

The history of Native American sports name changes

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Donald Trump's social media posts calling for the NFL's Washington Commanders and Major League Baseball's Cleveland Guardians to revert to their old names has revived the conversation about Native American imagery in sports.

Each team has indicated it has no plans to go back to names that were abandoned years ago in the aftermath of a reckoning over racial injustice, iconography and racism in the U.S. following the death of George Floyd. Other professional teams have maintained names and logos through criticism and calls from activists who say they are offensive.

Here is a look at how the issue has unfolded:

OCTOBER 2013

Then-President Barack Obama told The Associated Press he would "think about changing" the name of the Washington Redskins if he owned the team.

"I don't know whether our attachment to a particular name should override the real legitimate concerns that people have about these things," Obama said.

Trump soon after posted to Twitter: "President should not be telling the Washington Redskins to change their name-our country has far bigger problems! FOCUS on them,not nonsense."

JANUARY 2018

The Cleveland Indians announced they would remove the Chief Wahoo

logo from their uniforms the following year after decades of protests and complaints that the grinning, red-faced caricature used in one version or another since 1947 is racist.

"Major League Baseball is committed to building a culture of diversity and inclusion throughout the game," Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement. He said the logo "is no longer appropriate for on-field use."

The team said it would continue to sell merchandise with the logo in the Cleveland area.

SUMMER 2020

After several sponsors publicly voiced their opposition to the name Redskins, longtime owner Dan Snyder said in early July the organization would undergo a "thorough review." Snyder had said multiple times since buying the team in 1999 that he had no intent of changing it.

Cleveland hours later said it was considering going away from Indians, the baseball team's name since 1915. Manager Terry Francona said he was in favor of a change.

On July 13, Snyder announced the Redskins moniker was being retired after 87 years, dating to the team's time in Boston. Later in the month, the organization unveiled plans to be known as the Washington Football Team for at least one season, and that name remained through 2021.

MLB's Atlanta Braves and the NHL's Chicago Blackhawks doubled

down on their names. The Braves wrote in a letter to season-ticket holders they will "always be" known as that, while the Blackhawks said they would continue to use their name and logo because it honors Native American leader Black Hawk of Illinois' Sac & Fox Nation.

The Braves said they were reviewing the use of the tomahawk chop and chant, a discussion they started with Native American leaders in 2019. The Blackhawks banned headresses at home games.

In August, the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs followed suit, prohibiting the use of Native American headdresses, face paint and clothing at their stadium. They faced increased scrutiny over the tomahawk chop and chant around winning their first Super Bowl title that February.

DECEMBER 2020

Cleveland owner Paul Dolan announced the team would no longer be called the Indians following the 2021 season.

"It was a learning process for me and I think when fair-minded, open-minded people really look at it, think about it and maybe even spend some time studying it, I like to think they would come to the same conclusion: It's a name that had its time, but this is not the time now, and certainly going forward, the name is no longer acceptable in our world," Dolan told the AP, adding he did not want an interim moniker like Washington's.

Trump quote-tweeted

a story about the change with the message: "Oh no! What is going on? This is not good news, even for 'Indians'. Cancel culture at work!"

JULY 2021

Seemingly out of the blue, Cleveland unveiled its new name, Guardians, in a video posted to social media. They completed the season as the Indians before becoming the Guardians in November.

Cleveland's new name was inspired by the large landmark stone edifices — referred to as traffic guardians — that flank both ends of the Hope Memorial Bridge, which connects downtown to Ohio City. October 2021

The tomahawk chop was front and center as the Braves reached — and won — the World Series, with MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred endorsing the fan behavior, citing the support of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, based in North Carolina about three hours from Atlanta.

"The Native American community in that region is wholly supportive of the Braves program, including the chop," Manfred said. "For me, that's kind of the end of the story. In that market, we're taking into account the Native American community."

FEBRUARY 2022

After a lengthy process, Washington rebranded as the Commanders. Snyder said the change pays "homage to our local roots and what it means to represent the nation's capital."

by posting a picture on Twitter of Commander, his recently acquired German shepherd puppy, in front of the White House.

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The Hardin County Fiscal Court, in a Regular Meeting on 8 July 2025, had the First Reading of Ordinance No. 344, Series 2025 Budget Amendment #1 entitled:

AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 ANNUAL BUDGET AND AMENDMENT THEREOF. HARDIN COUNTY FISCAL COURT HAS REALIZED UNBUDGETED RECEIPTS FROM THE GENERAL AND LGEA FUNDS.

A Second Reading of the proposed Ordinance will be held on 12 August 2025 at a Regular Fiscal Court meeting at 3:30 P.M., at the Hardin County Government Building, 150 N. Provident Way, 3rd Floor, Fiscal Courtroom, Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

A copy of the full text of the ordinance is available in the office of the Hardin County Treasurer, Finance Department, Hardin County Government Building, 150 N. Provident Way, 3rd Floor, Suite 320, Elizabethtown, Kentucky, Monday through Friday from 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

/s/Keith L. Taul
Hardin County Judge/Executive

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