

# CU Buffs WR McKnight has insider's view of NFL lifestyle

## Receiver best friends with Jets QB Sanchez

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Scotty McKnight is still a year away from the National Football League draft in which he hopes his name will be called, but the Colorado wide receiver is nine months removed from the draft that changed his life.

Since the New York Jets picked his best friend with the fifth overall selection in April, life has been a whirlwind. Surreal experiences have educated McKnight on living in the limelight.

Rookie quarterback Mark Sanchez will lead the underdog Jets against Peyton Manning's Indianapolis Colts today (1 p.m., CBS) in the AFC Championship game. McKnight will be in Indianapolis leading the J-E-T-S Jets Jets Jets! chant and rooting hard for his friend, just as he has been doing since his fall semester at CU ended in mid-December.

"It's been cool," McKnight said. "To meet some of those guys up there and kind of get an inside look on how they live. I mean, it's a dream. I would love to do that obviously. So seeing it happen for him, it's definitely been a motivation for me to give everything I can to this last season."

If Sanchez and the Jets can pull off another upset of the Colts, they advance to the Super Bowl in Miami. It would be a perfect capstone to the most memorable year so far in the lives of two guys who met as ball boys for Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Carson Palmer's old high school team when McKnight was in second grade and Sanchez was in third.

They grew up together in Southern California playing football, riding waves on boogie boards, flirting with girls, going to movies, celebrating birthdays and holidays and putting whoopee cushions on the seat before McKnight's older sister, Shannon, sat down at the dinner table.

In the past nine months after Sanchez left the University of Southern California one year early and was drafted, he appeared on SportsCenter for simply attending a New York Yankees game. McKnight was there by his side chatting with Derek Jeter and Alex Rodriguez.

McKnight, who is poised to become Colorado's all-time leading receiver early next season, remembers telling Sanchez, "Dude, I have to make a phenomenal catch to get a SportsCenter. All you have to do is go to a baseball game."

They have been to two movie premiers, sitting next to the Schwarzenegger family at one. They spent a night at a New York hotspot chatting up Tiger Woods. They have dodged paparazzi and have been chased down a street in Manhattan into a cab by a crazy Jets fan, who had been waiting outside a restaurant for them.

"People get weird and I just don't understand it," McKnight said. "That aspect of it has been weird to get used to, but it's something that kind of comes along with the territory."

Last week McKnight found himself back home rooting for the Jets side-by-side with comedian Adam Sandler as New York beat the San Diego Chargers, the team he worshipped as a kid.

"There are definitely perks, but for the most part you just do the stuff you've done your whole life," McKnight said. "You relax and play jokes on your sister. That's what we like to do."

McKnight's sister, Shannon, said there were times growing up when she grew weary of her little brother and his feisty friend, but she learned to love their mischievous ways, even at her wedding last summer.

"I was so nervous they were going to play a big wedding-day prank on me," she said. "My dad sat down with them and told them it was my day and not to mess with it. So on the rehearsal night they stole my phone and texted my soon-to-be husband pretending to be me."

"They said I was having second thoughts and we needed to talk right away. My husband read it right before I was going to walk down the aisle in the rehearsal. He said he read it and thought, 'There is no way she would do this to me' and then looked for Scotty and Mark. He saw the two of them laughing in the corner with my phone and knew it was them."

McKnight said he and Sanchez haven't changed much at all even though so much around them has. They opt to stay in and watch movies or play video games a lot. If they do go out, Sanchez has to be careful about it because of the fame and scrutiny that comes with being the starting quarterback for the Jets.

In a lot of ways, McKnight can relate to some of the characters in the HBO series *Entourage*. The show is based on a young actor who makes it big and brings his best friends from childhood along on the ride. Because what would success be without friends there to help you enjoy it?

"That's the best part about it," McKnight said. "I think that's one of the reasons we can hang out with each other so easily is there is no expectations. He knows when I come out there, I'm not wanting to do all these cool, crazy things."

Sanchez has become a familiar face in Boulder as well. He has attended a handful of CU games over the past three seasons and was on the sidelines last fall when the Buffs lost the season opener against Colorado State.

Sanchez has spent a few summer evenings on the CU practice fields throwing balls to the Buffs in seven-on-seven sessions.

"I think football always was a big thing for them," Scotty's mother Cathy McKnight said. "They are both so in love with the game, and they are both such students of the game. I think that's where that bond solidified."

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