

Kickoff!

It's 8:00 pm, Sept. 9, 2023. Sean Williams '25 stands on the sideline of Folsom Field in Boulder as the CU Buffs prepare for kickoff against their in-state rival, Colorado State. The booming speakers vibrate his chest, the deafening roar of the crowd behind him rings in his ears.

"It's really electric," Williams said. "You know, a lot of celebs pulled up."

His sister, Sienna Williams '27, is a basketball recruit for the University of Colorado and was gifted tickets to the football game by women's basketball head coach JR Payne for herself and her family. So, Sienna and Sean strolled the sidelines alongside celebrities like The Rock, Offset, and Lil' Wayne. Retired NFL star Rob Gronkowski was outside at a pre-game party. This game had been talked about for weeks. Celebrities and fans were prepared to gloat with a win under their belt.

The double overtime thriller did not disappoint, as CU pulled out the win with a final score of 43-35.

"I think that it was a big ranked win," Sean '25 said. "A lot of people didn't believe that the Buffs were going to get it done, and they did. I think that brought a lot of hype to Boulder."

Williams has been to plenty of Buff games in the past. This year, everything has changed.

"I mean, the student section was sometimes full last season, but that was it," Sean said. "Then, this year, it's just always full. There's barely any free seats."

The packed house. The celebrities. The unconditional fan support.

It can all be attributed to one man. Deion Sanders.

Moving from Jackson State in Mississippi to Folsom Field in Boulder, right in Monarch's backyard, Sanders made it his mission to transform the CU football team, to make them the best they can be.

"I'm not new to this, I'm true to this, and I keep going," Sanders said. "It's not about them. It's about us."

Sanders' abrupt arrival at CU has raised some questions from doubters, but he has refused to let that affect the team. Sanders is used to skeptics—it's simply part of the job he loves.

"I don't have a message to detractors or haters. I don't take my time to respond and to defend myself," Sanders said.

The growth and success of the team



DEION Fun Facts

rap single named "MUST BE THE MONEY"

Got his nickname "PRIME TIME" From a friend in high school.

Others say he earned it though his outstanding performance.

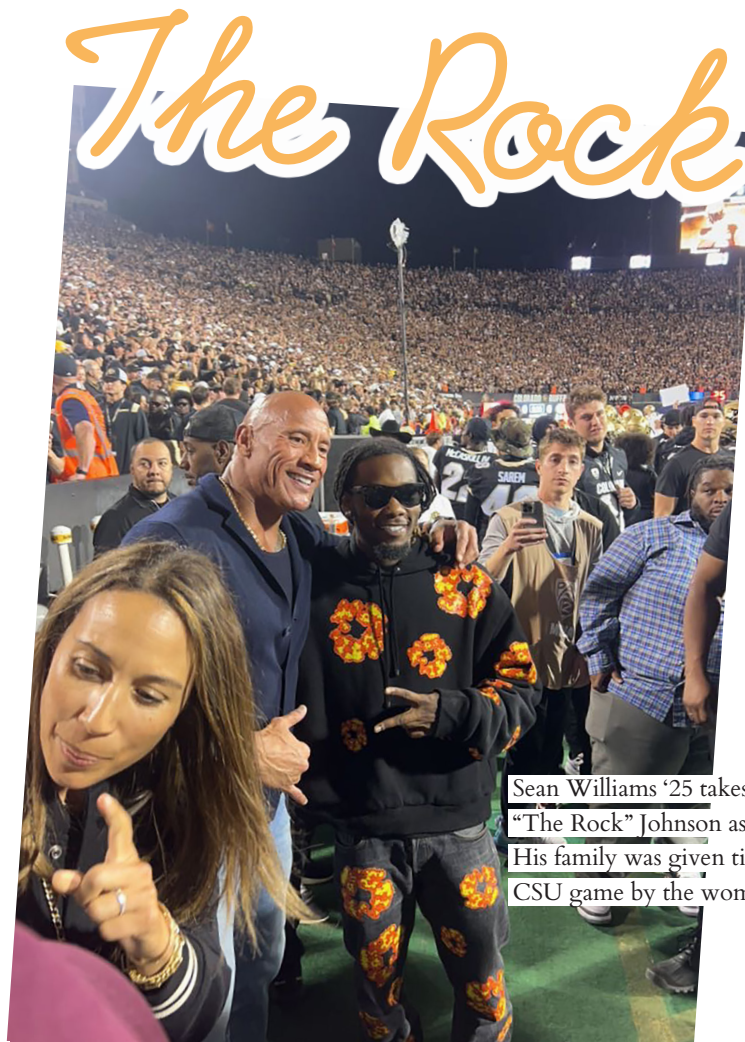
NFL HALL OF FAMER

Past NFL DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Played in WORLD SERIES and SUPER BOWL



Sienna Williams '27 stands with other CU basketball recruits on Folsom Field before the CSU vs. CU kickoff. She wore her CU Buffs gear, prepared for a good game.



Sean Williams '25 takes a photo of Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson as he walks the sideline. His family was given tickets to the CU vs. CSU game by the women's basketball coach.

The CU vs. Nebraska game brought the city of Boulder

\$17,000,000

goes beyond the fans. The explosion of CU football fame and success has affected the Boulder community at large. Brian Howell, a sports reporter for BuffZone, is one of many who have directly experienced the impact of the team's success.

"The Buffs have never sold out the entire season," Howell said. "They, in fact, have only sold out four games in the last 17 years. They sold out six of six games this year."

Howell has been covering Colorado sports since 2010. He has seen the drastic change that Sanders' presence has brought to the community.

"He sensed that kind of losing mentality when he got in here," Howell said. "He's brought in a winning mentality that not only the players have, but he demands it from the people that work there."

Language Arts teacher Sean Duncan is a CU Boulder alumnus and a loyal fan of the Buffs. In the past, he didn't waste his time or money going to the games



Sienna Williams '27 takes a selfie with sophomore and junior CU women's basketball recruits, waiting for the game to begin. They had received sideline passes.



Marco Gebre-Mariam '26 watches the pre-game warm-up and Ralphie's Run at the CU vs. Stanford game. Gebre-Mariam and his family awaited the game.

we were there!

CU vs. CSU game had

10.3M

VIEWS ON ESPN

327%

re-sale ticket price increase

PRIME BRINGS

FOX Big Noon Kickoff

College GameDay

60 Minutes

First Take

The Pat McAfee Show

because he knew they were the worst team in college football.

"It's way different than anything I've ever seen before," Duncan said. "In the past was fairly dead, and I could have gotten a ticket but I said no, because I knew we were going to lose."

Duncan has watched the Buffs since before they had any success, and continues to watch them now as they rise to success. Although he is the only non-Ohio State fan in his family, it doesn't stop him from supporting the Buffs.

"CU is the only school I applied to," Duncan said. "I knew from a young age that's where I wanted to go."

Fellow CU graduate social studies teacher Geoff Findley has found a renewed sense of pride in their team.

"Have you all been in my room? The walls are yellow and black, and there are big Buffs flags," Findley said. "I have been talking a lot of smack, but I haven't been able to back it up lately. So finally I can."

Findley attended CU Boulder twice during his adult life. Both times, the CU football team lost the majority of their games. Of the few fans that attended games, many left before the game even reached halftime.

"Before, fans just wanted to hang out and have a tailgating party," Findley

said. "And now you see everybody getting up at 7:00 a.m. so that they can go."

Sanders changed the world of Boulder football the moment he arrived. With him, he brought 86 new players. Two of the new players are his sons, Shedeur and Shilo Sanders. Beyond what he has done for the community, the team, and the sport, Sanders is a family man. Not only does he coach his two sons, but his daughter Shelomi also plays on the CU basketball team.

"I'm living a wonderful life here as a father and a coach, and I love every minute of it," Sanders said.

The people at Monarch are loving it, too.

With the football team on a continuous rise to success, Buff fans and the entire Colorado community feel the excitement. Sanders has brought passion and accomplishment, and he plans to keep climbing.

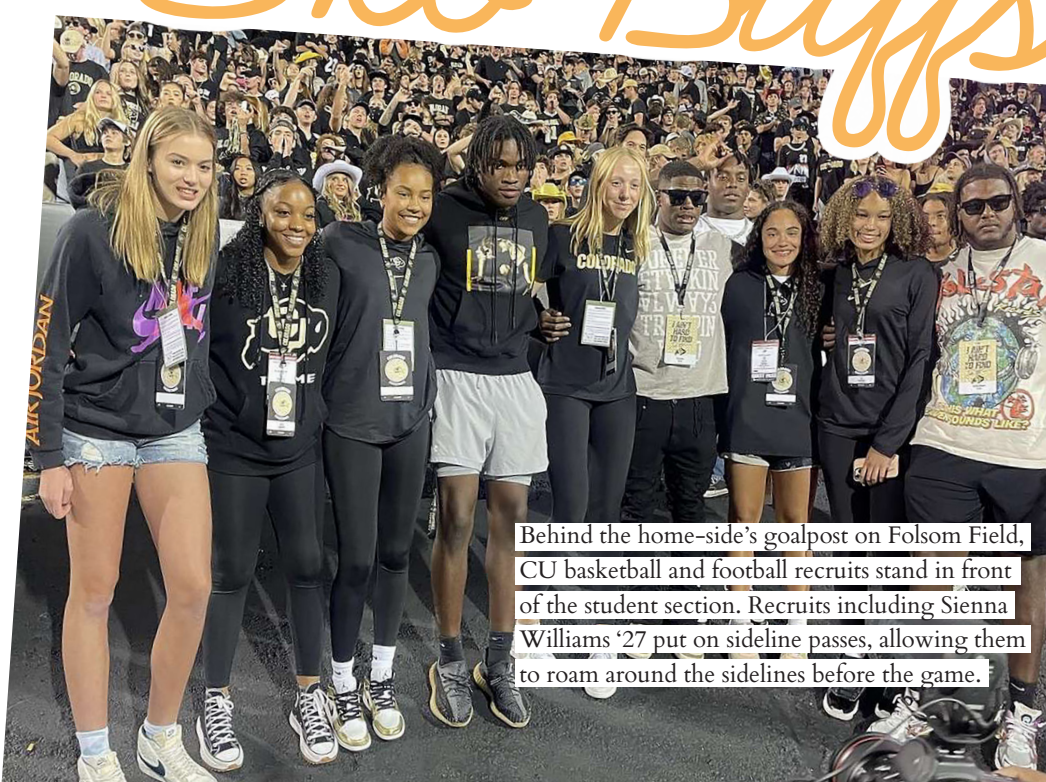
"We're still on a natural high. We are still working our butts off to achieve perfection," Sanders said. "We're still loving what we do and doing what we love."

His love is contagious. With every game and every win, it spreads not only to the fans, but to all of Colorado.

"I'm so proud to be a Buff," Findley said.

**"I hate being reactive. I like to be proactive."
— Deion Sanders**

Sko Buffs



Behind the home-side's goalpost on Folsom Field, CU basketball and football recruits stand in front of the student section. Recruits including Sienna Williams '27 put on sideline passes, allowing them to roam around the sidelines before the game.

Sienna Williams '27 and her friend pose on the sidelines before the game starts. They stood on the sidelines with various celebrities.

