

Normals to Bulldogs to Sun Devils

ASU's mascot has evolved along with university

Self-styled Satan-stopper, Jack Thompson, is trying to convince Apple Valley, Calif., residents to eliminate the high school's Sun Devil mascot.

He has threatened to focus attention next on ASU's long-running sun imp, who has already withstood a challenge or two over the years.

This article traces the traditions behind mascots in general and ASU's in particular.

Background research, including copies of newspaper clippings, logos, and other data, was provided by Estelle Denzin and Carol Moore, library assistants at University Archives.

By John Matthews

What's in a nickname?

History and tradition are two key ingredients.

Wisconsin's Badgers, Ohio State's Buckeyes, North Carolina's Tarheels, and Indiana's Hoosiers have been around a long while.

They are included with 32 others in a list of nicknames attributed to states and the people of the Republic in the February, 1872, issue of *Harper's New Monthly* magazine.



This is the "official" Sun Devil with the encircling sunburst.

Michigan's Wolverines, Minnesota's Gophers, and Iowa's Hawkeyes also have survived unchanged.

The Texas Beefheads (Longhorns), Oregon's Webfeet (Ducks), and the Kansas Jayhawkers (Jayhawks) are among those modified slightly.

Some have disappeared from our lexicon. It's just as well. These include Nebraska Bugeaters (now Cornhuskers), Missouri's Pukes (Tigers), Mississippi's Tadpoles (Rebels), and Georgia's Buzzards (Bulldogs).

While many universities derived their institutional symbol from the state nickname, other institutions evolved a monicker in a more unorthodox fashion.

When team sports first appeared at DePaul University, the players wore blue uniforms emblazoned with a large, white "D." DePaul athletes soon became known as "D-Men," which evolved into today's familiar "Blue Demons."

From its earliest days, Duke University's athletic teams were known as "Methodists" or simply "the Blue and White." In 1919, Durham, N.C., newspaper editor W. Dwight Ware coined "Blue Devils."

The locals rejected the name at first, but constant repetition prevailed. The name stuck after Duke's first-rate football teams captured national attention.

Interestingly, DePaul, a Roman Catholic school, and Duke, an institution with Methodist learnings, are still known as "Demons" and "Devils." Wake Forest, another Bible Belt college, treads the middle road. They're the "Demon Deacons."

When the first football spun through the air at Tempe Normal School in an 1897 loss to the Phoenix Indian School, the athletes were referred to simply as "The Normals."

There was a feeble attempt in 1899 to christen them the "Owls." After all, the wide-eyed feathered critter was a symbol of deep study and concentration. Besides, one of the players had a pet owl who managed to wing his way into the official team photo.

In any event, the hooter was soon booted and the Nor-

mals remained "The Normals" until 1922.

On Nov. 13 of that year, the campus newspaper *The Normal Student* reported: "Our team was defeated 14-6 by the Mesa Farmers, but was not beaten. Indeed, it deserves the name given it by a prominent spectator . . . 'Bulldogs.'"



This bulldog was our symbol from 1922 until 1946.

This was a good idea and was quickly accepted. A bulldog is a menacing pooch who looks ready to chew on an enemy's leg. The name certainly had more punch than "The Normals."

In the next game, the team held the Phoenix High School to a 13-13 tie. The campus newspaper reported on Nov. 22, 1922: "The Bulldogs certainly showed that they deserved their name when the Coyotes came over last Saturday confident that they would give the school teachers a trouncing."

Throughout the story, the newspaper referred to the team as "Bulldogs." This is the first time the nickname was used in print to identify the Normal School.

For the rest of the season and throughout the basketball campaign, the teams were called "Bulldogs."

As time passed, sportswriters and editors could still another identification for Arizona State College.



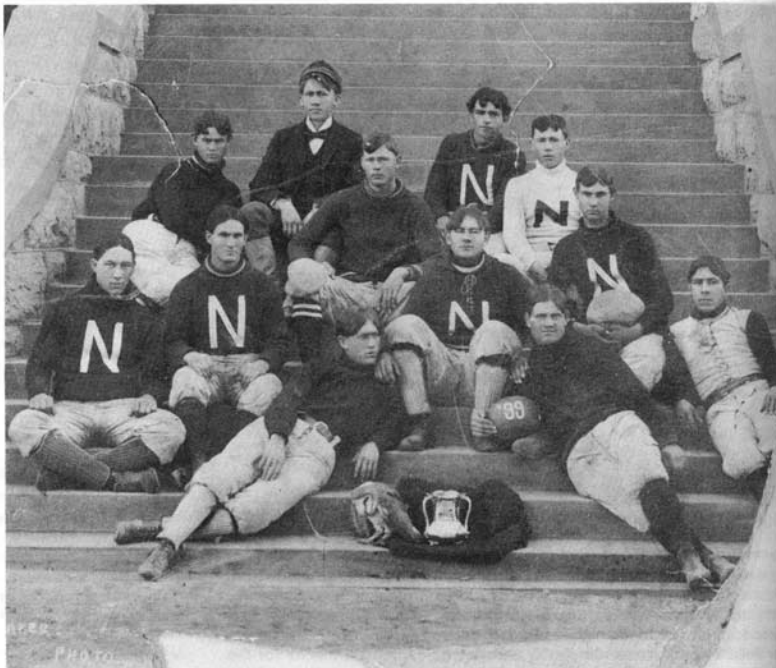
One of the first symbols proposed after students voted for the Sun Devil in 1946.

A headline in the campus newspaper on Sept. 27, 1940, proclaimed: "Sun Dogs Open Season With Grid Triumph." In that contest, the "Dogs" bested the California Aggies, 21-13.

Despite these media efforts favoring "Sun Dogs," the school's official symbol remained "Bulldogs" until 1946.

That summer, the Phoenix Thunderbirds, a group sponsored by the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, formed a committee to promote Arizona State College, which was now entering a period of rapid growth following a World War II decline.

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Tempe Normal athletic teams were never called "The Owls." However, some boosters thought the owl would be an appropriate mascot after this

feathered fellow showed up for the 1899 football team's picture.

University Archives photo