

# A real life CatDog

## Joe Petrick has changed allegiances from Central to Centennial high

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THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Born and bred with Big Blue at Central High School, he now bleeds red for Centennial.

Joe Petrick admittedly has changed allegiance.

And with the historical Bell Game on the horizon Friday at Dutch Clark Stadium, the 50-year-old will be front and center for the game that draws close to 15,000 loyal fanatics.

He'll be wearing red, for sure.

### Growing up blue

Born in Pueblo, Petrick grew up on Goat Hill, ironically located in Centennial's school district.

"I started off at Edison, went over to Bessemer and then Keating," Petrick said. "I got to go to Central on a transfer. My whole family is Central blue. I have two cousins who were on state championship teams at Central."

Petrick's father was a Central graduate, his mother a graduate of Catholic High School.

"I never went to a lot of athletic events," Petrick said. "Never went out for a sport. I did bowl for Central in an intracity league."

### The turning point

Petrick graduated from Central in 1985. He attended the University of Southern Colorado, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in accounting, and continued on to get his master's degree.

Petrick was a professor at USC and was just beginning his career when he received a call from Frank Latino, who at that time was principal at Centennial.

"Mr. Latino gave me a call and asked if I would be willing to come to Centennial to teach a class," Petrick said. "I grew up thinking it was better to be dead than red. I'm a Central grad.

"I had been to every Bell Game in my lifetime and never even thought of sitting on the Centennial side. Now, they wanted me to teach at Centennial?"

Petrick took the offer, teaching one accounting class at Centennial for



CHIEFTAIN PHOTOS/CHRIS MCLEAN

Joe Petrick sits in the press box above the field at Dutch Clark Stadium getting ready to track statistics for the Centennial High School football team, a job he's been doing for more than 20 years.



the next five years.

"I walked into Centennial and just fell in love with high school teaching," Petrick said. "I had a couple of football

players in class, and they asked if I wanted to come to the next game and be on the sideline. That was the Bell Game 1994."



I truly have the greatest job in the world.

JOE PETRICK  
CENTENNIAL HS FOOTBALL STATISTICIAN



### PEOPLE

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ABOVE: Joe Petrick takes photos of students and sideline activity during Centennial High School's football game with South on Sept. 2 at Dutch Clark Stadium.

LEFT: Joe Petrick (left) poses for a photo on Sept. 2 at Dutch Clark Stadium with students after they inflated 'Biscuit,' the giant bulldog that serves as a tunnel for the football team as they enter the field.

### Becoming a football junkie

One day while teaching at Centennial, Petrick was approached by head football coach Tom

Brockman, who asked if he wanted to become the team's statistician.

"Coach Brockman came to me the first week of the football sea-

son and asked if I would do stats for the team," Petrick said. "I said sure. I was single and I thought I get to hang

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out in Grand Junction. I made the trip and fell in love with being around the football team.”

Since that Western Slope venture, Petrick has been a fixture with the Bulldog football team as their stat man.

“I’ve seen every varsity snap home and away since then,” Petrick said. “That’s 212 games. Every snap. I have them all documented.”

“I never thought I’d be a football junkie. I watched the Broncos growing up. I’m lucky because Coach Brockman taught me how to watch a football game and how to enjoy it.”

Brockman, now living in Denver, was impressed when told Petrick continues to be an integral part

of the football program.

“That’s a pretty long run of support right there,” Brockman said. “What makes it unique is he’s willing and wanting to step up to the plate and has continued doing that for all these years.”

“He’s always thanked me for giving him that opportunity and takes a lot of pride in what he’s doing.”

### **Giving back to Bulldog nation**

For the past 20 years, Petrick has entrenched himself as a member of Bulldog nation.

He was hired as a full-time teacher and immediately became involved in many school activities.

He picked up photography early in his career

and it’s been a labor of love.

“I’ve always enjoyed taking pictures and don’t remember how it started,” he said. “John Ward was doing the annual and asked me to stand on the sidelines for a football game and take some pictures. Since then, I’ve bought a nice camera and lens and taken a ton of pictures.”

“I give them to the parents and kids. I probably take 15,000 a year. That’s my gift back because I truly have the greatest job in the world.”

He’s also been the Key Club sponsor and helped with the alumni foundation. In 2014, Petrick was inducted into the Centennial Hall of Fame for service to the school.

“I’ve watched all the sporting events at Centennial,” he said. “If there’s a yellow bus in the parking lot, I’ll catch it to an away game.”

“I’ve seen about 90 percent of the girls soccer games and watched a lot of softball.”

“I tell people I’m not crazy because I teach. I’m crazy because I love what I do.”

Petrick also is the keeper of the bell.

“When we have the bell, I haul it around. I’m the bell keeper,” he said. “I’ve actually thought about sleeping in the front seat with the bell behind me at times.”

### **Living a red life**

Many times, Petrick catches the wrath of

transforming from a Central grad to a Centennial cheerleader.

Even his family.

“I remember the first year I was at Centennial, my mom made me wear blue socks or blue clothing even though I was at Centennial,” Petrick said. “I still wear something blue every Bell Game.”

That’s difficult for Petrick since much of the clothing he owns is red.

“I have a walk-in closet that has nothing but red clothing,” Petrick said. “I bet I easily own over 150 red T-shirts.”

“But I do cheer for Central when they aren’t playing against Centennial. There’s always going to be that foundation. I can’t say enough thank you’s to the Central

family.”

Brockman appreciates what Petrick has done for the school.

“The guy is really a dedicated Bulldog although he was born and raised a Wildcat,” he said. “Not only has he continued to do stats for the football team, but he takes a lot of pride in being a teacher.”

“Centennial High School is his life, and that’s remarkable.”

As Centennial’s most rabid fan and one of Pueblo’s top sports fans, Petrick wants to be known for one thing: “I spread happiness. That’s what I do.”

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