorado won for both the 1993 and 1994 seasons. Here's a closer look at CU's winning plays:

1993 (October 16; Colorado 27, Oklahoma 10)— Lamont Warren throws a 34-yard touchdown pass to Charles Johnson on the halfback option play. What made it special? Warren slipped on the slick artificial surface as he threw the ball, and some 40 yards later in the end zone, Johnson made the catch on the ground after he was interfered with. The play defied imagination, and is truly appreciated when looked at in slow motion.

1994 (September 24; Colorado 27, Michigan 26)—College football's play of the decade, this effort also won an "Espy" from ESPN for the play of the year in all of sports for 1994. As time expired, Kordell Stewart throws a 64-yard touchdown pass to Michael Westbrook, who made the catch after a Blake Anderson deflection. CU had trailed, 26-14, with under four minutes remaining, and trailed by five with 15 seconds left on its own 15-yard line after stopping Michigan on defense.

TRAVIS HUNTER TOP TWO-WAY PLAYER

Travis Hunter became the best two-way player in college football in the two-platoon era over his two seasons at Colorado. In 2023, as just a sophomore after transferring to CU from Jackson State, Hunter led the nation in snaps despite missing three-and-a-half games due to injury. He was honored as a consensus first-team All-American and was only not a unanimous first-team selection because one of the five publications didn't list a flex or all-purpose position (he was unanimously selected as a first-team All-American by the other four publications that do). He was also honored with the Paul Hornung Trophy as the nation's most versatile player and was named a first-team Academic All-American.

In 2024, he became the most decorated player in a season in college football history, earning the consensus National Player of the Year by winning the Heisman Trophy, the Walter Camp Award, and also being named the Player of the Year by the Associated Press and The Sporting News. He won the National Defensive Player of the Year honor, taking home both the Bednarik and Lott IMPACT trophies, was named the top receiver of the year, winning the Biletnikoff Trophy, and was the first repeat winner of the Hornung Award as the nation's most versatile player. He was also given the Muhammad Ali Museum's inaugural Emerging GOAT Award and Sports Illustrated's Breakout Star honor. Academically, he upped his first-team Academic All-America honor by being named the Academic All-American of the Year for all of Division I (FBS & FCS) football. He was the Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year and honorable mention Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year (behind teammate Shedeur Sanders, who claimed that honor), and was first-team All-Big 12 at both receiver and cornerback. He was a unanimous first-team All-American and picked up seven first-team and eight overall honors from the five publications that select the team, and is the first player in the history of the Walter Camp and AP, the two oldest All-America teams, to earn two first-team honors and in the case of the AP, three overall honors. The other three publications only allowed him to be selected at one position.

In 2024, he caught 94 passes for 1,258 yards and 15 touchdowns, setting the CU record for TD receptions, second most receptions and third-most yards in CU history. He also had four interceptions and 11 pass breakups and led the nation with 1,483 snaps, playing 85 percent of CU's scrimmage snaps on the season.