



Bufs induct legends into Hall

Goucher, Logan, Ward, Williams among inductees

By Ryan Thorburn
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BROOMFIELD -- Segregation. Racism. The Great Depression.

None of the above stopped Claude Walton from becoming the first African-American varsity athlete and first All-American at the University of Colorado.

And seven decades of waiting for the phone to ring didn't stop Walton from attending his induction into the CU Athletic Hall of Fame.

The 95-year-old legend may have been in a wheelchair during Friday's ceremony at the Omni Interlocken Hotel, but Walton stood tall among some of the great names in CU sports history.

"I'm just happy and fortunate enough to be still around to receive the honor in person," Walton told the Camera before being honored with eight other members of the 2008 class. "I enjoyed my four years at the university 70-plus years ago and I'm happy to come back and participate."

Walton earned All-American honors in the discus in the spring of 1936. Two decades later, Frank Clarke (football) and Billy Lewis (basketball) -- who were also inducted on Friday -- became the first black players at CU in their respective sports.

"It's just a great day and a great honor. It's so personal and it's difficult to explain the full extent of the emotion," said Lewis, who made his debut for the Bufs during the 1957-58 season and also competed in the high jump for the CU track team. "Frank and I were here together. Frank was one of the most awesome athletes I've ever seen. He was so big and he was so fast. Now days there are some athletes like that, but he was about as big as I've ever seen. And he looks great for 75."

Clarke arrived at CU in 1954 and ended his college career with a victory over Clemson in the 1957 Orange Bowl. He went on to play three seasons with the Cleveland Browns and eight with the Dallas Cowboys, participating in the famous 1967 NFL Championship game against Green Bay known as the "Ice Bowl."

Fittingly, Clarke's head coach at CU, Dal Ward, was inducted posthumously as a member of this year's hall of fame class.

"Dal Ward is the one who wanted me to come here from the get-go. He was a very dedicated coach and teacher," Clarke said. "I'm just very grateful and very humbled to be associated with such a great university. My goodness, I'm thrilled beyond words."

Ward posted a 63-41-6 record from 1948-58 and is largely credited for putting CU on the national map. He died in February 1983 at the age of 76.

“Dad loved CU and I just feel badly that he’s not here tonight,” said Mary Metzger, one of Ward’s five children. “I remember him pacing the sidelines and pulling up his pants when he got nervous and when things got competitive. ... He was a strict father and he was very strict with his boys. There was no nonsense. We didn’t have any of the off-the-field antics. He would not put up with that at all. He truly loved the game.”

Two of CU’s greatest multi-sport athletes — John Stearns (football, baseball) and Dave Logan (football, basketball) — were also inducted.

Stearns, known as “Bad Dude,” owns the Buffs’ career record for interceptions and was an All-Big Eight selection as a senior in 1972, but he went on to become a legendary professional baseball player for the New York Mets.

Logan averaged 14.1 points in 58 career basketball games through his senior season in 1975, but he went on to play professionally in the NFL as a wide receiver for the Cleveland Browns and Denver Broncos.

“I remember telling coach (Eddie) Crowder before coming up here, ‘I want to play Major League Baseball some day,’” Stearns recalled. “Nobody believed me. They thought, ‘He’s full of (it).’

“But Eddie had no problem with it because I brought it up ahead of time. And that’s the way you have to handle it as a two-sport player.”

Alfred Williams, a unanimous All-American at CU and a key member of the 1990 national championship team, was also inducted. The Butkus Award winner enjoyed a long NFL career highlighted by two Super Bowl victories as a member of the Denver Broncos.

Kara Grgas-Wheeler Goucher — who led CU to its first national title in cross country by winning the event and also capturing NCAA championships in both the 3,000- and 5,000-meter runs — is the only female member of this year’s class. She joins former basketball stars Lisa Van Goor and Shelley Sheetz as the only women in the hall of fame.

“It’s a big honor for me. I loved my time at CU and I feel like it set me up as a representative not just for the athletic department but for women’s sports in general,” said Grgas-Wheeler Goucher, who qualified and ran in both the 5,000- and 10,000-meter runs at the Olympics in Beijing. “I’m a little surprised there’s only three women in, but I hope this is the beginning of more women being inducted and I hope I’m a good representative for all the great female athletes that have come through CU.”

Adam Goucher, a member of CU’s 2006 hall of fame class, accompanied his wife.

Don Campbell, who was awarded the Purple Heart after getting hit in the leg and hip by machine gun fire, overcame his World War II injuries to become one of CU’s great track athletes. Known as the “Colorado Comet,” Campbell was a seven-time conference champion in three events and a 1948 All-American in the 100-yard dash.

“I can’t really talk about one special day at CU because they were all special,” said Campbell, who was coached by the legendary Frank Potts. “What’s really exciting tonight is to meet these guys because I’ve

heard about them. Claude, I met him several years ago at one of those legends things ... we started talking and I was really impressed with this guy. He had a great sparkle in his eyes and he's intelligent beyond words."

This year's class will be introduced at halftime of tonight's CU-Kansas State football game at Folsom Field.



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