

Colorado Classic: Terry Kunz, former CU Buffs fullback

By Irv Moss *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*

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Reunions can restore a lot of friendships and memories, but as Terry Kunz found out a week ago, they also can reveal a harsh truth.

Kunz was in Boulder recently for a reunion of University of Colorado football players. His name tag was waiting for him from his playing days for the Buffaloes in 1972, 1974 and 1975. His senior-year team compiled a 9-3 record and went to the Bluebonnet Bowl, where it lost to Texas 38-21.

The members of the 1975 team's roster, along with other notable players from earlier, are what made the reunion special. CU stalwarts such as Bobby Anderson, Bo Mathews, Jon Keyworth, Leon White, Billy Waddy, Don Hasselbeck and a host of others had name tags. The 1975 team had 11 NFL draft choices, including center Pete Brock, defensive tackle Troy Archer and offensive tackle Mark Koncar, all three taken in the first round. Dave Logan and Kunz were teammates at Wheat Ridge High School, and they went into the NFL together, Logan as a receiver and a third-round pick by the Cleveland Browns and Kunz as a running back and eighth-round choice of the Oakland Raiders.

Reunions from far enough back also can ruffle a person's mind.

"It seemed as if I was looking back on a previous life," Kunz said.

Kunz's football career ended in 1978 after a knee injury suffered as a member of the Oakland Raiders. After a short stint in the real estate business, he switched to the construction business, where he works today.

But in the last few years, Kunz has found a new interest in sports. His daughter Annie is making her mark in soccer and track and field at Texas A&M after a brilliant high school career at Wheat Ridge.

"Once you get to the point you can't compete any more, you live through your kids," Kunz said.

Annie Kunz is providing her dad quite a life. Her soccer career has provided five or six travel destinations a year to watch her play.

"She considered Colorado, but once she visited Texas A&M, that was it," Kunz said of his daughter's choice for college.

Kunz was a running back at Wheat Ridge during the time of coach Red Coats, who brought his high-powered brand of wide-open football to the Front Range from his previous job in Texas.

"I think Red Coats was the most dynamic coach in the area," Kunz said. "He adapted his offense to his players."

Kunz also won a state track and field championship in the hurdles, attesting to his running speed.

Eddie Crowder was the coach when Kunz arrived at CU in 1971. Bill Mallory, who attended last week's reunion, was his coach his last two years. Kunz's college career didn't begin on a high note.

"When I first got to CU, I was behind Bo Mathews," Kunz said. "Standing on the sidelines is tough when you're used to playing all the time."

But moving to the NFL was an eye-opener.

The Raiders were coached by John Madden, and the roster was filled with all-pros. Kunz suddenly was walking among Ken Stabler, Cliff Branch, Ted Hendricks, Art Shell, Dave Casper, Gene Upshaw and a roster full of other stars. Otis Sistrunk, a huge defensive lineman who claimed he was from the University of Mars, welcomed Kunz to the NFL.

"We were in training camp, and he came out of the locker room blowing cigarette smoke through his face mask," Kunz said. "I hadn't seen that before."

Kunz was in the right place at the right time in a Raiders uniform in the 1976 season. The Raiders went to Super Bowl XI and on Jan. 9, 1977, beat Minnesota 32-14, so Kunz got a Super Bowl ring.

"I tore up my knee in the 14th game of the season," Kunz said. "I was playing when we were too far ahead to lose or too far behind to win. The Raiders had a tendency to solicit different reactions from the other teams. I know the Denver Broncos didn't like us."

Kunz maintained a family tradition. His father, Eldon Kunz, and uncle LeRoy Kunz were star players for the University of Denver.

He played at CU during some of its glory days.

"Back then, CU was putting eight, nine players in the NFL every year," Kunz said.

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About Terry Kunz

Born: Oct. 26, 1952, in Denver

High school: Wheat Ridge