

Rick George was named athletic director at the University of Colorado on July 17, 2013, returning to Boulder where he helped play a role in the school's first and only national championship in football some 23 years earlier.

George, 59, came to Colorado from the Texas Rangers baseball club of the American League, where he was named chief operating officer on October 5, 2010 with a promotion to president of business operations in February 2013. He agreed to a 5-year contract at CU, and he officially started on the job on August 12, 2013. In June 2016, the Board of Regents approved a contract extension through 2020-21, and in June 2019, the Regents once again extended him through the 2023-24 academic and athletic year.

He is just the sixth full-time athletic director in Colorado history, following in the footsteps of Harry Carlson (1927-65), Eddie Crowder (1965-84), Bill Marolt (1984-96), Dick Tharp (1996-2004) and Mike Bohn (2005-13). Two others have bridged directors in interim capacities, Jack Lengyel (six months between Tharp and Bohn) and Ceal Barry (two months between Bohn and George).

His list of achievements in his first 1,000 days in the position were many, but none more significant than shepherding through a \$156 million Athletic Complex Expansion from creation through fruition, gaining approval from the Board of Regents and then raising nearly one-half of the estimated cost to initiate construction, which began May 12, 2014. The project was the core of the Sustainable Excellence Initiative (SEI), the jewel of which was a long-awaited indoor practice facility. Once green-lighted, he spearheaded the most successful fundraising campaign in athletic department history, raising over \$100 million for the project.

By the end of his second year, George implemented the department's first-ever comprehensive strategic plan, which mapped CU's immediate and long range purpose and goals. He also redesigned the management teams, made tough budget decisions that reduced deficits he inherited (and has since produced two budget surpluses), and canvassed the state, region and nation in both friend- and fundraising. The department is now in the second year of the second three-year plan orchestrated by George (through 2020-21).

In his fourth year in the position (2016-17), 13 of CU's 16 athletic teams were at one time or another ranked among the nation's Top 25 (including all five in the fall; skiing is a coed program with combined rankings). Included in that group was the football team, as the Buffaloes returned to the national rankings for the first time in 11 seasons, in part due to George's support of Mike MacIntyre as the program's head coach and allowing him to follow through with his plan to bring the Buffaloes back to national prominence. All but one team competed in the postseason, most in NCAA Championships, with football making it to a bowl game for the first time in nine years and both basketball teams going to their respective NIT events.

Near the end of his first year and most recently in his fifth, he was recognized by CU's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee as its choice for Staff Member of the Year; no token award, the group acknowledged his attendance at most home athletic events, regular meetings with team

captains of all programs to interact with them and receive their feedback, and willingness to meet with any student-athlete and that his door is always open to them.

George brought the most diverse background to the position than any before him at Colorado: all five others had extensive and primarily exclusive college athletic histories, the only exceptions being when Marolt left CU after 10 years as ski coach to lead the U.S. Olympic ski team before returning, and Tharp, who was a university attorney with strong CU-Boulder campus ties. While George began and worked in the college athletic world for the first half of his professional career, he stepped outside that box for the second half.

George was with the Rangers for less than three years, but saw the team win two American League championships and compile a 243-176 record (.580 winning percentage) during his time there, second-best in the major leagues during that time frame. As the COO, he worked closely with team president and CEO, baseball Hall-of-Famer Nolan Ryan, and was responsible for all facets of the Rangers' business operations, including oversight of all sales and marketing efforts, broadcast and communications, ticket and suite sales, naming rights, etc., in addition to overseeing the finance, human resource and operations departments.

Among his many accomplishments with the Rangers was a comprehensive branding study that successfully rebranded the ball club, and an implementation of a new ticketing strategy that over the course of three seasons increased ticket revenues by over \$30 million. The club's attendance saw an increase of 40 percent from the 2010 season to nearly 3.5 million in 2012, second in the American League (behind the New York Yankees) and third in the majors. The 2013 numbers were on pace to exceed the 3 million mark again when he left the franchise for CU.

Prior to joining the Rangers, George served as executive vice president and chief of operations for the PGA TOUR for two-and-a-half years (beginning in June 2008). While with the TOUR, he worked with the corporate marketing department in renewing sponsorships and creating new events. He also oversaw the Tournament Business Affairs division that worked with Tournaments to increase tournament revenue.

He also worked for the PGA TOUR as president of the Champions Tour from 2003-08, and as the executive vice president for championship management his last three years there. His major accomplishments included increasing revenues and sponsorships and the development of strategic plans, the latter including a vision and mission statement as well as core values. The Champions Tour had grown to a minimum 29 events with over \$55 million in prize money when he left for the PGA TOUR.

From 1998-2003, George served as President and CEO of the Fore!Kids Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization that raised money for children's charities via golf-related events, where he led rebranding and organizational efforts that resulted in increases in charitable giving to the Foundation.

At the collegiate level, George worked in three major conferences (Big Ten, Big 8, Southeastern) in football operations, beginning with his alma mater, the University of Illinois, as football recruiting coordinator (1983-87).

He graduated from Illinois in 1982 with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts & Sciences Individual Study that had an emphasis on Sports Communication and Journalism. He was a four-year letterman at cornerback for the Illini, playing in 44 straight games and starting in 27 games in all, as he played two years each under coaches Gary Moeller and Mike White. He was a two-time recipient of the school's Bruce Capel Award, given for dedication and courage to honor Capel who lost his life serving his country in Vietnam; George received the honor for his junior and senior seasons.

Upon his graduation, White named him the assistant director for player personnel for the Illini, and a year later (1983), he assumed the all sports recruiting coordinator. In March 1984, George took over the recruiting chores solely for football, with his first class ranked No. 1 in the nation by the recruiting services with all in the top 20; he coordinated five classes in all at Illinois when the call came to take him out west to Colorado.

On March 2, 1987, Bill McCartney hired him as Colorado's football recruiting coordinator. Two-and-a-half years later (Dec. 21, 1989), George was promoted to assistant athletic director for football operations, not coincidentally after the Buffaloes finished the regular season with an 11-0 record and the school's first-ever No. 1 national ranking in the polls. CU lost to Notre Dame in the Orange Bowl and would finish No. 4, but came back to go 11-1-1 in 1990, this time defeating the Irish in the Orange Bowl to earn consensus national champion honors.

Shortly thereafter, he left the Buffaloes for Vanderbilt University, where he was reunited with former CU offensive coordinator Gerry DiNardo, who was named the Commodores' head coach a year earlier. In eight years at Vanderbilt (1991-98), he also served as associate athletic director for external operations in conjunction with overseeing the football program. This was where George first expanded his professional role outside of solely football, as he had oversight over all external departments, particularly in the area of managing budgets and developing marketing and promotional strategies for all sports.

George was born April 3, 1960 in Woodstock, Ill., and graduated from Collinsville (Ill.) High School, where he lettered in football, basketball and baseball. He is married to the former Nancy Green, and the couple has two grown daughters, Jenni Reed (husband Tom) and Christi, and two granddaughters (Harper and Maddie).

***On July 19, 2017, George was named chair of the LEAD1 Association, which represents the athletic directors, programs and student-athletes of the 130 member schools of the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). His two-year term with the organization expires this September. Its mission includes influencing how the rules of college sports are enacted and implemented, advocating for the future of college athletics and providing various services to the members. He also serves on the Division I Council of the NCAA, is part of the NCAA's D1***

***Council Transfer Working Group, and most recently, is serving on an 18-member committee exploring the ability of student-athletes to profit on his or her name, image and likeness; it's called the NCAA Working Group on State and Federal Legislation.***