

## Woelk: Buffs' best and worst in the Big 12

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In honor of Colorado's upcoming 15th -- and very possibly final -- year in the Big 12, here's one completely arbitrary list of CU's best and worst moments in the league (with the disclaimer that I'm quite sure I've forgotten deserving moments in each category):

**Best --** Can't separate these two.

On Nov. 23, 2001, Gary Barnett's Buffs shocked the college football world by pummeling No. 2 and previously unbeaten Nebraska, 62-36, behind six touchdowns from Chris Brown. The win ended a nine-game CU losing streak to the Huskers -- but perhaps more importantly, signaled the beginning of the end of the Huskers' dominance in the Big 12.

Eight days later, Barnett's Buffs struck again, knocking off No. 3 Texas, 39-37. The victory moved the Buffs up to No. 3 in the national rankings and earned Colorado a Fiesta Bowl berth.

**Worst --** Might get some argument here from some corners, but the 70-3 loss to Texas in the 2005 Big 12 title game makes the top of this worst moments list on the field because of the score, the stage (national television) and the ensuing fallout. The defeat was CU's third straight in a stretch that saw the Buffs outscored 130-22, and it proved to be Barnett's last game as the Buffs' head coach.

**Best --** Led by sophomore guard Chauncey Billups, Colorado knocked off Bobby Knight's Indiana Hoosiers in the first round of the 1997 NCAA basketball tournament. Ricardo Patton's Buffs finished 22-10 that season (11-5 and second in the Big 12). After beating Indiana, the Buffs took a shot at another legend -- North Carolina's Dean Smith -- and actually led the Tar Heels at the half before falling, 73-56, in the second round.

**Worst --** The recruiting "scandal" and its ensuing fallout is tops for off-the-field moments. Before all was said and done, CU lost its president, chancellor, athletic director and football coach -- but not before some of those administrators imposed a ridiculous set of recruiting restrictions that did nothing but hamper a department already reeling from the allegations.

**Best --** Led by double-digit scorers Erin Scholz, Raegan Scott and La Shena Graham, Ceal Barry's CU women's basketball team wins the inaugural Big 12 Tournament in Kansas City in 1997. The Buffs then beat Marshall and Stephen F. Austin before falling to Tennessee in the Buffs' fourth Sweet 16 appearance in five seasons.

**Worst --** One of the saddest moments not just in Big 12 history, but in the annals of college sports. A couple of hours after the Oklahoma State men's basketball team played in Boulder in January 2001, one of three planes carrying OSU staff and players crashed near Byers. Two players and eight staff members died.

**Best --** After trailing No. 3 Oklahoma 24-7 in the third quarter in 2007, Dan Hawkins' Buffs rallied to stun the Sooners, 27-24, on Kevin Eberhart's 45-yard field goal as time expired.

**Worst --** Take your pick here: Jeremy Aldrich's missed field goal in 1999 against Nebraska in the waning moments of regulation, or Alex Henery's 57-yard kick for Nebraska (the longest in NU history) with 1:43 remaining in the 2009 game. Both resulted in heartbreaking Buff losses.

**Best --** Maybe the biggest upset on this list. In 2008, CU hosted the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships. The Buffs had never been a threat to win a conference track title -- until that season, when Mark Wetmore's Buff men stunned the conference by winning the league championship on their home track.

**Worst --** After the wins over Nebraska and Texas in 2001, the Buffs spent several weeks talking about why they belonged in the national title game. Oregon then showed which team actually got the shaft by throttling the Buffs, 38-16, in the Fiesta Bowl.

**Best --** OK, this isn't a specific moment; rather an acknowledgement of a dynasty. Wetmore's CU cross country teams

have won 12 conference men's titles and 11 women's crowns in the 14 years of the Big 12's existence. They've also won three men's NCAA championships and a pair of women's titles. The list of All-Americans and Olympians is long. Try Adam Goucher, Shayne and Alan Culpepper, Dathan Ritzenhein, Kara Goucher, Billy Nelson, Jorge Torres and Jenny Barringer for a start.

**Worst --** One thing nobody will miss when the Buffs leave the Big 12? The officiating. It started out bad and has gotten progressively worse over the years. Other conferences publicly admit when their officials make mistakes. The Big 12 doesn't even have the courage to do that.

**Best --** In January 2003, Stephane Pelle hit a jumper with 25 seconds left and Kansas misses three shots in the final seconds to give the Buffs a 60-59 win in Boulder, ending a 27-game losing streak to the Jayhawks.

**Worst --** The 58-0 Colorado loss at Missouri in 2008. Not only was it a thumping in every sense of the word, it also ended CU's 242-game scoring streak.

**Best --** Led by Fran Munnely, Bill Hempen's 2003 soccer team defeats Nebraska, 3-1, in the regular season finale to clinch the program's first regular season Big 12 title.

**Worst --** In 2006, thanks to mounting budget woes, Colorado elects to cut the men's tennis program.

**Best --** It's not often I'll include a loss on a list of best moments, but the 17-12 CU defeat at Nebraska in Rick Neuheisel's second year deserves mention. The Buffs were ranked fifth; Nebraska fourth. A dropped pass by a CU receiver (we won't name names) makes the difference, but the Buffs still go on to defeat Washington in the Holiday Bowl and finish the season ranked eighth in the nation.

**Worst --** In 2007, the NCAA hits Colorado with a number of sanctions because the athletic department had been undercharging non-scholarship players for training-table meals from 2000 to 2005. Barely a month later, the "violations" committed by CU were no longer even against NCAA rules.

**Best --** Barry's Buffs advance to the NCAA Elite Eight in 2002 with wins over Southern, No. 22 LSU and No. 5 Stanford before falling to Oklahoma.

**Worst --** Colorado's 19-10 loss to Montana State in Dan Hawkins' debut.

**Best and worst --** In the fall of 2005, Buff golfer Edward McGlasson collected his first collegiate victory and immediately dedicated the victory to CU coach Mark Simpson. A couple of months later, Simpson died after a long battle with cancer.

**Other memorable moments and figures:** Chris Brown's 1,744-yard rushing season and Heisman candidacy in 2002. ... A second-place conference finish by the men's golf team in 2009. ... Jeremy Bloom's electrifying presence on the field as a football player, and later on the slopes as an Olympian. ... A five-set home win by the volleyball team over No. 1 Nebraska in 2006. ... The CU men's 2003 NCAA hoops tourney team with Pelle, David Harrison and Michel Morandais. ... Any one of Jenny Barringer's multiple NCAA records. ... Any or all of soccer star Nikki Marshall's goals.

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