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colorado

## Wideout ran odd route to CU success

McKnight wins over coaches, team

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 09/13/2008 11:33:25 PM MDT



Colorado wideout Scotty McKnight (21) is wrapped up during the Buffaloes' win over Colorado State on Aug. 31. McKnight has led all receivers in CU's first two games this season. (Doug Pensinger, Getty Images )

"I'll never hear the end of it from Scotty," Kiesau said following a recent practice in preparation for Thursday night's home game against No. 25 West Virginia. "And I'm happy about that. I'm happy it turned out the way it has."

In 2005, McKnight sent a video of his high school highlights to the University of California coaching staff. McKnight caught 161 passes in three seasons at Tesoro High School in Orange County (Calif.) but was drawing scant interest from Division I-A recruiters.

Kiesau was coaching the Cal receivers.

"Scotty and I joke

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BOULDER — The old saying "things work out for the best" holds a special meaning for Colorado sophomore wideout Scotty McKnight. Likewise for CU receivers coach Eric Kiesau.

about it all the time," Kiesau said. "I don't remember his tape. I'm not sure he believes me, but I don't think I ever got it. We get a lot of tapes."

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McKnight did get one good look. Dan Hawkins wanted him to come to Boise State and offered him a scholarship. But before signing day arrived, Hawkins had packed his bags for Boulder. McKnight decided to switch to Colorado. Hawkins still wanted him, but at CU it would have to be as a walk-on. At least initially, McKnight would be without a scholarship.

"I didn't take that as an insult," McKnight recalled. "I took it as, Coach Hawk saw some potential in me and said, 'Hey, you can come up here and earn your way.' I've been raised that way from my parents."

After redshirting in the fall of 2006, McKnight caught everything in sight the following spring, including the eyes of the coaches. He did not disappoint. In 2007, McKnight became the first freshman wide receiver in Colorado history to lead the Buffaloes in receptions (43).

McKnight was put on scholarship in January. As a freshman, he led the Buffs in receptions six times. And he is 2-for-2 this season.

At 5-feet-11 and 190 pounds, McKnight isn't particularly big for a receiver. And although he has been clocked as fast as 4.5 for 40 yards, he probably would not beat many cornerbacks in a foot race.

McKnight won't make the acrobatic catch or jump over a defender. But he knows how to get open. He finds openings in a defense. He lives in the creases.

"I've been saying ever since I started coaching wideouts: It doesn't matter if you're 6-4, 215 pounds and run a 4.3," Kiesau said. "I've coached guys like that. The guys who are productive, the guys who can change the face of the game, are guys that are smart and understand how to create separation so they can be at the right spot every

time."

Playing the slot (inside) position, McKnight is the quintessential possession receiver, although perhaps a bit more athletic than some. He's the guy everybody can count on. Tough. Sure-handed. And sure to find a seam and a way.

"It's a knack because you work at it," Hawkins said. "It's a knack because you think about it. You watch film and kind of see what's going to develop.

"Does he have a certain feel for it? Yeah, he does. But he's a hard-working guy that pays attention to the details. He's prepared when he comes to the game."

McKnight has worked for several years with former Colorado receiver John Minardi (79 catches from 1998-2001), who operates Minardi Sports Training in Orange County. Minardi helped McKnight with weight training, speed work and pass routes. Minardi also helped sell McKnight on CU.

"Scotty is a lot of fun to work with because he picks up things so quickly," Minardi said in a phone conversation. "I showed him how to do an angle off a defender and then how to weave. He tried it once, and then did a double weave."

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**Scotty McKnight** wins praise for his ability to analyze and work the defense.

Said Cody: "Scotty sees things like I do."

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From the inside, Z-receiver position ("flanker" in old-school lingo), Mc Knight can thread between safeties and linebackers, almost hiding amid the ruckus before he breaks into the clear.

McKnight seems to have a pitch-and-catch chemistry with quarterback Cody Hawkins. They're the same age, same class. And on the same page.

"I think a lot of (the chemistry) comes from Cody and I both being guys that really love playing the game," McKnight said. "We understand what defenses are doing and hone in on what our offense is trying to accomplish. We are never satisfied until we do things right."

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sports

## Hundreds gather to honor legacy of Eddie Crowder

By Natalie Meisler  
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 09/14/2008 12:23:08 AM MDT



Kate Crowder, right, acknowledges cheering during a Saturday memorial service at CU's Folsom Field for her late husband, former CU coach and athletic director Eddie Crowder. (Hyoung Chang, The Denver Post)

BOULDER — It was an idyllic football afternoon at Folsom Field, not unlike those Saturdays more than

35 years ago when Eddie Crowder's Colorado Buffaloes toppled the unsuspecting ranks of Penn State and Oklahoma.

On this day there was no band, no Ralphie, no crowd roar, no football. The flags on either side of the stadium were at half-staff.

As Crowder's dearest friend and former CU Regent Jerry Rutledge eulogized, "This is the house that Eddie built."

Crowder was always known to all as "Eddie." That's why Saturday's memorial service for the former CU coach (1963-73) and athletic director (1965-84) who died Tuesday at age 77 was called "A Celebration of Eddie's Life" on the official program.

Nearly 1,000 former Buffs, friends, family, colleagues and current CU staffers paid tribute to Crowder.

Many noted it was just like the athletic director to schedule a bye week for the day. Ex-players swapped war stories. Most are successful businessmen. John Stavely, a former defensive back who introduced each speaker, is a Boulder County judge.

A charter flight of Crowder's Oklahoma friends, including former Sooners coach Barry Switzer, was unable to make the trip because of Hurricane Ike. Former Crowder assistant Steve Erhardt, the current Liberty Bowl director, pinch hit for Switzer.

Crowder was an All-American quarterback and assistant coach for the Sooners before he was hired at CU. "Boomer Sooner" played over the stadium before the service concluded, along with CU's fight song. An OU flag joined the others at half-staff.

Erhardt gave his rousing rendition of the original

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Bill Belichick spygate, when Crowder discovered a former Oklahoma player enrolled in CU's Law School scouting practice the week of the 1972 Oklahoma game. Crowder had Erhardt, who himself was a lawyer, research the state statutes and wanted the Oklahoma coach, athletic director and president arrested when they arrived in Colorado on charges of industrial espionage.

"But he knew if they were arrested, they would have the motivation," Erhardt said. Crowder used it as motivation for his own team, which won 20-14.

McCartney gave his eulogy on the patience Crowder showed. Between the Chuck Fairbanks regime and McCartney's first three seasons, "we had won 14 games in six years, dead last in all of college football," McCartney said. "We had to die to get better. Coach was patient with me. He had faith."

Two of the most prominent ex-Buffs, All-Americans Bobby and Dick Anderson, brought their 90-year-old mother Mariette Anderson.

She recalled how Crowder insisted she and her husband take the team plane home after the Liberty Bowl. While players received rings, Mariette Anderson said Crowder made sure she received a charm as a bowl souvenir from Bobby's MVP performance.

Crowder's widow, Kate, told the gathering, "If it weren't for Eddie I wouldn't have known you."

She recalled a saying posted on the desk of her husband's late son, Robert: "Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened."

Bobby Anderson had perhaps the most stirring eulogy remark. Crowder accompanied him to New York two years ago when Anderson was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame. Seated next to

Ohio State's Archie Griffin, Anderson ribbed the former Buckeye about how his college coach defeated Woody Hayes and Ohio State. "I pointed in the balcony, 'That's the guy who beat Woody Hayes.'"

Pointing this time to the blue Colorado sky, Anderson said, "See that guy up there? We love you, Coach."

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# A testament to faith: Johnson family one year removed from miracle

By Kyle Ringo  
Sunday, September 14, 2008

Susan Johnson says she met Jesus during terrifying moments for her family one year ago this week. Her husband, Mark, the voice of the Colorado Buffaloes, can't help but believe her.

Dealing with medical emergencies has become commonplace for the Buffs' radio play-by-play man, but this was the first time his wife was the center of attention. It's likely, had things turned out differently, someone else would be calling Colorado football games this fall instead of the familiar, deep voice now in his fifth year with KOA radio.

The Johnsons arrived at their church in Evergreen that morning in the midst of a minor disagreement common between couples. Mark, normally a reserved and private man when it comes to his religion, spoke his wife's name out loud at one point when the minister asked for the names of those who needed prayer.

It was a surreal moment of foresight.

Thirty minutes later, the Johnsons were singing the final hymn of a typical Sunday morning. Susan stood between her 17-year-old son, Nicolas, and 15-year-old daughter, Halle. Mark was on Halle's other side singing with the couple's youngest child, 11-year-old Jacob.

"Dad, there is something wrong with mom," Halle said.

Mark Johnson turned and looked at his wife, who was slumped over the back of their pew in black pants and a long black sweater. She had undergone surgery to remove a benign tumor in her neck five days earlier and the first inclination was whatever was happening might have something to do with that.

Susan's eyes opened after a minute or two, but she was not responsive. The congregation continued singing around them as a nurse, who happened to be sitting behind the family, came to Susan's aid. Moments later an emergency medical technician who was sitting across the aisle came to help, as did the acting chief of the Evergreen volunteer fire department.

Susan Johnson said it was about this point when she regained the ability to understand what was happening around her. The problem was she couldn't speak and couldn't move the right side of her body.

She was trapped inside herself watching the terrified faces of her loved ones and wanting desperately to tell them, 'I know I'm going to be all right.'

She insists she wasn't scared, but she was frustrated by her inability to communicate. She was enveloped by a sense of calm and what she calls "a feeling of invincibility."

"I had an experience while I was out," Susan Johnson said. "To describe it would take hours because there was so much involved, but I would say that I met Jesus.

"It's hard to explain that because it wasn't the Jesus that you see in the paintings and all of that. I went through a neurological thing. I'm still trying to figure out what exactly happened and what I really experienced, but if I were to just simplify it, I met up with Jesus and was given a choice.

"He said, 'I know that you're willing to die for Jacob and you're willing to die for your family. I want to know if you are willing to live?' "

An ambulance was summoned and the medical professionals working on Susan began to believe she was suffering a stroke. As she was loaded into the ambulance, Mark Johnson heard one EMT tell another, he didn't know if Susan was going to make it. They called for a helicopter. Susan heard someone call out her blood pressure. She recalls thinking with an eerie calm that it was very high.

Within minutes the Flight for Life was descending on a small patch of grass next to the church. The congregation remained inside praying. Some members watched over the Johnson children. Susan worried about her daughter, who was clearly terrified the last time she had seen her. Mark Johnson helped load his wife into the orange helicopter. His blue eyes followed her ascension into the cool, blue morning sky.

"It was a terrifying, and I don't use that word lightly, it was a terrifying experience for me," Mark Johnson said.

## **'Magic Mark' and the beauty queen**

In 1989, Mark Johnson was a young man with a mullet and plenty of ambition.

He worked the afternoon slot at a top-40 radio station in Grand Forks, N.D., and used the on-air name "Magic Mark." He sometimes did work outside his normal responsibilities for the radio station and was asked one day to emcee the sendoff party for Miss North Dakota, who was on her way to the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City.

Johnson agreed to the gig with no expectations of meeting the love of his life.

He and Susan clicked immediately. They talked that night and began dating when she returned from her unsuccessful bid to win the crown. Two years later they were married.

The couple found common ground in their faith and love of family. They began to move around the nation in search of better jobs in radio, and they decided to start a family.

First they moved to Santa Barbara, Calif., for Mark's next job. Then back to North Dakota. He took his first job in sports radio in Mankato, Minn., next. Then back to Grand Forks to cover the University of North Dakota. They moved east to West Lafayette, Ind., where he did high school sports and some Purdue University coverage. Then on to Illinois State. He called Carmelo Anthony's run to the national title in basketball at Syracuse University in New York before finally coming to Colorado in 2004.

Along the way they were blessed with three children. Each brought joy and new a greater challenges.

Shortly before Jacob arrived 11 years ago, they learned he had suffered a stroke in the womb and likely would be disabled.

When Jacob was born, doctors diagnosed him with hydrocephylus, a condition in which the body loses its ability to drain fluid from the brain. The problem caused the stroke and doctors told the Johnsons he wouldn't survive more than a few days. That became weeks. Then months.

Jacob is a fighter full of life, despite all his disabilities. Doctors solved the hydrocephylus problem through brain surgery in which they inserted a shunt to drain excess fluid. It was the first of 10 brain surgeries.

Jacob has since developed cerebral palsy, pervasive development disorder, autism, and epilepsy. He is blind from brain damage and requires constant care, including feeding and changing.

"A lot of people look at Jacob as this huge burden and in some ways he has been a greater blessing than we would have ever been smart enough to ask for," Susan Johnson said.

Through his 11 years, he has learned to scoot around on his bottom and perform some simple tasks such as pressing buttons on remote controls. He will open doors and go outside if he is not closely monitored.

"He doesn't have the comprehension that it's dangerous out there, that you don't go in the middle of the street or you don't go outside without clothes on," Susan said.

### **Divine intervention**

Susan Johnson's left hand was hanging outside a small window in the helicopter. She could feel the air passing swiftly over it and remained unconcerned for her safety despite understanding that helicopters don't come and pick up the average person in need of medical attention.

She still couldn't move or communicate, but her experience in the church made her supremely confident she was going to survive.

Mark Johnson's frantic heart was beating hard inside his white Mitsubishi Galant as he sped to St. Anthony's Central Hospital. He arrived and sprinted toward the emergency room entrance and pushed through the doors. A security guard stopped him. Mark identified himself. The guard seemed to be expecting him and told him he had to wait in the lobby until the chaplain arrived.

"The room is spinning," Mark Johnson said. "I'm thinking, 'I've lost my wife, my best friend and my children are motherless and I'm going to be without a spouse. And I've got my youngest son who is disabled. And what do I do? And how do I handle all this?'"

After agonizing for several minutes, a female chaplain finally came to the lobby. She was annoyed that the security guard had misunderstood and made Mark Johnson wait. She ushered Johnson into the emergency room where doctors were baffled by Susan Johnson.

A CAT scan and magnetic resonance imaging test told them nothing. They assumed stroke but were not able to put Susan on blood thinners because of the incision from her surgery earlier that week. Time was precious.

She heard doctors tell her husband they couldn't find any clots, but everything, including the right side



of her face drooping, suggested stroke. Susan was relieved to see her husband but troubled by the anxiety and worry on his face.

In listening to doctors talk about what might be going on inside her, she heard many familiar terms learned in caring for her son. The understanding comforted her even more.

Her right hand came back first. Eventually she was able to point to a dry erase board with the word maintenance misspelled. It was her way of trying to tell Mark she was OK. He didn't quite get it.

Susan began to become desperate to speak. Hours passed until she eventually forced out a word, "Halle."

Slowly, they all came back.

"I just kept telling them, 'I'm going to be OK. I'm going to be OK.'"

A year later, doctors still haven't been able to say what happened to Susan Johnson that day, but she doesn't need an explanation. She hasn't had any more episodes and her faith tells her none are coming soon. She believes she is still here for a reason.

Susan and Mark recently celebrated a milestone with their children. They have been in one place for five years for the first time as a family. More than anywhere, Colorado is now home and they are confident their prayers will guide them through anything.



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## **'Coach' Crowder remembered**

### **Picture-perfect day sets stage for service for ex-CU coach, AD**

By Ryan Thorburn  
Sunday, September 14, 2008

It was an Eddie Crowder kind of afternoon.

A brilliant sun was shining down over the Flatirons as an impressive contingent of University of Colorado luminaries and friends gathered on this September Saturday to honor the legendary CU football coach and athletic director.

Crowder died Tuesday night from complications due to leukemia at the age of 77. His spirit lived on during a memorial service at Folsom Field with an estimated 1,000 in attendance.

"We're here to remember a most significant life in the state of Colorado," said former CU All-American Bobby Anderson, who played for Crowder from 1967-69.

"This is a great gathering of the Colorado football family. It's game day. So it's fitting we're out here on such a beautiful Colorado fall afternoon."

The Buffs had a scheduled bye week and did not play on Saturday. Current CU head coach Dan Hawkins, whose team will host No. 25 West Virginia on Thursday, was at Crowder's bedside moments before he passed away.

"The last thing he said to Dan was, 'You're the right man for the job,' " Crowder's widow, Kate, said.

There is no question Crowder was the perfect choice to return the program and the athletic department to prominence when he arrived in Boulder on Jan. 3, 1963. CU was 67-49-2 during his 11 seasons, including a 10-2 finish in 1971 that included a final ranking of No. 3 in the Associated Press poll behind Big 8 rivals Nebraska and Oklahoma.

During his playing days in Norman, Crowder was the Sooners' quarterback under legendary coach Bud Wilkinson. An Oklahoma writer once described the slippery signal caller as "The best boot-legger since Al Capone."

"Eddie really was a national figure," said Steve Ehrhart, who was a graduate assistant at CU under Crowder and later served as his mentor's legal advisor. "He was so well respected around the country."

Crowder's Buffs snapped Joe Paterno's 31-game win streak by upsetting the Penn State Nittany Lions in 1970; they beat Woody Hayes' Ohio State Buckeyes at Columbus in 1971; and they handed Chuck Fairbanks' No. 2 Oklahoma Sooners their only loss in 1972.

But perhaps the most significant game against a big-time opponent was the 1969 Liberty Bowl when Crowder's CU team defeated Bear Bryant and the Alabama Crimson Tide in Memphis, Tenn.

"Eddie brought a fully integrated team to the South to play all-white Alabama," said Ehrhart, who is currently the executive director of the Liberty Bowl.

"I didn't realize the impact that had until about 15 years later. But when you think about what was going on at the time with the civil rights movement and the changes that came not long after that game ... living in Memphis I can really see what a big deal that was."

Crowder's daughter, Carol, recalled a somber bus ride during her childhood from the stadium to the hotel after CU lost one of the five bowl games it played in during her father's sideline reign.

"I said, 'You know, we really shouldn't come to these games if we're not going to win them,'" she said.

Crowder served as athletic director at CU from 1965-1984. After Fairbanks compiled a 7-26 record in three seasons, he needed to make a great hire to make the football competitive on the national stage again.

Enter Bill McCartney.

"Then my first three years we only won seven more games," McCartney said. "Those 14 wins in six years ranked CU dead last in college football over that span."

Crowder retired from his position as athletic director in 1984, loyal to McCartney, and never wavered in his confidence that he was the right man.

A school-record 153 victories and the 1990 national championship certainly validated the decision to stick with McCartney.

"Coach Crowder was patient with me but forthright," McCartney said.

Former Oklahoma head coach Barry Switzer and OU fraternity brother Lee Allen Smith were also scheduled as eulogists but were unable to make the trip due to Hurricane Ike.

Crowder's name was painted on the field and the flags above the stadium hung at half-staff. Jerry Rutledge, a former CU Regent, described the setting this way:

"This is the house that Eddie built."



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## Crowder remembered in 'house that Eddie built'

By B.G. Brooks

Saturday, September 13, 2008

BOULDER — It was the kind of late summer Saturday at Folsom Field that Eddie Crowder remembered so well, worked in so efficiently and undoubtedly would have ordered again -- bright sun, blue skies and the mere breath of a Colorado breeze.

"Eddie timed this somehow -- a Thursday night game and great Saturday weather," said Bobby Anderson, one of Crowder's former players at the University of Colorado, referring to the Buffaloes having a bye during the week that Crowder died and not playing again until Thursday night against West Virginia.

Crowder, CU's coach and/or athletic director for two-plus decades, was remembered Saturday by about 1,000 people who attended a memorial service at Folsom Field's expanded east side.

Crowder, 77, died late Tuesday night at Exemplar Health Center in Lafayette from complications of leukemia.

With "Eddie" painted in white script inside two black boxes near the 20-yard lines on the field below them, Anderson and six other speakers reflected on Crowder's tenure at CU and the countless lives he touched as a coach, father and spiritual mentor in his later years.

"He was a great athletic director -- not just a great coach," said former CU regent Jerry Rutledge. "Look around you, this is the house that Eddie built . . . He knew the landscape."

Crowder's first two CU teams finished 2-8, but the next nine compiled a 63-33-2 record, winning three bowl games and becoming regular members of the national polls.

Crowder worked as both head coach and athletic director from 1965 to 1973, and when he left coaching in 1974 to devote all his time to the athletic director's job -- he held the position until 1984 -- his CU coaching record (67-49-2) was second only in victories to Fred Folsom's 77 in 15 seasons.

Anderson, perhaps Crowder's most celebrated player, recalled the unpretentious but direct way Crowder dealt with his teams. When he was a sophomore in 1967, Anderson had earned the starting quarterback job on a team heavily populated with seniors.

Nervous before his first start at Folsom Field, Anderson said Crowder knowingly came to him on the sideline beforehand and instantly put him at ease, saying, "You don't have a problem with me starting a sophomore at quarterback, do you?"

Added Anderson: "He was a wonderful leader . . . his kindness, his humility, the way he chose his

words. He imparted a great deal to his players with his intelligence.”

Crowder’s daughter, Carol, told of her father’s liking for driving family vacations -- and his children’s dislike for his “being on the road for four hours without a break.” But, she added, the family always could count on making a stop when a Stuckey’s was sighted: “He loved Stuckey’s soft-serve ice cream.”

Also speaking was John Stavely, whose father, Dan, was a CU coaching colleague of Crowder’s; Steve Ehrhart, executive director of the Liberty Bowl and a former CU graduate assistant and legal counsel; former Buffs coach Bill McCartney; and Crowder’s widow, Kate.

Scheduled to speak were Lee Allan Smith, a fraternity brother of Crowder’s at the University of Oklahoma, and former Sooners football coach Barry Switzer. But they canceled their trips because of fears of weather-related delays on their return flights.

McCartney told of Crowder taking a chance on hiring McCartney as head coach in 1982. McCartney at the time was a little-known Michigan assistant, and his Buffs teams didn’t begin winning until his fourth season on the job.

“Eddie was riding a losing streak, if you will,” McCartney said, noting Crowder’s last season in coaching and his first two football hires -- Bill Mallory and Chuck Fairbanks -- all were less than successful.

“But he was patient with me . . . He shot straight with me,” said McCartney, whose 1990 team shared the national championship with Georgia Tech.

Kate Crowder said current Buffs coach Dan Hawkins visited Crowder in his final hours and was told, “You’re the man for the (CU) job” -- a blessing Hawkins later said he greatly appreciated. He also said it motivated him: “We’ve got to get it done.”

Kate Crowder closed the memorial with one of her husband’s favorite quotations from Dr. Seuss: “Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.”

In lieu of flowers, Eddie Crowder’s family has established an Eddie Crowder Football Scholarship Fund. Those interested in contributing memorial gifts can make checks payable to the CU Foundation (put Crowder Football Scholarship in the memo field) and mail to The Buff Club, 369 UCB, Boulder, CO 80309-0369.

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