



More cash comes CU's way

Bufs receive two donations totaling \$610,000

By Ryan Thorburn
Wednesday, July 1, 2009

BOULDER, Colo. — Mike Bohn can only hope Dan Hawkins' fall and Jeff Bzdelik's winter goes this well.

Colorado's energetic athletic director was even more atingle than normal on Tuesday while announcing that the department had recently received two private donations totaling \$610,000.

One of the gifts, an anonymous donation of \$360,000, was given so the football offices in the Dal Ward Center would be renamed the Eddie Crowder Football Operations Complex in honor of the legendary CU football coach and athletic director who died last year.

The funds also allowed the athletic department to immediately replace the 18-year-old floor in the Dal Ward Center weight room with a rubber tile sports performance floor. Installation of the new floor was already underway on Tuesday.

The second gift, a donation of \$250,000 from John and Debbie Raeder, was given in support of the student-athlete academic center in the Dal Ward Center, which is now named for the Raeder family.

These donations arrived on the heels of the CU athletic department receiving its largest financial gift ever last week.

Louise Bennett Reed, who passed away last June at the age of 103, made the athletic department the sole beneficiary of her \$4.75 million estate. That money will be used to fund football and men's and women's basketball scholarships in her name.

"The Louis Bennett Reed gift, followed by these two very generous contributions, provide meaningful opportunities for continued improvement to our capital facilities initiatives," Bohn said during an interview with the Camera. "And we are encouraged that loyal supporters continue to make significant gifts." Bohn and senior associate athletic director Tom McGrath also stressed on Tuesday that plans for a new basketball/volleyball practice facility are still being executed as expeditiously as possible.

Originally, the athletic department had hoped to break ground on the \$10 to \$11 million project this summer. Bohn said the downturn in the economy and CU's decision to cancel plans for a new heating and cooling plant -- which was originally attached to the practice facility construction plan -- "delayed it a bit."

Eighteen architect firms submitted proposals in March. Sink Combs Dethlefs -- the firm that designed the Dal Ward Center, the suites at Folsom Field and the new men's basketball locker room -- was

chosen.

McGrath said the athletic department has already gone through the Colorado State Legislature, the CU Board of Regents, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, the Boulder Campus Planning Commission and CU Facilities Management to gain approval for the project. Next Friday he will be meeting with the CU Design Review Board to make sure the exterior of the proposed facility fits in aesthetically with other buildings on campus.

The new facility will attach to the north side of the Coors Events Center and will include two separate practice gyms and a volleyball operations center.

As part of the project, additional locker rooms for high school or other tournaments will be added to the Coors Events Center (so the CU basketball programs will never be displaced), along with a new training room, a new volleyball locker room and lounge, a new locker room for officials, a new media room and a storage room for concessions.

Athletic department officials don't want to commit to an exact date for completion of the project, but if the red tape is all cleared and fundraising goes well they are hoping to see the new facility erected by the fall of 2010.

"We still feel really good about where we are," Bohn said. "We just want to make sure it's done right."

Before the 2009-10 basketball season begins, Bohn hopes to have ribbon boards installed and improved video presentation available on game nights inside the Coors Events Center.

Other completed, ongoing or planned facility upgrades include:

A large picture of Olympian and NCAA champion Jenny Barringer competing in the steeplechase has been added to the inside of the elevator in the Dal Ward Center with the words "Ultimate effort."

"She's just awesome," Bohn said of the CU track legend.

A storage room in the basement of the Dal Ward Center is currently being converted into positional meeting rooms for the football program. Two meeting rooms were lost when the locker room was expanded; last year a high-density storage system was purchased to make room for construction of the new meeting rooms.

"Adding these new meeting rooms is significant for the coaching staff," Bohn said.

Before the summer is over logos of each of the Big 12 institutions will be added to the foyer of the Dal Ward Center.

"When recruits visit we want them to see Texas and Oklahoma and all of the other Big 12 team logos and realize this is big-time," Bohn said.

The interior of the Dal Ward Center has been repainted with traditional CU colors and also a shade of "Buffalo Gold" that can also found in the Oval Office. The cross country team discovered the color while visiting the White House after the men's national championship in 2006.

"They explained to us that this color represents optimism," Bohn said.

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Longmont, Colorado
Wednesday, July 01, 2009

Publish Date: 7/1/2009

CU memories abound with Larry Zimmer

By Patrick Ridgell
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Larry Zimmer was named the 2009 recipient of the Chris Schenkel Award last month. For those unfamiliar with it, it is a pretty big deal.

It goes to a sports broadcaster who's had a long and distinguished career broadcasting mainly the games and deeds of one college football program.

Zimmer started calling CU games for KOA in 1971, and aside from a brief parting in the early 1980s, their relationship has thrived.

"What it says is, as an individual, he's worked at the highest level for a long time, and he's so skilled at his craft that the people want you, and you become a legend," KOA sports director Mark Johnson says. "Look at the people on that list. They're all legends."

Zimmer's tales of CU football include some of the program's best moments and personalities, dating back to his first Buffs game in 1971, which was at his hometown in Baton Rouge, La., against LSU. But it's not all about CU football.

Consider some of the names whose lives intersected Zimmer's while he worked in radio, ever since he got his start in Columbia, Mo., in 1956. There's Jack Elway, John Elway, Dan Devine, Harry Truman, Casey Stengel, Gerald Ford, Henry Iba, The Kingston Trio, Count Basie, Brothers Four, Peter Nero. The list goes on.

With CU, he called Fifth Down. Talked about it on the air, too. He called the Hail Mary. The national championship. Rashaan Salaam's run to the Heisman. 62-36.

He knew Eddie Crowder so well that the week before each game, Crowder would diagram for him what trick play CU had in store.

"Eddie made me feel right at home," Zimmer said.

And Bill McCartney: "I knew Bill as a player. He was also a fraternity brother (at Missouri) ... He and Woody Widenhofer roomed together. That was a pair, I'll tell you."

And fellow-Louisianan Kordell Stewart: "Every time we were around each other, we had a good time."

The list of Buffs who've touched Zimmer, 73, is lengthy. Too lengthy to do justice here.

But to truly fathom Zimmer's work, go beyond CU.

He interviewed Harry Truman. Twice. One time he interviewed Gerald Ford. It was during the American Ski Classic. Zimmer brought up some of those games he called when he worked in Michigan, where Ford played many years earlier during his college days. Ford apparently had heard some of Zimmer's calls.

“Yeah,” Ford said. “I remember you.”

Zimmer knew early he wanted to go into radio. He was fascinated with it before he was 10, when his father was fighting in World War II. Zimmer and Larry Sr., had their own code going in the letters dad mailed home to get past the censors who made sure correspondence home didn’t divulge too much information. The code let Zimmer know where Larry, Sr., was.

But Zimmer would also listen everyday for the news briefs coming from overseas. His interest piqued.

He’s seen a lot of history. The first game he ever called was high school football, 1956, in Columbia. It was the year before the schools there integrated, and Zimmer called the action between all-white Hickman and all-black Douglas, which closed the next year.

He called The Drive.

“The further they moved down the field, the quieter the crowd got,” Zimmer remembers. “Elway will tell you the same thing.”

After the 1962 baseball All Star Game in St. Louis, Zimmer found himself alone in the AL clubhouse. He asked AL manager Casey Stengel for an interview, and Stengel said, “Sure young man, if you don’t mind me undressing for my shower.”

Zimmer asked two questions — one about the game and the other about the pennant race. Stengel took 10 minutes to answer them.

“Easiest interview I ever did,” Zimmer said.

“I still have the tape.”

The highlight of his career was the Miracle on Ice at the 1980 Olympics. Zimmer attended the game, but not to work. When something grand appeared imminent, Zimmer hopped on a phone in the press box and started sending reports back to Denver. When CBS Radio booted him, he went to the press room, grabbed another phone and began doing play-by-play back to Denver from a television feed to the room.

“The ’80 Olympics were the highlight of my career,” Zimmer said.

How much longer will that career extend?

“I don’t want to be Brett Favre,” he says. “I still look forward to going to the stadium every week. As long as my health is there, I can do it.”

Sounds good.

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