

# Emerson Wilson instilled standard of excellence in players

## Former Boulder High coach, CU player died Wednesday

**By Neill Woelk** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

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When former Boulder High star Bobby Anderson was earning All-American accolades at the University of Colorado, he'd finish practice every day with the same routine.

After his teammates had headed to the locker room, Anderson would line up by himself at the 1-yard line and run a play -- all the way to the opposite end zone.

"I'd run 99 yards for a touchdown after practice every day," Anderson said.

Anderson performed that routine for a couple of reasons.

One, his high school coach at Boulder, Emerson Wilson, had taught him that "success is not just doing what's expected of you, but doing more. It's about doing more every day."

Two, the CU record for the longest run from scrimmage was 95 yards. The mark -- which is still the CU record, by the way -- was established in 1954 against Kansas State by ... you guessed it, Emerson Wilson.

Wilson died Wednesday at the age of 77 in Kansas City.

"The one thing Emerson established immediately with you was to strive for excellence," Anderson said. "The first thing he'd talk to you about was winning the conference championship and the state championship. He always said at Boulder High, you should expect nothing less."

Wilson delivered. When he retired at BHS after the 1974 season, he had produced an 86-39-6 record that included a state championship in 1963, a Northern Conference title that same season and a Centennial League title in 1965.

He also coached some of the most noteworthy athletes in BHS' storied history, a list that included Bobby Anderson, Dick Anderson, Phil Irwin and Hale Irwin.

"In those days, he was a classy step up from what most high school guys experience," Phil Irwin said Thursday. "His entire staff was in it for the kids. The men of that era really made a difference to guys like us. They came along at such an important time of our lives, and they were tremendous influences.

"Guys like him ... they don't come around often enough anymore."

Wilson also gave a young teacher at Boulder High his first opportunity at coaching. In 1962, he hired Sam Pagano to coach his offensive and defensive lines. Pagano would not only help Boulder enjoy some of its most successful years, but he would later move across town to rival Fairview, where he built a powerhouse program.

"He was just a great guy to work for," Pagano said. "He gave me a chance and I've never forgotten that. I had some wonderful years working for him."

Wilson was a prep All-American at Wyandotte High School in Kansas City. He lettered three years at Colorado (1953-55), then served as a graduate assistant at the University of Kansas, where one of his players was future All-American quarterback John Hadl.

After his stint in Boulder, he returned to the Kansas City area to teach, and was lured back into coaching at Shawnee Mission East, where he coached until the late 1980s.

He most recently had served as a political science professor at Penn Valley Community College in Kansas City, where he retired in 2007.

He was inducted as a CU "Living Legend" in 2003, and was a member of CU's Century Club.

He is survived by his wife, Carolyn, of Kansas City; a son, Michael, of Broomfield; daughter Betsy Wilson Mancuso of Manhattan, Mont.; and daughter Wendy Wilson of Belgrade, Mont.

The family is still working on details of a possible memorial service for Wilson in the Boulder area in the near future.

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