

Alan Cass, a CU-Boulder sports institution, calling it a career

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One of the charms of college sports is how different games can look and sound depending on where they are being played.

Football stadiums on autumn Saturdays have distinctly different atmospheres in Tallahassee, Fla., Austin, Texas, Eugene, Ore., and Boulder. The same is true of basketball arenas on winter weeknights and weekends.

Bands play different tunes, students and fans revel in different chants and fight songs and public address announcers add their own flair -- some understated, some not -- to the proceedings.

Those contests at the University of Colorado will be forever changed when Alan Cass turns off his microphone, stands and pushes in his chair at the scorer's table in the Coors Events Center for the final time following the Buffs' home finale against Nebraska on Saturday.

Cass has been the public address announcer for CU men's basketball games since 1965 and for CU football since 1982. Along the way, he also served as PA announcer for women's basketball, baseball, track and field and other sports and events on campus.

He, more specifically his voice, is a Boulder institution.

"I tried to play it pretty evenhandedly," Cass said modestly.

He is approaching his 70th birthday and Cass and his wife of 48 years, Sue, recently realized this school year is the 50th anniversary of the first time he ever picked up a microphone to call a CU sporting event. It seems like an appropriate time to finally put it down for the final time.

"We're just so looking forward to being able to sit together at a game," Sue Cass said. "Being able to do that will be one of the great joys of my life."

"She's my life saver," Cass said.

It has been a true labor of love for Cass, who has worked all those games for all those years as a volunteer. He says there are many things he will miss about the job, but the people he has met and developed friendships with are right at the top, especially his fellow volunteers.

Cass also served as the Denver Broncos public address announcer in Mile High Stadium and Invesco Field for 20 years. He contracted West Nile Virus in 2007 and decided to bid the Broncos farewell. Sue Cass said her husband is at peace with his choice to stop calling Buffs games, but it has been a much harder decision this time around.

Cass has been as dependable as they come.

In all those years on the job, he missed one men's basketball game because of a kidney stone and three football games, all in 2007, because of West Nile.

"The adrenaline starts flowing and I want to be there," he said.

Perhaps no one has seen more Colorado sporting events in history.

Cass grew up in Boulder after moving back to the community from Lake Placid, Fla., when he was 7 years old. His family always had deep roots here. His great grandfather came to Boulder from Wisconsin in 1859 and Cass believes someone in his family has lived in Boulder every year since then until he and Sue recently moved to Longmont to be closer to their

grandson. Cass' grandmother was among the first female CU graduates in 1891.

He lived in numerous spots around town during his childhood, including three years in the basement of the Chi Omega Sorority house before moving to Green Mountain Avenue and then to 14th Street and Euclid. He remembers attending CU sporting events as early as the late 1940s.

He never saw himself becoming a public address announcer. The truth is, the job sort of picked him. As a CU student in the early 1960s, he was attracted to the games and began helping his mentors A.B. Patterson and Warner Imig with equipment. Eventually he began to fill in for them when they had scheduling conflicts.

Cass always has attempted to avoid drawing attention to himself. He does his best to inform fans in a straightforward and deliberate fashion, preferring to keep the focus on the student-athletes and coaches. But he has attracted a following at times over the years.

In the late 1980s, fans in Folsom Field liked the way he enunciated the names of former CU running backs OooooCeeeee Oliver and JaaayJaaay Flannigan and they began saying the names along with Cass each time those players touched the ball.

The [in...com...plete](#) announcements at Broncos games when a pass from the opponent fails to find its target, is also a Cass creation.

One of his regular sayings is now featured prominently as part of a mural painted on a large wall in the southeast corner of the Coors Events Center. The mural depicts the Flatirons to the southwest of town with a sunset as the backdrop along with these words that Cass regularly includes in his pregame introductions as a subtle reminder to opponents.

"Welcome to 5,345 feet of Rocky Mountain Altitude."

There have been bumps in the road. No one is perfect after all. Sometimes the home team has made things hard on him. Former Buff forward Shaun Vandiver, for example, changed the pronunciation of his name three times in three years when he was playing in Boulder.

But Cass has no complaints. He has loved every minute of doing all those games. Even when he wasn't feeling well on a cold, icy winter night, he still made his way to the arena or the stadium.

Recently, a friend of his reminded Cass that his decision to retire from his public address announcer duties will bring a significant change.

"He said, 'You're going to have to buy a ticket now,' " Cass said. "It really hit me. By gosh, you're right."

Here is a suggestion for the powers that be at CU.

Don't let that happen. Give the man a lifetime pass. He's earned it, though he would never dream of asking for it.

At some point in the coming months, CU will hold tryouts to find a successor. Here is a second suggestion. Choose someone like Cass. Someone who doesn't scream hysterically into the microphone stealing attention away from where it ought to be.

What's the old saying? If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Cass could fill a book with stories from his days at Colorado, from memorable victories on the football field over Nebraska and Oklahoma to watching players such as Joe Romig, Darian Hagan, Rashaan Salaam, Cliff Meely, Jay Humphries and Chauncey Billups.

When pressed to provide a list of his favorite games, he coughs up five, all from the football field. But this year's basketball team gave him a memory he won't soon forget last Saturday, coming back from 22 down to beat No. 5 Texas. It gave him chills.

"Coming from so far behind and knowing what these seniors have been through these past three or four years, it was so meaningful and so moving," Cass said. "I'll tell you, I had tears in my eyes. It was great to see it happen for these guys."

Another Cass trademark comes at the end of each game when he reminds fans to take their time and get home safely.

"Until we CU again."

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