



No slowing down for CU's Barry

By Joshua Lindenstein
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Colorado Buffalo football game days used to be a little faster paced for Ceal Barry.

As coach of the women's basketball team, Barry would plan entire Saturdays around the festivities at Folsom Field.

With the September sunshine and enthusiasm in the air for all things CU, the coach saw the games as the perfect chance to woo recruits to her own program. So there would be campus tours, meet-and-greets with Ralphie and tailgating in the morning and rooting on the football team in the afternoon.

But when the Buffs took on Eastern Washington last Saturday, there was Barry cruising up to the stadium on her bicycle not too long before game time.

"That's so different because my game-day experience prior to the games used to be recruiting," Barry says. "I did that for years."

Gamedays might have slowed down some for the legendary coach in the three years since she hung up the whistle. But her contributions to CU haven't.

Much as she did in amassing 427 wins for CU as a coach for 22 years, Barry is still building teams to help the Buffaloes succeed. It's just that now her drive and spirit for the university touch all of the athletic department's programs.

As the department's senior woman administrator and associate athletic director for academics and student services, Barry has spent the last three years trying to ensure the Buffs' success not only on the field but also in the classroom and after graduation. Her responsibilities include representing CU at Big 12 and NCAA meetings as the SWA. She also oversees equipment, the training table, training room and academic support.

She was instrumental last year in discovering and rectifying NCAA violations the Buffs were inadvertently committing at the training table.

"She's been a major piece of the foundation and has been instrumental in keeping our senior staff as a cohesive unit and one that works together," says athletic director Mike Bohn, who was hired in 2005 -- not long after Barry resigned as basketball coach and began working as an administrator.

Barry was already in charge of student services when Bohn was hired. But the A.D. quickly realized he wanted Barry more involved.

A perfect example of her value, he says, was the Big 12 Track and Field Championships.

Not only was Barry instrumental in the preparation and staging of the event, which helped CU's track program gain

respect among its Big 12 peers, she was also at the meet each day making sure athletes and meet officials and others involved felt appreciated.

"The neat thing about Ceal is she's not afraid to roll up her sleeves and help pick up trash or fold tables or maybe reach out to an injured student athlete that maybe needs a little extra help," Bohn says. "That's what helps our program grow is that type of leadership and work ethic."

Barry's most satisfying accomplishment as an administrator so far has been revamping the academic support department.

She's helped bring in five new academic advisors and hired a new director, Kris Livingston, who was Barry's director of basketball operations.

Barry says her experience at molding teams and finding the right personnel for the right jobs has helped her immensely in her new role.

"We didn't always hire the most experienced academic advisor and that was the same thing in coaching," Barry says. "I always recruited the best people, people with character. You hire good people and they learn the job very quickly."

"I expect this staff to be together for a long period of time and it's going to be really, really successful. It took three years to rebuild it, but the results will last a long time."

One of Barry's hires, academic and tutor coordinator Mindy Sclaro, says Barry's influence has instilled a great sense of team in their department.

"That's how she approaches it and builds her staff, and I related to that very directly," says Sclaro, who was a high school soccer coach and administrator at Alexander Dawson for several years. "She really built the team in the same model that she's built successful teams on the court."

Instituting programs such as the one that helps place student athletes in jobs after graduation have also been rewarding for Barry.

"I think we've created an environment where we try to be full-service to every need that a student athlete will have," Barry says.

Barry's 25th anniversary at CU came last spring and, in the volatile world of athletics, she is humbled to have been able to stay in one place -- specifically CU and Boulder -- for so long. Whether expectations aren't met or greener pastures come along, rare is the coach who can have such a long career at one school.

While Barry's team was having success in the 1990s, Barry did hear from other universities inquiring whether she'd be interested in taking over their programs.

But she could never leave CU.

"It's not that you get complacent or comfortable," Barry says. "It's that you make a choice about your quality of life. I think I made good decisions along the way."

There are likely still plenty of schools that would love to have Barry as their coach.

But, despite admitting that she gets a bit more "emotionally engaged" during tournament time in March, Barry says she

has no plans to return to coaching.

"I've been given a great opportunity in this career, and it's demanding in its own right," Barry says. "I think had Mike Bohn not been amenable to having me on his staff and welcomed me in the way he did, had this situation been different, maybe so."

At the age of 53, she also doesn't miss the pace of coaching.

Fortunately for CU, however, she doesn't plan on slowing down too much.

"I'm not a person that's going to retire when I'm 55," Barry says. "I work a lot. I've always worked. That's just the nature of who I am."



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