

Typographic Trends in American Sports Brands

By Alan Jacobson

Graphic Communication Department

College of Liberal Arts

California Polytechnic State University

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Author: Alan Jacobson

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Professor Gordon Rivera, Senior Project Advisor _____

Harvey Levenson PhD., Graphic Communication Department Head _____

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Chapter I

Introduction

Purpose of Research

While Graphic Communication spans a great number of topics, perhaps one of the most beautiful and subtle is the world of typography. Typography has been a nuanced, intricate art long before the invention of movable type or printer, and the changes it has undergone in its lifetime are both stark and fascinating.

In 2012, typography is as alive and dynamic as ever. The science of creating attention grabbing display text or easy reading body copy is constantly being manipulated, creating its own localized sphere of culture and trends. This ecosystem of visual culture is very important; typography is all around us. Every advertisement, every logo, and every document – the art of typography is everywhere that words exist on a substrate or screen.

Since typography is everywhere, that means we are subjected to its changing fashions and nuanced subtlety daily. Especially in the media, which is fueled by the desire to keep things “current,” you can see the evolution of typography very clearly. From fashion to music, being hip and in with all trends – including typography – is the difference between sinking and swimming.

One facet of media (especially the media of the United States) that is a particularly interesting example of an aspect of typography is professional sports franchises. Dealing in billions of dollars and viewing audience, professional sports have an extremely vested interest in being current and making their teams and events attractive avenue for the entertainment of the American populace. The aesthetics of the game (in this case, the advertising game) are constantly changing, and typography is no exception.

Significance of Research

A logo, having the purpose of visually embodying an organization, is an extremely important aspect of portraying a team that is attractive as a legitimate member of its respective league while representing itself as a great option for the entertainment of its fans. The more legitimate a team's image appears, and the more fans it appeals to, the more money it can make through advertising, endorsements, merchandise, and ticket sales.

This research intends to examine how trends manifest themselves in the rebrandings of sports logos of the four major US sports leagues: the National Football League, Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association, and National Hockey League. Specifically, this research will address changes in those leagues within the last fifteen years. This report hopes to generate new understanding of the motivations behind sports rebranding as well as give us insight into the artistic culture behind the sports themselves.

Being a multi-billion dollar industry, it is essential to grasp the enterprise of visual culture in American sports. Predicting trends, or even establishing them, can lead to more effective presentation of a team to their audience – leading to more fans, more media coverage, and in turn more money from advertisers. Understanding the motivation behind these aesthetic decisions is key; this research plans to research logo changes as well as identify what motivated them, as well as evaluating the reaction of fans of the sports. Knowing these, it will be easier to establish competitive and effective logo alterations – as well as simply understanding and appreciating the aesthetic history of American sports.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Typography has a huge influence on the visual culture of the world. This literature review begins with a short overview on the history of type, as well as a summary of typographical categories. It then examines examples of how typography has engrained itself into the visual aesthetics of world culture. The literature review will culminate with a brief examination of typographic trends within major league sport franchises in the United States.

Short History of Type

The modern understanding of typography can be traced to Johannes Gutenberg who is considered one of the most important persons in modern history. While Gutenberg is not necessarily credited with inventing movable type, or even the printing press, Gutenberg did create a method of printing that facilitated mass production through the use of movable type. (Open University, 2005). Gutenberg created metal punches that had letters engraved into them. Subsequently, he used these punches to emboss the letterform into a copper matrix. This matrix was then placed underneath a mold that was filled with molten lead. After cooling, this resulted in a piece of movable type. Using this formula, it was possible to mass-produce type with single matrices of copper and the appropriate mold. (Open University, 2005)

Gutenberg combined movable type with a streamlined screw press to invent a method suitable for mass production of printed material. (Open University, 2005) His most famous printed work is the 42-line bible, the printing and distribution of which was the catalyst to more widespread learning, and by association, historical events such as *The Renaissance* and *The Scientific Revolution*. (British Library)

Typography is understood to be the technique of arranging letters and words of type to make language visible, readable, and aesthetically pleasing.

Typographic Categories

Discussions on typography typically divide different visual styles of fonts into unique categories. Each category of font has its appropriate uses, differing characteristics, and a unique history – an understanding of each category is important to seeing visual trends and understanding the culture behind typography. The styles to be examined include blackletter, humanist, old style and sans serif.

Blackletter

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Æ Œ
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z ð ó ŭ
ch cl ff fl ft ll sh si sl ss st þ tt b
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 . , ; ! ? = — — ‘ ’ “ ” () % &

The style known as blackletter is probably the oldest typeface classification. The font Fraktur falls into this category. Gutenberg's 42 line bible uses a blackletter typeface, as it was the style of type used in most religious documents of the time – this is because the original aim of the blackletter style was to emulate and standardize the handwriting of Latin, Greek, and Roman religious scribes. In doing so, a consistent style began to form – originally focused on legibility and widespread geographic use, blackletter's journey across cultures and its appearance in Gutenberg's bible eventually led it to its current characteristics. (Alex, 2009)

Once focused on legibility, blackletter actually became less so as time passed. Characters (letter characters) began to have much thicker strokes and negative space grew tighter. Eventually this gave blackletter its name – the very thick style set in large quantities on a page dominate the white space of the paper itself. (Alex, 2009)

With Gutenberg's press, blackletter began to move towards uniformity amongst its characters. This made it easier to mass-produce the movable type required for printing. Blackletter's characteristics that span its style include very thick strokes and intricate, elaborate upper case letters – typically decorated with thinner strokes to accompany the main letterform. These aside, the defining quality of the blackletter style is its rigid, straight lines and sharp corners of some strokes contrasted with the natural, calligraphic-inspired curves of other strokes. (Alex, 2009)

Blackletter's uses today are typically limited to display text (decorative and set at large sizes, rather than used in body text); however, they have purpose in historical recreations and enhancing any work with a gothic-inspired theme.

Humanist

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
ÀÁÂÃÄÅ Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ ß à á â ã ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ÷ ø ù ú û ü ý þ ÿ

Originally appearing shortly after Gutenberg's bible was printed, the humanist style presented an alternative to the blackletter style that had once dominated the typographical world. Centaur is an example of a Humanist font. (Boardley, 2007)

While both based on calligraphy, humanist fonts take their inspiration from Italian handwriting – characterized by being much more open and legible than their blackletter counterparts. Humanist fonts have rather ambiguous defining characteristics, meaning that many typefaces can be classified at least as having some humanist qualities. (Boardley, 2007)

The most important of these qualities is the curved line – most purely humanist typefaces feature little to no straight lines. This does not necessarily mean that there are not aligned vertical and horizontal aspects of the font; it simply means that the strokes are not truly straight lines. Other characteristics of humanist fonts include a small x-height, as well as low contrast in the strokes – meaning that in each letterform the stroke width has little variation. (Boardley, 2007)



Humanist fonts are still in use today, Jenson probably being the most popular. The high legibility and more breathable negative space in humanist fonts lend them well to body copy. However, since they are typically designed with many elegant and aesthetically pleasing curved lines, they have their place in display text as well.

Old Style

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
ÀÁÂÃÄÅÆÇÈÉÊËÌÍÎÏÐ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
mnopqrstuvwxyzàáâãäåæçèéêë
&1234567890(\$£.,!?)

Old style type like Garamond is considered to be the first departure from styles based on calligraphy. While still having its roots in handwriting and humanism, old style differentiates itself in many ways. (Boardley, 2007)

Old style came about as a result of movable type manufacturers becoming increasingly skilled at their work. At its core, old style is a progression out of humanist fonts grounded strongly in calligraphy, and into a more refined piece of artwork unique to type manufacturers. (Boardley, 2007)

One of the more notable differences is a higher level of contrast between the strokes of individual letterforms. This contrast lends itself to more wedged serifs, when compared to humanist fonts. Some argue that this serves to increase legibility compared to humanist fonts, helping readers' eyes flow from one letterform to the next. Another distinction is the movement of the stress (the angle of thick / thin stroke contrast) – where in humanist typefaces the stress is often close to -45 degrees, most old style fonts are closer to -10 degrees. (Boardley, 2007)

Old style fonts include Garamond and Times New Roman. This style is most suited to body text, arguably improving on humanist legibility – but it can be used for almost anything; it is the everyman's font choice.

A typographical sub-classification, Modern, extrapolates on these differences to hyperbole, featuring completely vertical stress, extreme stroke contrast, and right angle serifs. Modern is much more suited to display text rather than body copy (as its extreme stroke contrast makes it tiring on the eye in smaller sizes, and is especially popular in the fashion industry. (Boardley, 2007)

Sans Serif



Sans serif fonts like Helvetica are undisputedly the most recent font classification to come into existence. While the first sans serifs began sprouting up in the beginning of the 19th century, it wasn't until the early half of the 20th century that they truly emerged as their own category and indeed, secured their legitimacy in the world of typography. (Kirsanov, 1998)

Originally being very controversial (carrying with them the alternate classification *grotesque*), sans serifs broke new ground by simply dropping the serif attached to letterforms – the only requirement for a typeface to be considered sans serif. Born out of utilitarianism, designers of sans serif sought to make a font that was purely practical,

without any unnecessary additions – particularly useful in hands-on art forms like industrial design and architecture, where space was at a premium and small font sizes would not allow any frills. (Kirsanov, 1998)

With the creation of typefaces like Futura and Helvetica, sans serifs erupted in popularity in the later half of the 20th century. They moved past their origins in practicality and utilitarianism into widespread use. Sans serifs can now be seen in display text, logotype, and even have a place as body copy (though their legibility compared to serif fonts is constantly under debate). (Kirsanov, 1998)

Typography's Influence on Visual Culture

Typography has a rich and storied history, and it goes without saying that its own culture runs very deep. But how has the world of typography altered visual culture? How can such a subtle art have any lasting impact on our lives? Two examples of how typefaces alone can cause cultural memes – one negative, one positive, will now be examined – that of Papyrus, and Helvetica.

Papyrus

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789,./?;:'-("&)*

Designed in 1983 by Chris Costello, Papyrus is technically a decorative display font – though if you were to align it with any typographical category, it would be a humanist sans serif, with some added texture. Since its release it has been included as a default in most Microsoft software and on Apple's operating systems. Its original attention was to be an alternative display font – something it over-accomplished in spades. (Linotype, 1983)

This seemingly innocuous font, while not particularly attractive, has no intrinsic reason for people to hate it, or make such a fuss about it. The trouble with Papyrus is its widespread overuse.

Given its playful, cultured, and unique textured elements, Papyrus is one of the go-to fonts for do-it-yourself designers everywhere. To those unfamiliar with typography, anything besides an old style font like Times New Roman is paradigm shift – this unfortunately lends itself to being chosen for its uniqueness when ironically it is anything but – Papyrus can be found everywhere; from cafes, to elementary schools, to the logotype of James Cameron's box office hit *Avatar*. In trying to be different, those choosing Papyrus ironically draw more attention as an example of what not to do.

Through such widespread use, Papyrus has become a cultural phenomenon – a font that everyone loves to hate. And if not hate, people at least enjoy the fun of trying to spot Papyrus wherever they can in their day-to-day life. A quick Google search on "Papyrus font is" yields the following popular searches:

There are even multiple blog-type websites dedicated to the daily spotting of Papyrus; *papyruswatch.com* encourages readers to send in pictures of their daily happenings upon the typeface pariah. Unquestionably, this font's massive popularity with amateur designers coupled with the associated notoriety of the average consumer has ensured that Papyrus has left a permanent mark on our culture.

Helvetica

Helvetica Regular
Helvetica Bold
Helvetica Oblique
Helvetica Bold Oblique



Ubiquitous, is perhaps the one word that could summarize Helvetica. It is the most widely used font in the world. (Saar, 2009) A beautiful sans serif designed by Max Miedinger of the Haas Type Foundry, Helvetica was released in 1957 under its original name, Neue Haas Grotesk. (Rawsthorn, 2007)

Helvetica's release came at a time when sans serifs were rising fast in popularity, right in the middle of the 20th century. Graphic designers were rapidly increasing the use of sans serifs in their work, and the Haas Type Foundry sought to capitalize on that trend. Unsuccessful at first under the name Neue Haas Grotesk, once rebranded to Helvetica the typeface enjoyed critical acclaim as it skyrocketed in use. Helvetica is simply everywhere, appearing in the logos of companies like American Apparel, American Airlines, Intel, Nestle, and Toyota. Occasionally described as a near perfect font, Helvetica is not limited to logos – it is used by the United Nations, and is the typeface of the New York City subway system. (Rawsthorn, 2007)

This truly ubiquitous font has currently defines the world of typography to the common man, whether they realize it or not. It has inspired museum exhibits and has its own full-length documentary. That a typeface could have such an impact on our culture in 50 short years, rising to the title of “most used,” is truly amazing.

Typographic Trends within United States Sports Media

Typography is clearly capable of influencing people, for better or worse. An interesting medium that this can be observed in is the sports media of the United States. Typographic minded decisions occur often in regard to the branding of teams in the United States' four largest professional sports leagues: the National Football League, the National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, and the National Hockey League.

Denver Broncos

BRONCOS
D E N V E R

BALTIMORE
RAVENS
CINCINNATI
BENGALS
ATLANTA
FALCONS
ARIZONA
CARDINALS
HOUSTON
TEXANS
SEATTLE
SEAHAWKS

In 1997, the Denver Broncos began a large scale rebranding that introduced new primary and script logos. The typography in the script logo features a very heavy expanded font with a relatively small x-height for the “Broncos,” accompanied by a tall, thin sans serif below for “Denver.” In the 1997/98 season and the 1998/99 season, the Broncos won the Superbowl. (Creamer).

Since then, five additional NFL teams have adopted extremely similar script logos, some with small variations, but all having the characteristic of a thick, expanded font for the mascot of the team with the city being contrasted as either a lighter weight of the same font or a sans serif. These teams are the Baltimore Ravens in 1999, the Houston Texans and Seattle Seahawks in 2002, the Atlanta Falcons in 2003, and the Cincinnati Bengals in 2004. (Creamer)



A similar occurrence, also with its stylistic root in the 1997 Denver Broncos, comes in the form of professional teams in Anaheim in the early 21st century. The two teams were at the time the Anaheim Angels and Anaheim Mighty Ducks / Anaheim Ducks. In 2002 the Anaheim Angels went through a rebranding that changed most of their logos, moving away from the winged script capital “A” that defined them for four years after becoming the Anaheim Angels from the California Angels in 1997 – they went in favor of a gothic inspired font *a la* the Boston Red Sox or the San Francisco Giants, but retrograded their iconic halo over the “A”. In 2002, the same season they rebranded, they won the World Series. (Creamer)

After the NHL lockout of 2004/05, the Disney Corporation sold the Anaheim Mighty Ducks. Wanting to update the look, in 2006 the rebranded not only the logo but also their club name, becoming simply the “Anaheim Ducks.” They dropped the cartoon inspired look and colors of their old logo, and adopted a sleek display font with an iconic webbed foot taking the form of a “D” in Ducks. In the 2006/07 season, the Ducks won the Stanley Cup. (Creamer)

What makes this phenomenon stranger is that it isn’t isolated. In 2008 the Tampa Bay Devil Rays eschewed their eccentric display type and neon color scheme in favor of a baseball classic blue and white, with an elegant slab serif. They also renamed themselves the “Tampa Bay Rays.” That year, they won the American League Pennant (but lost the World Series). (Creamer)

These three are significant mostly because of the underlying reason for their rebranding – coming out of the 90s and into a new century, the Angels, Ducks, and Devil Rays all had characteristically cartoon inspired logos and elements of the nineties (and even the eighties) present in their design. While the success of the teams after the rebranding is probably coincidental, it most likely had an effect on the decisions of future teams to undergo image changes. Other teams experiencing this phenomenon include the 1997 Denver Broncos (mentioned earlier for winning back to back Superbowls after rebranding) and the 1997 Pittsburgh Pirates, who won the World Series after adopting a new primary logo the same year. (Creamer)

Chapter Summary

Since Gutenberg, typography has diverged into many categories, each with their own unique characteristics and applications. This myriad of selections makes typography a very subtle, nuanced art, but one that shows its effects everyday. Typographical trends continuously erupt in different micro-cultures, and sports media is no exception. The rebranding of the 1997 Denver Broncos inspired and the success of the team that followed inspired five other teams to change their logotype, and the rebrand of two Anaheim based teams at the start of the 21st century both serve as examples of typography’s permeation and significance in the industry of sports media. The following report will more thoroughly examine these trends and many others throughout the four major sports leagues in the United States.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Study of Logo History

This study will begin with a detailed report of all the teams in major US sports leagues (National Football League, National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, and the National Hockey League) that have changed their logo in the last fifteen years. Chris Creamer's *www.sportslogos.net*, a database of sports logos and their past iterations, will be used for compiling an in depth study of any team's changes in their logos, especially their primary and script logos.

This research will examine each sports franchise that has rebranded from 1997 to date, and will be followed by an analytical juxtaposition of possible motivations behind the logo change. Topics examined will include (but will not necessarily be limited to):

- the chronological and stylistic proximity of other teams changing their logos
- management and ownership changes in the administration of the team
- the on-field success of the team the seasons before the rebranding, immediately following the rebranding, and the seasons after

The end product of this phase of research will be a thorough visual and analytical report of each logo change spanning the four leagues.

In addition, during this phase of research industry professional Scott Coulson will be interviewed. Coulson is the Director of Creative Services for Dunbrook Apparel and has worked closely with the brands of the four major sports leagues throughout his career. Scott will provide an inside look at his perception of trends in the industry as well as the factors that motivate them.

Examination of Trends

Once each logo change is analyzed, the report will be looked into and analyzed as a whole piece. Examining the motivations of individual rebrandings and juxtaposing them chronologically will uncover trends in the industry and how they create stylistic patterns among different teams.

Population Study

Professional sports teams exist to provide entertainment to a population with the goal of making money. By extension, any decision to change a team's imagery and visual culture is necessarily an attempt to effectively provide entertainment to the fans, which will ultimately make the team more money.

Following the extensive logo report, a survey will be conducted that examines the effectiveness of uncovered trends among a randomly sampled population. Utilizing the tools on *www.kwiksurveys.com*, the survey will be electronically distributed with a goal of at least 100 responses from a variety of age groups. After the collection of results from that survey, a final conclusive analysis will be offered that showcases how the trends uncovered in the logo report translate to fan perception present in the survey.

Chapter 4

Research Results

In Chapter 4, all imagery used is from www.sportslogos.net, and all team statistics are from www.databasesports.com



**ARIZONA
CARDINALS**

1988-2004

Arizona Cardinals

Changed: 2005

Old:

Moving from St. Louis to Phoenix in 1988, the Cardinals have had four location changes in their history and are currently the oldest continuously-running professional football team in the United States. Since their move from Chicago to St. Louis in 1960 the team has been using the cardinal head as their primary logo (pictured top-left). The team adopted the associated wordmark when becoming the “Arizona Cardinals” from the “Phoenix Cardinals” in 1994. The wordmark logo is quite plain and generic; it features a sans serif of varying weights stacked to form “Arizona Cardinals,” and uses no distinguishing or ornamental characteristics.

New:

As part of the move from Sun Devil Stadium to the newly-completed University of Phoenix stadium, the Cardinals updated the look of their primary and script logos. The objective was to make a bird that looked meaner, and more aggressive. To accomplish this, the Cardinals commissioned the Verlander Design Studio, who had already worked with a number of NFL teams – including the Houston Texans, Seattle Seahawks, Atlanta Falcons, and Cincinnati Bengals. The new wordmark features a smaller “Arizona” contrasted against the larger set “Cardinals,” both in a sans serif typeface with discretionary hairline serifs. The Cardinals are the most recent in a series of teams to utilize the “small city name, big team name” stacked wordmark logo in the NFL – a trend potentially started by the Broncos in 1997 and continued by the Verlander Studio.

Regular season record (2004), (2005), (2006):

(6 - 10), (5 - 11), (5 - 11)



**ARIZONA
CARDINALS**

2005-present

BRONCOS
D E N V E R

After the Denver Broncos won two back-to-back Superbowls following their rebranding in 1997, a number of teams including the Cardinals adopted similar wordmark logos.



1996-2002

Atlanta Falcons

Changed: 2003

Old:

Founded in 1966 as an NFL expansion team, the Atlanta Falcons used the primary logo top-left until a rebranding in 2003. The primary logo is intended to depict a falcon that resembles the shape of an “F.” The Falcons did not adopt a wordmark logo until 1998 (pictured above-left). This logo was a tilted, serif font with interesting decorative features, especially around the “F” and “A” in “Falcons.”

New:

In 2003, the Falcons were given a fresh look by the Verlander Design Studio, one that according to owner and CEO Arthur Blank is “...fresh, strong, and dynamic...The new logo depicts a more powerful, aggressive Falcon – one of fast movement.” The primary logo is indeed reflective of that goal; its update is arguably more visually interesting and striking, and definitely suggests movement. Interestingly, in their wordmark logo the Falcons went from unique to generic, joining the Ravens, Texans, Seahawks, and Bengals in adopting script logos similar to the Broncos after their 1997 rebrand. Atlanta’s new wordmark keeps in the style of small city name stacked on a large team name – a characteristic of work Verlander has done with other teams in the NFL. The wordmark utilizes a sans serif with discretionary hairline serifs that suggest movement (in keeping with Atlanta’s primary logo).

Regular season record (2002), (2003), (2004):

(9 - 6), (5 - 11), (11 - 5)

Postseason record (2002), (2003), (2004):

(1 - 1), (n/a), (1 - 1)



2003-present



1996-1998

1999-present

Baltimore Ravens

Changed: 1999

Old:

Joining the NFL as an expansion franchise in 1996, the Baltimore Ravens' original logo is surrounded by controversy. When security guard and amateur artist Frederick Bouchat learned that Baltimore was acquiring an NFL team, he faxed the logo pictured bottom-right to the Maryland Stadium Authority. When a strikingly similar logo was unveiled without any credit to him, Bouchat sued the Ravens – though the court ruled in his favor, he was not awarded any monetary compensation.

The original “Bouchat” logo featured a large “B” superimposed on a coat-of-arms style shield, with wings sprouting from either side. This “winged and feathered” look continued to Baltimore’s wordmark, which featured an angular, decorative serif with many unique feathered accents.

New:

To mitigate negative press from the logo controversy, newspaper *The Baltimore Sun* ran a poll with three new logos. The profile of the raven’s head (pictured top-right) eventually won the poll, and after adding a superimposed “B” then-owner Art Modell unveiled the new brand in 1999. In this case again, the most interesting change is that of the wordmark. Instead of keeping with the highly-stylized and unique look of their previous script logo, the Ravens favored a stacked format similar to that of the Denver Broncos. Baltimore’s new wordmark did carry over some angularity, and features a decorative serif “Ravens” below a sans serif “Baltimore.” One season after unveiling the new logo, the Baltimore Ravens won the Superbowl.

Regular season record (1998), (1999), (2000):

(6 - 10), (8 - 8), (12 - 4)

Postseason record (1998), (1999), (2000):

(n/a), (n/a), (4 - 0 WON SUPERBOWL)



Frederick Bouchat was upset after seeing the logo of the new NFL franchise in Baltimore, as he had drawn and faxed a similar logo in 1995.



1995-2011



2012-present

Carolina Panthers

Changed: 2012

Old:

Added to the NFL as an expansion team in 1995, the Carolina Panthers have not had a primary logo change in the duration of their existence. Their original primary logo, pictured top-left, is made to depict a snarling black panther. In addition, the old primary logo imitates the state borders of both North and South Carolina (though the team is based in Charlotte).

The older Carolina Panthers script logo features brush strokes that are full of motion, and are reminiscent of popular visual styles during the team's founding in 1995. This wordmark was unique in the NFL, and lent itself well to the Panthers because of its "clawed out" look.

New:

After the end of the 2011 season, the Panthers unveiled new primary and script logos. Dropping outlines for cleaner lines and a more modern feel, the Panthers' administration feels the new logo brings "...a more aggressive, contemporary look." The change was also made to give the primary logo more visibility across a variety of media, including digital and web.

The script logo, while losing some of its defining characteristics, was also redesigned with legibility and modern media in mind. It features a stacked "Carolina Panthers" and uses a sans serif typeface with a few claw-inspired accents.

Regular season record (2011), (2012), (2013):

(6 - 10), (n/a), (n/a)



1997-2003

2004-present

Cincinnati Bengals

Changed: 2004

Old:

The Cincinnati Bengals joined the NFL in 1968, and began using the wordmark pictured top-left in 1997. It is a unique combination of slab and traditional serif fonts, and features hard edged, geometric letterforms. Its angularity and appearance against a black background draws comparisons to the Baltimore Ravens' original script logo.

New:

In 2004, the Bengals introduced a new wordmark logo. They hired the Verlander Design Studio and joined other teams utilizing the "stacked" wordmark style, implementing changes in likeness to the Atlanta Falcons, Seattle Seahawks, and Houston Texans – who had each adopted a similar script logo just a couple of years before (and the Denver Broncos and Baltimore Ravens before them). The Bengals did add their own twist to the wordmark, carrying over the unique slab / traditional serif combo that made their original logo distinct. Structurally, however, the wordmark bears a striking resemblance to those used by other teams in the NFL – caused partly by similar work being done by the same design team.

Regular season record (2003), (2004), (2005):

(8 - 8), (8 - 8), (11 - 5)

Postseason record (2003), (2004), (2005):

(n/a), (n/a), (0 - 1)



BRONCOS

BRONCOS
D E N V E R

1968-1996

1997-present

Denver Broncos

Changed: 1997

Old:

The Denver Broncos have had only one wordmark since their founding. Pictured top-left, it is a plain but powerful all-caps slab serif. It is in the same typeface as the large uppercase “D” in their second most recent primary logo, also featured on the left.

New:

Much more significant to the modern visual culture of the NFL is the Broncos’ most recent rebranding. In 1983 future hall-of-famer quarterback John Elway arrived in Denver. From the time of his arrival until 1997, the Denver Broncos appeared in three Superbowls, losing all of them. Before the 1997 season, the Broncos unveiled a new brand for the team, eschewing the original slab serif “D” in favor of a modern, stylized profile of a horse’s head. With a new logo, Elway led the Broncos to back-to-back Superbowl wins in 1997 and 1998. Though the rebrand was initially met with negativity by both the media and fans, the championships cemented the new look as one definitive of an elite Denver team.

Even more interesting than the proximity of the championships to the rebranding, is other team’s logo changes following the Broncos’; specifically, the changing of the script logo. Denver uses a large, stylized slab serif “Broncos” stacked on a sans serif, smaller “Denver.” This contrast offers a visually striking – if generic – look that many teams took to adopting shortly after Denver’s success. Baltimore changed their script the season after Denver’s second Superbowl (1999), and the most recent change comes from the Arizona Cardinals, in 2005.

Regular season record (1996), (1997), (1998):

(13 - 3), (12 - 4), (14 - 2)

Postseason record (1996), (1997), (1998):

(0 - 1), (4 - 0 WON SUPERBOWL), (4 - 0 WON SUPERBOWL)



2002-present

Houston Texans

Founded: 2002

New:

While the Houston Texans were founded in 2002 and have not had a change in branding since, it's important to look at their design decisions when creating the new logo (especially the new script).

The primary logo is fashioned after a bull's head and is stylized to resemble the state flag of Texas. The script was designed by Mark Verlander, and is another example of following in the Denver Bronco's footsteps, stacking the city and team names and using size to contrast them. The Texans still have some unique characteristics in their wordmark, incorporating angular serifs that complement the points of the primary logo's star and horns. Interestingly, Verlander was working on the Texans' brand at the same time he was doing work with another NFL team: the Seattle Seahawks.

The Houston Texans are the only new or relocated franchise added to the NFL since the Bronco's rebranding with the exception of the Tennessee Titans. However, the Texans' choice of script logo coupled with other teams changing in a similar time frame suggest the Broncos may have set a standard for wordmarks in the NFL.

In their inaugural season the Houston Texans had a regular season record of 4 - 12, and have had two winning seasons to date: one in 2009 (9 - 7) and one in 2011 (10 - 6 regular season, 1 - 1 postseason).

The logo for the Seattle Seahawks features the word 'SEATTLE' in a small, blue, sans-serif font above the word 'SEAHAWKS' in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font.

The Seattle Seahawks debuted their new script logo in 2002 – the same year the Texans unveiled their imagery. The script logos are strikingly similar, as a result of them being made by the same studio.



1978-1997

1998-present

New York Jets

Changed: 1998

Old:

Founded in 1960 as an AFL team and joining into the NFL during the 1970 merger, the New York Jets adopted the logo pictured top-left in 1978. It features stylized geometry, and a thick, angular sans serif. At the time of its unveiling, it was intended to be futuristic and sleek, resembling a jet wing.

New:

Prior to the 1978 logo change, the Jets used the logo pictured at the bottom-right of this page. The only championship the New York Jets lay claim to, the 1968 AFL-NFL Superbowl, was won with that classic logo. In 1998, under pressure from Superbowl veterans from that era, head coach Bill Parcells spearheaded an effort to reform the team's identity. The result is the logo depicted top-right: a return to the original Jets' script, which while still a sans serif offers many more curved, organic lines compared to the Jets' 1978-97 logo. The logo signifies the team's return to an image steeped in tradition and – the Jets hope – winning. The season of the Jets' logo change was also the first time they had appeared in the playoffs since 1991.

Regular season record (1997), (1998), (1999):

(9 - 7), (12 - 4), (8 - 8)

Postseason record (1997), (1998), (1999):

(n/a), (1 - 1), (n/a)



Prior to the 1978 change, the Jets used this logo – the same one used during their 1968 AFL-NFL Superbowl championship.



Seahawks

1976-2001



SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

2002-present

Seattle Seahawks

Changed: 2002

Old:

In 1976, the NFL added two expansion teams: the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and the Seattle Seahawks. The Seahawks' original logo was inspired by the artwork of Northwestern Native American tribes – though the wordmark, strangely, was a rounded serif with contrasting stroke widths; not a common style among NFL teams.

New:

In 2002, to coincide with the Seahawks' move to the NFC and to the newly completed Qwest Field, the Seahawks commissioned in-house NFL designers to modify their primary logo and Mark Verlander of Verlander design to reimagine Seattle's wordmark. Verlander, who was also working on the Houston Texans' logo (and would eventually go on to do branding for the Cincinnati Bengals, Arizona Cardinals, and Atlanta Falcons), used a style similar to the Denver Broncos and Baltimore Ravens was implemented: stacking the team name and city and using the size of the words to form contrast. The Seahawks' new wordmark also implements angled serifs to complement the more edgy feel of the redesigned primary logo.

Regular season record (2001), (2002), (2003):

(9 - 7), (7 - 9), (10 - 6)

Postseason record (2001), (2002), (2003):

(n/a), (n/a), (0 - 1)



1997-2001

2002-2004

Anaheim Angels

Changed: 2002

Old:

When Disney bought the California Angels in 1996, the team moved to the newly renovated Anaheim Stadium and became the Anaheim Angels. To give the Angels a new identity in the new ownership, Disney revised the brand and created the logo pictured top-left, which the team used from 1997 to 2001.

Disney's visual style is clearly present in the 1996 logo, which features a decorative script and cartoon-inspired "A" with an illustrated wing. While reflective of the new ownership, the new logo lacked visual correlation with existing MLB logos – for better or worse, the new brand was unique.

New:

Before the 2002 season, Disney enacted another logo change for Anaheim. It showed a return to not only the original look of the Angels (the California Angel's logo from 1993–95 is pictured bottom-right), but a move to a more traditional baseball style with gothic-inspired letters.

In 2002, the same season of the change, the Anaheim Angels won the World Series. Surprisingly, during the following season Disney sold the Angels, which were eventually renamed to the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim in 2005.

Regular season record (2001), (2002), (2003):

(75 - 87), (99 - 63), (77 - 85)

Postseason record (2001), (2002), (2003):

(n/a), (11 - 5 WON WORLD SERIES), (n/a)



The 2002 Angels logo showed a return to the gothic styling present in earlier Angels brands, like this one used by the California Angels.

The logo features the word "BOSTON" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. Below it, "RED SOX" is written in a red, gothic-style script font with blue outlines. A small "TM" trademark symbol is at the bottom right.The logo features the word "BOSTON" in a red, gothic-style script font with blue outlines. Below it, "RED SOX" is written in the same red, gothic-style script font with blue outlines. A small "TM" trademark symbol is at the bottom right.

1960-2008

2009-present

Boston Red Sox

Changed: 2009

Old:

The Boston Red Sox arguably have some of the most recognizable lettering in sports – the exaggerated gothic styling of “Red Sox” is an aesthetic classic. The Red Sox’ continued media prominence only serves to further this recognizability.

Boston’s script logo from 1960 to 2008, pictured top-right, features the gothic “Red Sox” lettering under a thick slab serif. The sharp angles of the “Red Sox” letters contrast with thick, squared off ends of “Boston.”

New:

In 2009, the Red Sox unveiled new team uniforms. To coincide with this change, Boston’s wordmark was given an update – the “Boston” lettering was changed from the old sans serif to the same gothic lettering style used for “Red Sox.” The change serves to further promote an already established visual style, and the repetition of that style has potential to further increase brand recognition. It is possible that the change was also made to promote continuity, as the Red Sox had been using the gothic “B” as their cap insignia since 1975.

Regular season record (2008), (2009), (2010):

(95 - 67), (95 - 67), (89 - 73)

Postseason record (2008), (2009), (2010):

(6 - 5), (0 - 3), (n/a)



Cincinnati Reds

Added: 2011

In 2011, the Cincinnati Reds elected to add an alternate script logo to their repertoire. Having only used slab serif and sans serif scripts prior to updating to a decorative serif wordmark in 2007, the 2011 addition marks the first time the Reds have used an actual script in a script logo.

The new script is very “traditional” baseball, featuring a swash that trails behind the “s” to form an underline under “Reds.” Interestingly, the Reds added this alternate script in the same season the Washington Nationals re-branded from a sans serif to a script wordmark.

Regular season record (before), (season of), (after):

(91 - 71), (79 - 83), (n/a)

Postseason record (before), (season of), (after):

(0 - 3), (n/a), (n/a)



Above-left: The Reds’ wordmark from 1961–2006, using a tall sans serif and the squat slab serif from their primary logo.

Above-right: The Reds’ current primary wordmark; a decorative serif.



1994-1999

2000-present

Houston Astros

Changed: 2000

Old:

The Houston Astros have used the logo top-left since their purchase by Drayton McLane in 1993. Following that purchase, the Astros rebranded before the 1994 season.

The objective with this identity for the Astros was a more serious, aggressive logo. The typefaces used are both sans serif, with some additional detail in the “A” as well as a tilt that suggests motion. This look was not especially popular with fans, though it fulfilled its objective of a more serious brand, especially considering the previous logo used by Houston (pictured bottom-right).

New:

The Astros used the blue-and-gold brand for only 6 years; in 2000 the team relocated to then “Enron Field” (now Minute Maid Park). To coincide with the relocation, the team again rebranded (pictured top-right).

The objective this time was to move towards a more “traditional” baseball brand. This was accomplished with a classic, flowing baseball script and accompanying underline swash trailing the end of “Astros.” The team also integrated pinstripes into their uniforms for a classic baseball appearance. The Astros would go on to win the World Series in 2005 with this brand.

In addition to the rebranding in 2000, the Milwaukee Brewers elected to drop their stylized lettering in favor of a classic baseball script.

Regular season record (1999), (2000), (2001):

(97 - 65), (72 - 90), (93 - 69)

Postseason record (1999), (2000), (2001):

(1 - 3), (n/a), (0 - 3)



The logo change in 1994 was meant to convey a more “serious and aggressive” look than their original brand, pictured left.



1993-2011

2012-present

Florida / Miami Marlins

Changed: 2012

Old:

Titled the Florida Marlins from 1993 to 2011, the Marlins' original brand was "traditional baseball" through and through. Using a slab serif typeface with script elements for their wordmark (like the classic baseball swash coming off of the "s"), the Florida Marlins also incorporated pinstripes into their uniforms and kept their color palette relatively muted.

New:

At the end of the 2011 season, the Marlins were set to move from Sun Life Stadium to the newly completed Marlins Park. Accompanying the move was a dramatic rebranding from the Marlins, who now would dub themselves "Miami" rather than Florida – to reflect a team that the city could call their own (the "Florida" Marlins' original stadium was located in Miami as well).

The new brand has a striking combination of bright, neon colors – a trend perhaps carried over from the bold colors of the city's other franchises (the Miami Heat and Miami Dolphins). The wordmark changed to be anything but traditional baseball, now featuring a bold, thick sans serif that creates a sleek, modern look.

Moving forward with the new brand, it will be interesting to see if the Marlins can claim the same kind of success under the new identity – the Florida Marlins won two World Series in 1997 and 2003 under their old look.

Regular season record (before), (season of), (after):

(72 - 90), (n/a), (n/a)



1994-1999

2000-present

Milwaukee Brewers

Changed: 2000

Old:

In 1994, the Milwaukee Brewers updated their identity to coincide with the franchise's 25th anniversary. The 1994 look featured gothic-inspired lettering combined with unique geometry; the cross-bars of many letterforms of the typeface are angled (visible in the "B," "R," and "S"). However, the colors and letters drew comparisons from fans to the University of Notre Dame brand, and the new identity was only used until 1999.

New:

In anticipation of the move from Milwaukee County Stadium to the new Miller Park, in 2000 the Brewers again rebranded. Using barley imagery as a tie-in to the team's name, the Brewers also introduced a round logo with a baseball inside. In addition, Milwaukee's new wordmark features a traditional baseball script and accompanying swash – interestingly, both the round baseball logo and the traditional script are elements of the New York Yankees' logo, who won the World Series the previous two seasons (and again in 2000). The style of using a round logo around a baseball is also a prominent visual style across other teams, such as the Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins.

The Brewers' rebrand occurred the same season as that of the Houston Astros, who also elected to adopt a traditional baseball script.

Regular season record (1999), (2000), (2001):

(74 - 87), (73 - 89), (68 - 94)



The changes made by the Brewers take cues from the brand of the New York Yankees, who won three back-to-back World Series from 1998–2000.



2004-2011

2012-present

San Diego Padres

Changed: 2012

Old:

The San Diego Padres used the top-left logo from 2004 until 2011, rebranding in 2004 to commemorate their move to the newly finished Petco Park. The primary logo of this brand features a decorative script superimposed over the shape of a home plate, and its use is continued as a wordmark logo following the Padre's 2012 image change.

New:

In 2012, the San Diego Padres unveiled a new primary logo. Clean, but somewhat generic, the "Padres" wordmark is not present and the words "San Diego Padres Baseball Club" circle the SD cap insignia in a plain sans serif typeface. Interestingly, the move towards a circular logo is a step backwards for the Padres, who used a circle in their primary logo prior to the 2004 rebrand.

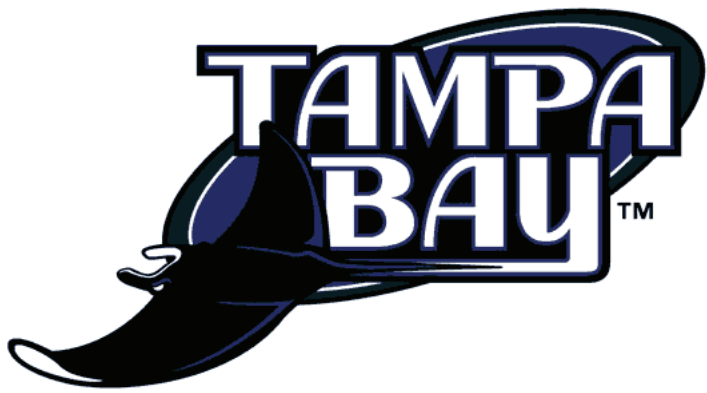
The Padres' new primary logo came just one season after the Washington National's new rebrand, whose primary is also a circle with the team's insignia displayed in the center. With the addition of the Toronto Blue Jay's new circular logo, in 2012 the Padres joined 11 other teams that feature a round brand.

Regular season record (2011), (2012), (2013):

(71 - 91), (n/a), (n/a)



Prior to 2004, the left was the primary logo of the Padres. 2012 marked a return to a circular logo for San Diego.



1998-2007



2008-present

Tampa Bay Devil Rays / Rays

Changed: 2008

Old:

Originally the Tampa Bay Devil Rays since their founding in 1998, the Rays' original primary logo featured a Devil Ray and a stylized sans serif "Tampa Bay" imposed over an oval. However, finishing last in the American League for nine out of their ten seasons since their founding, coming into the 2008 season the team was looking to make changes – both to their lineup and image.

New:

Prior to the 2008 season the Devil Rays modified their monicker to just the "Rays," symbolizing rays of sunshine (Florida is nicknamed the "Sunshine State"). The changes saw a departure from the decorative, somewhat cartoony logo used previously to a clean, professional wordmark imposed on a baseball diamond. The Rays' script logo is set in a modern slab serif font, with a small gold "ray" accent around the "R."

Prior to the rebrand, the Rays had never seen a winning season. However, 2008 turned out to literally be a banner year for the Rays, netting them the American League Championship. It was the first winning season for the Rays, and they have yet to have a losing season since. The Tampa Bay Rays lost the 2008 World Series to the Philadelphia Phillies.

Regular season record (2007), (2008), (2009):

(66 - 96), (97 -65), (84 - 78)

Postseason record (2007), (2008), (2009):

(n/a), (8 - 7 LOST WORLD SERIES), (n/a)



2004-2011



2012-present

Toronto Blue Jays

Changed: 2012

Old:

The Toronto Blue Jays began using the logo pictured top-left in 2004, with no apparent motivation aside from a fresh look for the franchise. The primary logo features the same typeface as the wordmark: a highly stylized script colored to make the lettering look embossed. The logo also features a cartoony blue jay profile, protruding from the “J” of “Jays.”

New:

Following a 2011 season with a .500 record led by manager John Farrell, the Blue Jays responded to fan pressure and instigated a rebranding. The new logo was unveiled in late 2011 to the delight of fans and old Blue Jays greats: it was a retooling of Toronto’s original brand used from 1977–96. Not only was this brand original, it was the look of the Blue Jays when they won back-to-back World Series in 1992 and 1993.

The new wordmark features a hairline serif font, with “Blue Jays” having the letters split; a look not common in baseball, but iconic to fans of Toronto during their elite years. As of May 2012, the Blue Jays’ new primary logo is the top rated graphic on *www.sportslogos.net*, a database of sports graphics authored by Chris Creamer.

Regular season record (2011), (2012), (2013):

(81 - 81), (n/a), (n/a)



With some slight modifications, the Blue Jays’ new brand is a return to imagery that marked an elite team.



NATIONALS

2005-2010



Nationals

2011-present

Washington Nationals

Changed: 2011

Old:

In 2005, the Montreal Expos relocated to Washington DC and adopted the new monicker “Nationals.” Included with the new name and relocation was a rebranding for the franchise.

The original Nationals logo solid, but arguably lacked any distinguishing characteristics; the wordmark was a simple sans serif that was colored to give the appearance of being embossed.

New:

After 5 seasons in the DC area, at the end of the 2010 season the Nationals unveiled changes to the team’s image. This rebrand was a result of fans demanding a logo with more character than the blocky sans serif used previously. Fans also wanted a “W” insignia for the team (prior to 2011 the team used an interlocking “DC” as a cap insignia and secondary logo).

The Nationals’ primary logo went the route of teams like the New York Yankees and Milwaukee Brewers and elected to use a circular design, prominently displaying the new “W” insignia in the center. The Nationals’ new wordmark was also in the style of the script “W,” going the route of a classic baseball script.

Regular season record (2010), (2011), (2012):

(69 - 93), (80 - 81), (n/a)

ATLANTA HAWKS

ATLANTA HAWKS

1993-2007

2007-present

Atlanta Hawks

Changed: 2007

Old:

The wordmark pictured top-left was used by the Atlanta Hawks from 1993 to 2007. A twist on an otherwise simple serif font, the script logo features unique negative spacing in some of the letterforms that suggest the claw or beak of a hawk.

New:

Before the start of the 2007 / 2008 season, the Atlanta Hawks unveiled a logo update, which included a new wordmark and tweaks to the team colors (introducing dark blue to the brand for the first time since 1970). The new wordmark is graphically simpler than the prior 1993 script, featuring very thin serifs and no unique graphical elements. The letters are shaded to give the appearance of an emboss.

Regular season record (2005/06), (2006/07), (2007/08):

(30 - 52), (37 - 45), (47 - 35)

Postseason record (2005/06), (2006/07), (2007/08):

(n/a), (3 - 4), (4 - 7)

ATLANTA HAWKS



The new Atlanta Hawks brand is the first to use a dark blue color since this logo from 1970.



1993-2012



2012-present

New Jersey / Brooklyn Nets

Changed: 2012

Old:

Originally known as the New Jersey Americans, the New Jersey Nets adopted the top-left logo in 1997. Featuring a basketball descending through a hoop imposed onto a shield, the Nets' original typeface logo was a simple sans serif with shading to suggest embossing.

New:

In 2012, the Nets were prepared to move to the newly-completed Barclay's Center in Brooklyn. With that move, the team also rebranded and renamed itself, and in early 2012 unveiled themselves as the "Brooklyn Nets."

With the new name and arena came new logos; the Brooklyn Nets showcased a new brand that stripped any color from the logos at all. This decision made the Nets the only team in the NBA with a purely black-and-white color scheme (the San Antonio Spurs use black, white, and gray). The decision to go with no color was a result of the inspiration early New York subway systems gave to the rebranding. Rapper and part-owner of the Nets Jay-Z had a part in designing the logo, which is very bold and in-your-face. The lettering is very simple, a tall sans serif with no graphical frills.

The Brooklyn Nets will begin play with their new logos in the 2012 / 2013 season.

Regular season record (2011/12), (2012/13), (2013/14):

(22 - 44), (n/a), (n/a)



1980-2001



2001-present

Dallas Mavericks

Changed: 2001

Old:

Founded in 1980, the Dallas Mavericks used the logo pictured top-left from the teams' origin until 2000. The primary logo features an M donning a cowboy hat imposed over a basketball. The wordmark logo of the team was very muted in its earlier years, and was limited to a simple italic modern serif.

New:

2001 was a year of change for the Mavericks. The team moved to the new American Airlines Center, and was under the new ownership of Mark Cuban, who purchased the team in early 2000. With these changes came a new brand for the Mavericks; a change of image was very important to Mark Cuban following his purchase of the team. He felt that he brought a new attitude and identity to the team, and wanted the Mavericks' image to reflect the change. The team was also motivated by merchandising ability, electing to make design decisions that appealed to fans in order to sell more team memorabilia.

Dallas' new look is much more modern and edgy than its previous incarnation. The primary logo itself is a highly stylized horse head positioned over a basketball. The new wordmark for the Mavericks is a hybrid angular / humanist sans serif, with hard edges at some corners of the letters and slopes at other corners. This style would be seen in new variations of the Orlando Magic and Memphis Grizzlies logos in the following years.

The Mavericks won their first NBA Championship with the new brand in the 2010 / 2011 season.

Regular season record (2000/01), (2001/02), (2002/03):

(53 - 29), (57 - 25), (60 - 22)

Postseason record (2000/01), (2001/02), (2002/03):

(4 - 6), (4 - 4), (10 - 10)



1996-2005



2005-present

Detroit Pistons

Changed: 2005

Old:

The Detroit Pistons have won three NBA Championships: one under the logo pictured top-left, and two under the logo depicted bottom-right. The top-left brand arose in 1996, originally featuring a new teal and orange color scheme. However, this pallet was unpopular with fans, and was changed back to the Piston's original colors in 2001. The 1996 logo features a flaming horse head above the "Pistons" wordmark. The wordmark itself is a stylized slab serif, with a gradient that is meant to imitate metal.

New:

In the 1980s, the aggressive, defensive style of play of the Detroit Pistons led them to notoriety and the "Bad Boys" nickname. During that time, they were represented by the bottom-right logo, and netted themselves back-to-back NBA Championships in 1989 and 1990.

In 2005, the Pistons rebranded from the horse-themed look of the 1996 logo to an updated version of the logo from the "Bad Boys" era. The logo as a whole is cleaner and simpler; though the wordmark didn't undergo any dramatic changes, it dropped the gradients and frills of the previous Pistons script. The season of the rebrand the Pistons finished the regular season with the best record, but eventually were eliminated in the Eastern Conference Finals by the Miami Heat.

Regular season record (2004/05), (2005/06), (2006/07):

(54 - 28), (64 - 18), (53 - 29)

Postseason record (2004/05), (2005/06), (2006/07):

(15 - 10 LOST NBA FINALS), (10 - 8), (10 - 6)



The logo used from 1979 to 1996 is the representation of the "Bad Boys" era of the Pistons, when they won back-to-back NBA Championships.



1997-2010



2010-present

Golden State Warriors

Changed: 2010

Old:

In 1997, after a series of dismal seasons starting in 1994, Gary St. Jean became the new Golden State Warriors General Manager. With the administrative change came a rebranding, and the Warriors adopted the brand pictured top-left. This new brand marked the first time the Warriors had departed from their blue and yellow color scheme. The wordmark for the new Warriors identity was a very stylized, decorative serif font with shading and accents to suggest a three dimensional appearance. Unfortunately, the new logo did not see a marked improvement in the Warriors' performance, who continued to have losing records until the 2006 / 2007 season.

New:

Following the 2009 / 2010 NBA season, the Golden State Warriors unveiled a new rebranding. The new look for the Warriors was in many ways a nod to the team's past; the brand returned to the original blue and yellow palette the Warriors had used prior to 1997. The new logo also adopted the circular motif used in every brand for the team prior to 1997, and included the imagery of the at the time unfinished eastern span of the San Francisco Bay Bridge. The inclusion of the bridge is a salute to the popular logo the Warriors used from 1969 to 1971, pictured bottom-right. It is worth noting that the only NBA championships the Warriors have won while in the Bay Area of California was in 1975 – when the team used a blue and yellow, circular brand. The new wordmark is very simple, and consists of a solitary typeface with hairline serifs.

Regular season record (2009/10), (2010/11), (2011/12):

(26 - 56), (36 - 46), (23 - 43)



The logo at left was used by the Warriors from 1969 to 1971, and was very popular with fans; it served as inspiration for the latest Warriors branding.



1995-2003

2003-present

Houston Rockets

Changed: 2003

Old:

After winning back-to-back NBA Championships in 1994 and 1995, the Houston Rockets underwent a rebrand. The timing was arguably strange, but the end result of the image change is pictured top-left. It features the “Rockets” wordmark imposed over a basketball, circled by a cartoon rocket ship. The wordmark itself is a highly angular sans serif, with many points at the ends of the strokes of the letters; the wordmark is also shaded to appear embossed.

New:

Before the start of the 2003 / 2004 season, the Rockets moved to the new Toyota Center and again changed the team’s brand. Utilizing a design centered around a new “R” insignia designed by designer Eiko Ishioka, the rockets dropped unnecessary graphical elements around the primary logo, including the fan-maligned cartoon rocket ship. Interesting to note on the new insignia are the “motion lines” trailing from the legs of the “R.” This style is also used by several other teams, including the Los Angeles Lakers – who won three NBA championships in a row from 2000 to 2002 (a season before the Rocket’s rebrand).

The new wordmark of the Rockets is somewhat similar to its previous iteration, featuring an angular sans serif but without any of the distinguishing shading of previous years.

Regular season record (2002/03), (2003/04), (2004/05):

(43 - 39), (45 - 37), (51 - 31)

Postseason record (2002/03), (2003/04), (2004/05):

(n/a), (1 - 4), (3 - 4)



The 2003 rebrand of the Rockets introduced “motion lines” to the primary logo – a style used by the Los Angeles Lakers, who won three championships prior to the Rockets’ image change.



2001-2004



2004-present

Memphis Grizzlies

Changed: 2004

Old:

For 3 years after the Grizzlies' move from Vancouver to Memphis in 2001, their logo remained unchanged aside from the replacement of the city name. This logo featured an illustrated bear and a stylized, blocky sans serif wordmark with claw scratches adorning the letters.

New:

At the end of the 2003 / 2004 season, the Grizzlies unveiled a rebrand that would be the future of the franchise. Eager to usher in a visual culture unique to Memphis, the objectives of the rebrand were to create a logo representing winning, tradition, and respect.

The new brand features a stylized grizzly bear head, as well as a new monochromatic color scheme (with the exception of the yellow eyes of the bear). The new wordmark features a split-letter design for "Memphis," as well as a hybrid angular / curved sans serif reminiscent of the Dallas Mavericks' script.

Under the new brand, the Grizzlies won both their first playoff game and first playoff series against the San Antonio Spurs in 2011.

Regular season record (2003/04), (2004/05), (2005/06):

(50 - 32), (45 - 37), (49 - 33)

Postseason record (2003/04), (2004/05), (2005/06):

(0 - 4), (0 - 4), (0 - 4)



The new Grizzlies' wordmark bears similar contrasting geometry to the Dallas Mavericks' wordmark, introduced three years prior.



2000-2010

2010-present

Orlando Magic

Changed: 2010

Old:

The brand above-left was used by the Orlando Magic from 2000 to 2010, and features a stylized basketball surrounded by stars. The wordmark is a highly decorative display typeface reminiscent of a marker stroke, accompanied by a star in place of the “a.”

New:

After moving to the new Amway Center in 2010, the Orlando Magic introduced a graphical update to their wordmark logo. It is much simpler than the eccentric wordmark used previously, and employs a contrasting angular / curved sans serif of the same style as the Memphis Grizzlies and Dallas Mavericks.

Regular season record (2009/10), (2010/11), (2011/12):

(59 - 23), (52 - 30), (37 - 29)

Postseason record (2009/10), (2010/11), (2011/12):

(10 - 4), (2 - 4), (1 - 4)



1993-2006

2006-present

Mighty Ducks of Anaheim / Anaheim Ducks

Changed: 2006

Old:

In 1992, The Walt Disney Company released the film *The Mighty Ducks*. The following year, Disney founded an NHL team that was to use the same imagery as the fictional hockey team from the film. Featuring a teal and plum color scheme, the team's original colors were reminiscent of 90s cartoons (The Mighty Ducks would later receive their own animated series). The original wordmark for the team was under-stylized, utilizing a clean, geometric sans serif typeface — made even more geometric by the clipped corners of some of the letterforms.

New:

During the NHL 2004–2005 lockout, Disney sold the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim. A year after being under new ownership (at the start of the 2006–2007 season), Brian Burke (then the General Manager of the Ducks) responded to fan consultation by dropping the “mighty” from the team's name and initiating a rebranding of the organization. The new logo has a black, gold, and orange color scheme. The highly stylized, sleek wordmark is a departure from Disney influence and features angular letterforms with sharp, hairline serifs — which bear resemblance to the wordmark of the Carolina Hurricanes, who won the Stanley Cup the season preceding the Duck's rebranding. The Ducks won the Stanley Cup the same season of the team's image change.

Regular season record (2005/06), (2006/07), (2007/08):

(43 - 27), (48 - 20), (47 - 27)

Postseason record (2005/06), (2006/07), (2007/08):

(9 - 7), (16 - 5 WON STANLEY CUP), (2 - 4)



The hairline serif's of the Duck's wordmark resemble those of the Carolina Hurricanes, who won the Stanley Cup the year before the Duck's rebrand.



1995-2007

Boston Bruins

Changed: 2007

Old:

The Boston Bruins, founded in 1924 and being one of the “original six” teams of the NHL’s founding in 1942, have been an iconic professional hockey club for almost a century. While their logo has had changes before its modification in 2007, the second most recent iteration features black and yellow team colors and a thick, tall sans serif as the wordmark. The typeface is very geometric and is clipped at the corners of certain letterforms. The primary logo juxtaposes the “B” of this typeface over a spoked wheel, in use since 1948.

New:

From 2000 until the 2007–2008 season, all of the uniforms made for the NHL were handled by The Hockey Company and its associated brands. However, in 2004 Reebok had bought The Hockey Company and had started the development of a brand new line of professional hockey uniforms, dubbed “Rbk Edge.” Before the 07–08 season, Reebok unveiled these uniforms which were to be adopted across the NHL. In conjunction with the release of the new uniforms, a handful of teams changed or updated their logos; the Boston Bruins were one of these teams. The changes the Bruins made were minimal, but significant. The current logo features a typeface similar to the older logo, but with the inclusion of thick slab serifs. While visually this evokes feelings of strength and solidarity, the significance of this change is the franchise’s harkening to its roots. From 1932 to 1948 the Bruins used the same slab serif “B” in their primary logo — the tie in of this classic element with their most modern logotype is very clever. Also in the 07–08 season the Bruins made changes at the head coaching position (David Lewis to Claude Julien) and improved on their disappointing previous season. They then made a run at the playoffs (but lost in the quarterfinals) with a new head coach — and a new twist on a classic logo.

Regular season record (2006/07), (2007/08), (2008/09):

(35 - 41), (41 - 29), (53 - 19)

Postseason record (2006/07), (2007/08), (2008/09):

(n/a), (3 - 4), (7 - 4)



2007-present



Boston Bruin’s logo from 1932–1948



2006-2010



2010-present

Buffalo Sabres

Changed: 2010

Old:

The Buffalo Sabres, founded and added to the NHL in 1970 along with the Vancouver Canucks, have had a variety of visual styles in their 40+ years of play. Their second most recent logo change came in 2006, adopting imagery developed by a graphic designer under the employment of Reebok. The unveil in 2006 featured a yellow bison and a stylized serif for the wordmark; the typeface was relatively unremarkable, aside from borrowing the angular hairline serifs present in the logos of other professional hockey teams (like the Anaheim Ducks). However, the legless yellow bison immediately drew negative press, reminding fans of a banana slug and earning the new logo the infamous name “buffaslug.”

New:

Eventually Sabres management took heed from its fans and instigated another logo change just four seasons later. The newest and current logo was unveiled shortly before the team was sold by Tom Golisano to Terrence Pegula, and pays homage to the golden era of the Buffalo Sabres — the 1970s.

The logo effectively retrobranded itself to the logo used by the Sabres from 1970 to 1996, with slightly modified colors. The primary logo depicts a bison over two crossed sabres, but the logo shines in its wordmark; a beautiful thick script uncharacteristic of professional hockey clubs (the only other two teams with a script wordmark are the New York Islanders and the Phoenix Coyotes). The retrograding of Buffalo’s logo is important, demonstrating managerial awareness to fan opinion and also evoking the emotions of an earlier era — “The French Connection,” a period of time from 1972 to 1979 when Buffalo had three all-star forwards that brought the team to a competitive status immediately after its founding.

Regular season record (2009/10), (2010/11), (2011/12):

(45 - 27), (43 - 29), (39 - 32)

Postseason record (2009/10), (2010/11), (2011/12):

(2 - 4), (3 - 4), (n/a)



The Sabres’ new look borrows heavily from their original logo — reminding fans of the days of The French Connection



2000-2007

2007-present

Columbus Blue Jackets

Changed: 2007

Old:

The Columbus Blue Jackets were founded and added to the NHL along with the Minnesota Wild in 2000. Their club name comes from the Civil War history of Ohio and its major cities, which saw over twofold Union volunteers than what was requested by President Lincoln. Celebrating this patriotism, the Blue Jackets use red, white and blue as their color scheme. Their original wordmark logo was a tall slab serif typeface, which may portray the strength and solidarity of Ohio patriotism during the Civil War.

New:

Following a dismal performance in 2006–2007 when the Blue Jackets broke the record for most times being shut out in a season, the team fired their general manager and president Doug MacLean, replacing him with Scott Howson as general manager and Mike Priest as president. In addition to this administrative change, the club received a new logo in conjunction with Reebok's Edge uniform premiere. The new logo again ties into the region of Blue Jackets and features the Ohio state flag wrapped around a star. The wordmark for the Blue Jackets also received treatment, electing to adopt the sharp, angular letterforms and accompanying stylized serifs common in many NHL logos. The typeface change, while detracting from the uniqueness of the team, brought the Blue Jackets into the established visual culture of the NHL. The season of the logo change, the Jackets got their best start in the franchise's short history, and in the following year the club made it to the playoffs for the first time — though they were shut out in the first series and have not been made a postseason appearance since.

Regular season record (2006/07), (2007/08), (2008/09):

(33 - 42), (34 - 36), (41 - 31)

Postseason record (2006/07), (2007/08), (2008/09):

(n/a), (n/a), (0 - 4)



1996-2011

2011-present

Edmonton Oilers

Changed: 2011

Old:

The Edmonton Oilers, founded in 1972 and added to the NHL in 1979, are perhaps one of the most iconic teams in the league's history. This is owed to Wayne Gretzky — considered by many to be the greatest player in the history of ice hockey, Gretzky helped the Oilers win four Stanley Cups from 1979 to 1988.

The Oilers, whose primary logo has changed little since the teams founding, did not have a wordmark logo until 1996. At the beginning of that season, Edmonton unveiled new team colors (a deep blue and copper) as well as a new typeface logo. Pictured above left, their first wordmark featured a tall, thick sans serif with some letterforms clipped at the edges — adopting a style similar at the time to the Boston Bruins and the then Mighty Ducks of Anaheim. This wordmark was used until the end of the 2010–2011 season.

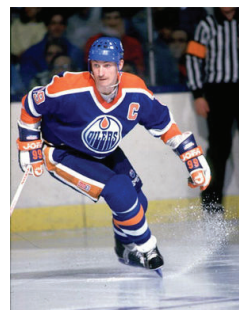
New:

In 2011 the Oilers updated their team's colors to navy blue and a burnt orange—significant, as these were close to the same colors used during the Gretzky era. It is possible that the change was made in hopes of re-igniting a nostalgic fire in the team and fans, who have not been to the playoffs since they lost the Stanley Cup to the Carolina Hurricanes in 2006.

The color change also brought a new wordmark logo. The Oilers eschewed the old geometric letters in favor of a more curvy, humanist sans serif — seen most easily in the “O” and “S.” In addition, hidden in the negative space between the “L” and the “E” there is a numeral one. Whether by design or by accident, the Oilers hope that the return to the aesthetics of their glory days will help them again be number one.

Regular season record (2010/11), (2011/12), (2012/13):

(25 - 45), (32 - 40), (n/a)



The new colors of the Oilers may be an attempt to make a visual return to their dynasty era with Gretzky.



1995-1997



1997-present

New York Islanders

Changed: 1997

Old:

Residing in Uniondale, New York, the New York Islanders were founded and added to the NHL in 1972. They are a dynasty team, and won four consecutive Stanley Cups from the 1979-1980 season to the 1982-1983 season. The Islanders' most recent logo change is a unique one; from the beginning of the team in 1972 until 1995 they kept their original logo, the same (aside from a slight color change) as the logo in the upper right of this document. At the end of the shortened 1994-1995 season, tensions were running high among the Islanders and their fans. Their rivals, the New York Rangers had won the Stanley Cup in 1994. Their new GM Don Maloney was under fire from the press and fans for poor team management decisions. Unfortunately, things were only going to get worse.

The Islanders announced their new logo and look for the team before the start of the 95-96 season, to the immediate disdain of fans. The biggest problem with the new logo was the mascot: featured front and center, this fisherman bore more than a passing resemblance to the "Gorton's Fisherman" mascot for frozen seafood company *Gorton's of Gloucester*. Rival New York Rangers fans would chant "we want fishsticks" at Islanders games — to make matters worse, the Islanders finished the season with a last place record of 22 - 50.

The new take on the wordmark for the Islanders wasn't necessarily bad; it features a stylized typeface with angular serifs, and is made to look three-dimensional. However, the juxtaposition of the team's administrative and on-ice problems and the logo's resemblance to a certain fisherman instigated an immediate demand for change from the fans.

New:

The logo was reverted back to the original used from 1972-1995 after just one season with the "Gorton's Fisherman" logo. Aside from a small shift in hue, the logo was unchanged; It features a solid, tall sans serif that is iconic, as it represents the team during their "dynasty era."

Regular season record (1996/97), (1997/98), (1998/99):

(29 - 41), (30 - 41), (24 - 48)



The new Islanders logo ended up being a media disaster, due to its resemblance to the *Gorton's* brand fisherman.



SENATORS®

1992-2007

Ottawa Senators

Changed: 2007

Old:

The Ottawa Senators were originally a founding NHL team, and called Ottawa home from 1883 to 1954. After the disbanding of the team in that year, Ottawa was without an NHL team until 1992, when a revival expansion franchise came to the city adopting the original name of the Senators. The “expansion” Senators also chose to take on the old red and black colors of the original Senators, also adding a gold accent. The original Senators logo, shown below, juxtaposed a large capital “O” over a block of red and black. For the expansion Senators’ new script logo, they utilized a typeface similar to the original “O”: a very modern, contrasting stroke width not often seen in modern hockey. The new team also added a stylized Roman Centurion, to represent the mascot.

New:

The Senators were looking like a team with nowhere to go but up at the end of the 2007 season; while they had lost the Stanley Cup playoffs the previous year, they still had a strong roster going into the 2007–2008 season and would also be sporting a new, updated team brand. The Senators were one of many teams that had their image revitalized to coincide with the launch of Reebok’s new Edge jerseys. In addition to changing and re-styling the primary logo, the script logo for the Senators changed dramatically. Forgoing their original modern typeface, the Senators instead adopted a traditional, oldstyle roman font that featured very thin serifs – a look more in concert with the visual culture of other NHL teams (and a style used by the recently re-branded Anaheim Ducks –who defeated the Senators in the playoffs the previous season.) Unfortunately, the team hit a downturn after its Stanley Cup run in 2006–2007, and in the 2007–2008 season the new-look Senators were swept by the Pittsburgh Penguins in the first round of the playoffs.

Regular season record (2006/07), (2007/08), (2008/09):

(48 - 25), (43 - 31), (36 - 35)

Postseason record (2006/07), (2007/08), (2008/09):

(13 - 7), (0 - 4), (n/a)



The original Senators logo featured a modern capital “O,” and served as the inspiration for the expansion team’s original wordmark logo.



**OTTAWA
SENATORS**

2007-present



1996-2003



2003-present

Phoenix Coyotes

Changed: 2003

Old:

When the “Jets” franchise moved from Winnipeg to Phoenix in 1996, they adopted the new name of “Coyotes.” Beginning their stay in Phoenix with a strong lineup and five playoff appearances in six consecutive years, the Coyotes were originally visually characterized by a strong southwestern influence: their primary and secondary logos were all in the “Kachina” art style of local Native American tribes. The typefaces the Coyotes utilized were a combination of a thick slab serif for the city (Phoenix) and a proportional sans serif for “Coyotes” (meaning all the letterforms are the same width). While certainly cultural and a good representation of the Phoenix geographic area, the logo had little in common with other NHL teams and the Kachina art style gave the primary logo an almost cartoon-inspired look.

New:

The Coyote’s original home rink (American West Arena) was not designed with hockey in mind; when the ice rink was set up, the attendance for games was capped at 16,000 – the second smallest NHL venue at the time. To coincide with the team’s move to the new Glendale Arena in 2003, the Coyotes’ look was given an update; dropping the Kachina-inspired style, the Coyotes moved to a more traditional, streamlined appearance, forgoing many colors from their original appearance and replacing the old typefaces. Apparently attempting to tone down on the somewhat eccentric styles of the past logo, the new wordmark of the Coyotes is clean and professional, contrasting Roman-esque serif “Coyotes” with a simple sans serif for “Phoenix.” While the Coyotes have had team and financial problems on and off the ice since their initial success, the season after the re-branding (and subsequent 2004/05 NHL lockout) was the first time in three seasons that Phoenix finished the regular season with a record above .500.

Regular season record (2002/03), (2003/04), (NHL Lockout):

(31 - 35), (22 - 36), (n/a)



PITTSBURGH
PENGUINS

1992-2000

Pittsburgh Penguins

Changed: 2000

Old:

After winning back-to-back Stanley Cups in the 1990–91 and 1991–92 seasons, the Pittsburgh Penguins changed their logo to the one pictured in the top-left of this page. The objective was a modern looking logo; this goal was arguably achieved, utilizing sharp angles and clean illustrations in the primary logo. The geometric sharpness carried over into the team's script logo, which utilized two angled sans serifs of differing stroke weights. Purportedly, the modern logo was never as widely accepted as their traditional "skating penguin" logo:

New:

While the more "modern" logo was used from 1992–93 to 1999–2000, every other logo in the team's history is closer in appearance to the skating penguin at the top-right of this page: especially important, a variation of this logo was used during the Penguins' back-to-back Stanley Cups. In 2000, Mario Lemieux (hall-of-famer Penguin center and MVP during both of Pittsburgh's Stanley Cups) bought the Penguins out of bankruptcy and announced plans to return to the team's more historic logo. Though the primary logo is largely unchanged from the one used in the Stanley Cup era, a new wordmark logo was introduced in the 2000-2001 season. While similar in its angularity to the previous wordmark, the new script logo incorporates hairline serifs popular in other NHL teams. Though the team saw little in terms of accomplishment in the seasons directly following the retrobranding, the Penguins eventually went on to win their third Stanley Cup in the 2008–09 season.

Regular season record (1999/00), (2000/01), (2001/02):

(37 - 31), (42 - 28), (28 - 41)

Postseason record (1999/00), (2000/01), (2001/02):

(6 - 3), (9 - 9), (n/a)



PITTSBURGH
penguins

2000-present



The Penguin's logo before the 1992 change. The yellow triangle is supposed to represent the "Golden Triangle" of downtown Pittsburgh.



1995-2007

2007-present

Washington Capitals

Changed: 2007

Old:

Joining the NHL as an expansion team in the 1974–75 season, the Capitals were initially terrible; setting league-worst records for regular season win percentages, the Capitals would not recover until 1982, when several key moves would net them 14 consecutive playoff appearances. Their logo at that time is pictured at the bottom-right of this page; it was used until 1995 when both the team colors and wordmark changed to the logo pictured top-left. This was an attempt to modernize the team's image as well as sell more merchandise. However, these objectives fell short – fans were not pleased with the new look, possibly because of its lack of integration with existing NHL culture: the logo unveiled in 1995 uses a modern serif typeface, a style that is only seen in the National Hockey League in the expansion Senator's original script logo.

New:

To coordinate with the launch of the Reebok Edge jerseys in 2007, the Capitals' look was again updated: this time, in the form of a retrobrand to be more consistent with the team's original image. Featuring a decorative angular sans serif for the word "Capitals," this logo is somewhat unique in the NHL, but is reportedly more well-liked by fans. After the change in 2007, the Capitals won their division for four straight seasons.

Regular season record (2006/07), (2007/08), (2008/09):

(28 - 40), (43 - 31), (50 - 24)

Postseason record (2006/07), (2007/08), (2008/09):

(n/a), (3 - 4), (7 - 7)



The Capitals' original logo was used from 1974 to 1995.

Chapter 4b

Survey Results

Survey Results

This section references the survey in Appendix 2

The survey section of this project was implemented as a way to measure and observe how a random sample would:

- be able to pick up on rebranding trends
- respond to rebrandings in relation to franchise's original design objectives
- respond to various examples of retrobranding
- pick up on typical characteristics of each league's typographical trends

In most cases, there are predictable results; that is, the responses to questions correlate with fan attitudes present in each rebranding examined earlier in Chapter 4.

The first content-based section of the survey, Question 2, asked the readers of the survey to identify tangible and intangible differences between the Carolina Panthers' original logo and their 2012 rebrand, as well as posing the question "Which do you see as more effective?" The older brand was placed on the left, while the newer was placed on the right. Key responses are listed below:

- *The left logo is very 90s. The right logo is bolder and more modern looking. The type is also easier to read.*
- *The text on the left is pretty unprofessional looking, and I think that the shading doesn't add any depth, but just makes it look very '90s'. The text on the right is definitely better, but it still isn't that impressive. Overall, I like the logo and text better on the right, as they are a bit simpler and more modern than the logo and text on the left.*
- *The panther has an outline and looks more like a cartoon on the left. The script looks flashier on the left but is easier to read on the right.*
- *Right logo is more sleek. It's more effective because it's more legible.*
- *The top (left) logo lettering is harder to read on a mobile device because the letters are smaller, which compresses the letter spacing. The logo of the panther is not as "smooth" as the bottom (right), although the logo on the top expresses more action and appears more aggressive.*

The purpose of this question was to evaluate public response to a recent branding change, and especially to ascertain whether the objectives of the rebranding were met and recognized by the general public. Those objectives according to the Carolina Panthers' administration were:

- a more modern, contemporary logo
- visibility across digital media
- increased wordmark legibility

According to the answers provided in this section of the survey, the rebranding of the Carolina Panthers was successful. Responders noted the overt modernness of the new logo compared to the old one, and in many cases commended the new wordmark on its increased legibility. A few survey answers even noted the new brand's increased application in digital media. Also, many respondents noticed the brand's departure from 90s and cartoon imagery – a trend identified by Scott Coulson. A majority of the survey participants favored the newer brand in terms of effectiveness.

The third survey question asked participants to visualize the most iconic sports logo they could, and comment on what makes the brand memorable or especially noteworthy. Key responses are listed below:

- *The golden state warriors trolley car logo. It's not current but it was a perfect representation of the city.*
- *The simpler the logo the better, as long as it is identifiable.*
- *The New York Yankees. It's simple, yet clean, classic, and historical.*
- *The winged wheel of the Detroit Red Wings in the NHL. It's a fairly simple concept, a wing on a wheel, but distinctive, related in theme to the host city with the inclusion of an automobile wheel, and beautifully executed.*
- *The most memorable logos are CLASSIC. While a new franchise obviously can't create 100 years of history in the first season, a 'back to basics' or 'less is more' logo usually works best.*
- *You don't want to move it too far away from its roots. Don't want to "reach" too far or you'll destroy the image.*
- *When teams update their logos to something more flashy, I tend to prefer their older logos.*

This question was intended to identify characteristics the audience believes contribute to a successful brand. One overwhelming trend in the responses to this question was the idealization of a “classic” logo. Many participants noted their preference for logos that represent the history of a team, and lamented when historic teams update their brand in a way that deviates from the original look of the team. These opinions are highly reflective of the retro-branding trend seen across the leagues in recent years; many of those rebrands were fan-motivated, and the responses to this question are consistent with that fact.

Another commonality amongst survey participants for this question was a preference for clean, simple logos. “Flashy” does not necessarily mean better, and many survey-takers noted that some of the best logos say the most by saying very little. This is especially consistent with teams in the NBA moving away from the highly stylized graphics of the late 1990s into cleaner, modern imagery.

The fourth question in the survey asked participants to comment on the methods of advertising used for sports teams around their hometown, as well as the effectiveness of those advertisements. Key responses are listed below:

- *In today's world, internet advertising through facebook and twitter is probably the best way to advertise.*
- *Internet Advertising. Many people my age spend a good deal of time on the internet.*
- *I think that the internet is the best way because it allows the fans to interact with the team.*
- *The newspapers all have the local sports teams somewhere on the front page, but internet advertising has to be the most effective.*
- *What does catch my attention is merchandise. People wearing team colors and jerseys and anything team-related on their bodies. Hats, shirts, shoes, those are the things I come in contact with the most.*

The point this question was meant to illustrate was the increasing digital presence of sports advertising. Though many respondents listed traditional forms of advertising to be the most common – such as newspapers, billboards, and television – a large portion of survey participants noted a marketing climate shift that focused more on the internet and in some cases, social networking. As teams like the Carolina Panthers acknowledge, the digital and mobile fronts are the newest advertising battleground, and visibility in those sectors is important in moving brands forward.

Some participants also mentioned that team merchandise was a large contributor to their advertising; teams like the Dallas Mavericks rebranded specifically to increase merchandising viability and visibility. As merchandise is a source of team revenue, it follows that it is significant consideration when teams rebrand.

The fifth survey question asked participants what they thought the reaction would be to a well-established team dramatically changing their brand. Key responses are listed below:

- *If it was a retro design it would probably work.*
- *I have always looked at a change in logo/uniform as an attempt by a team to separate itself from its losing past. With a winning past, why would you want to go away from that?*
- *There would be general upheaval from fans and the media alike if an established teams logo changed. However, after time, media becomes bored and the new logo would probably just become a general 'fan' topic point but less of an issue. However, if fans were enraged enough and had media backing their claims, I am sure that the team would rethink the logo change.*
- *I think the media loves seeing older styles of logos return. Washington Capitals, Toronto Blue Jays, Buffalo Sabres, Baltimore Orioles have all recently gone back to their older logos to high acclaim. I think drastic "re-innovations" are most accepted in the NBA.*
- *Negative reactions, probably making them revert to the old logo, think Coca-cola.*
- *People don't like change. They can accept it when the team is losing and want to send the message they are changing to a winner.*

The overwhelming response from survey-takers was that the reaction would be negative – however, a few of the more detailed answers had additional insight. One such insight was that the change would probably be more accepted if the team was trying to use the rebrand as a catalyst for winning. Scott Coulson believes that this is indeed a potential motivator for teams' identity changes; a great example is the five NFL teams who adopted wordmarks similar to that of the Denver Broncos and Baltimore Ravens – both of whom experienced immediate success following their own rebranding.

The survey responses also showed an understanding of the impact fans have on image changes: many participants noted that a dramatic enough change could warrant a fan backlash, and potentially a move back to the traditional logo. This is especially apparent in the marketing disasters of both the 2006 Buffalo Sabres and the 1996 New York Islanders, both of which retrobranded their logos following immediate fan controversy. Along the same thread, some survey-takers observed that teams retrobranding to imagery of past team success would potentially go over much better with fans than an entirely new look.

The series of questions numbered 6 – 13 asked participants to indicate their preference between two logos of the same team. The logos featured on the right were recent retrobrands to imagery from earlier in the teams' histories, while the logos on the left were the second-most recent iterations of the teams' brands.

For all questions except two, the retrobrands were preferred by overwhelming margins. This is consistent with data present in Chapter 4 that suggests in many cases, retrobrands were a result of pressure from fans. It also indicates the survey audience's preference for simpler logos – in most of the retrobrands featured in this survey, the new brand is much cleaner and more "modern" in appearance.

The two exceptions to the strong preference for retrobrands were the Buffalo Sabres and the New York Jets. In the case of the Sabres, the survey actually showed the second-most recent logo to be the most popular – and by a wide margin. A possible explanation for this outlier is that the Sabres are a relatively small-market team within the already small market of the NHL (compared to the other three major sports leagues). It is possible that the sampling of the survey did not accurately represent Sabres fans, who to date continue to lament the older logo. As for the New York Jets, the preference was still toward the retrobrand, but by a much smaller margin. The Jets haven't won a major championship since their AFL / NFL Superbowl victory in 1968 – Question 1 of the survey indicates the majority of survey takers were between the ages of 18 and 35. Perhaps that demographic doesn't remember the imagery of the team's championship era – of course, it is equally likely that the survey participants simply valued the aesthetics of the Jets' second-most recent logo.

This series of questions numbered 14 – 21 involved identifying which sports league an isolated letterform belonged to. Featuring two letters from each league, the letters were isolated from their wordmark in Adobe Illustrator

before being included in the survey – the letterforms were also desaturated, to avoid obvious clues to the letters' origins.

The purpose of this set of questions was to indicate how well the typographic styles of each league were recognized in individual letters. Six out of the eight letterforms were correctly identified by a majority of survey participants.

For the NFL, the “A” of the Houston Texans and the “N” of the Baltimore Ravens were used. Interestingly, the Texans' “A” gave the impression of an NHL team first, an MLB team second, and an NFL team third (according to the survey results). A possible explanation for this might be the lack of overt styling in Houston's wordmark, which was designed by the Verlander Design Studio. The Ravens' lettering, on the other hand, was recognized by the majority to be an NFL logo. The Ravens have a larger media presence than the Texans, as the franchise is older and has won a Superbowl.

For MLB teams, the “S” of the Boston Red Sox and the “T” of the Texas Rangers were used. These choices were very deliberate, as both teams use the gothic-inspired lettering that is prominent in Major League Baseball. Survey participants identified the two MLB easily and by a wide margin, further establishing the unique visual culture of baseball in America.

For the NBA, the “R” of the Los Angeles Lakers and the “T” of the Miami Heat were used. Both of these letterforms are unique in their lines suggesting movement – a trend a handful of teams in the NBA use (other examples include the Houston Rockets, Los Angeles Clippers, and Indiana Pacers). Both NBA letters were correctly identified by a majority of survey-takers, though the Miami Heat “T” also saw a large number who believed it to be part of an NFL logo.

From the NHL, the “U” of the Anaheim Ducks and the “P” of the Pittsburgh Penguins was used. Both letters were selected for the use of hairline serifs that have recently begun to see widespread use across the NHL. Survey participants had no problem identifying the Anaheim “U” as belonging to an NHL team, but the Pittsburgh “P” proved more challenging – NHL was answered behind both the NBA and MLB for the origins of the “P.”

Overall, the survey reflected research and trends present from earlier in Chapter 4 as well as noted by Scott Coulson in his interview in Appendix 1. Concluding remarks for both the rebranding analysis and the survey are contained in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Research Conclusions

This Chapter references the research present in Chapter 4, the survey in Chapter 4b and Appendix 2, and the interview with Scott Coulson in Appendix 1

National Football League

Verlander Design Studio and the Denver Bronco's Impact on NFL Wordmarks

In 1997, the Denver Broncos dropped the brand they had used since 1968 to introduce a new look for the team. While team had success in recent seasons prior to 1997 – advancing to the Superbowl three times since 1987 – they had yet to net themselves the championship title.

Following the rebrand, which was initially met with opposition from both fans and the media, the Broncos were led by John Elway to unprecedented success. Denver won back-to-back Superbowls during the 1997 and 1998 seasons, establishing the new team identity as one representing a championship-level Broncos team.

The legacy of the 97 and 98 Broncos continues to reverberate throughout the NFL in the form of their wordmark logo. The script unveiled by Denver in 1997 features a large size contrast between the team and city name, stacked on one another – the following seasons would see six other NFL franchises adopt a similar wordmark.

In 1999 – one season after the Broncos' second Superbowl – the Baltimore Ravens instigated a rebrand as a result of copyright controversy regarding their logo. This rebrand resulted in their current wordmark logo, which bears a high structural resemblance to the Broncos' script. The Ravens also had success under their new brand, winning the Superbowl just one season after the image change.

After the success of Denver and Baltimore, five more teams would adopt similar wordmarks: the Arizona Cardinals, Atlanta Falcons, Cincinnati Bengals, Houston Texans, and Seattle Seahawks. These teams' changes were made from 2002 to 2005; all were rebrandings except for the Houston Texans, who were founded in 2002 sporting the similarly-styled script.

These five teams had something in common with their new images: they were all created by Verlander Design Studio. Composed of Mark Verlander and his wife Susan, the studio has worked with the NBA and NFL on numerous occasions. In the case of the five rebrands following the change to Denver and Baltimore's logos, Verlander applied unique typefaces to each franchise, but retained a thread of stylistic and structural cohesion extremely similar to the Broncos' and Ravens' wordmarks.

Though tough to say with any certainty, the aesthetic correlation Verlander's work and the brand of the Broncos and Ravens appears to be beyond coincidence. And not without reason; according to Scott Coulson, Director of Creative Services at Dunbrook Apparel, the inspiration and drive to win are potential factors that contribute to a team's rebrand. And if any imagery reflects winning, it's the brand of the Broncos and Ravens introduced in 1997 and 1999.

It is interesting to note that although Denver and Baltimore netted Superbowl wins soon after their rebrand, none of the five teams the Verlander Design Studio worked on have won a Superbowl either before or after the image change – although the Arizona Cardinals have won two NFL championships, long before the AFL / NFL merger and existence of the Superbowl (ie prior to 1970)

The Modern Media Movement

A turn away from the nineties and an embrace of modern electronic communication is evident in recent NFL brand changes. According to Scott Coulson, "cartoon" imagery is being abandoned in many leagues as the visual styles of professional sports leagues move into the 21st century. Coulson also notes that when designing for any application, it is important to consider the applications of the design on a variety of substrates, as well as how the image will display across different media – especially important with the rise of internet and mobile advertisements. Clean lines and a more modern look lend themselves especially well to digital applications, and that trend is apparent in the recent rebrands across sports leagues.

A particularly good example of an NFL team rebranding with these factors in mind is the Carolina Panthers. In early 2012 the Panthers announced an update to the franchises' image. Previously, Carolina's script logo featured a highly stylized, "clawed-out" display typeface that evoked the grungy visual culture of the 1990s. Moving forward with the 2012 rebrand, the new Panthers wordmark is a much simpler sans serif with discretionary claw accents in the letters – perhaps not as edgy as the previous wordmark, but more legible and professional. The team also modernized their primary logo, electing to use cleaner lines with the objective of a more "contemporary" look. The Panthers' administration also noted their desire to give the brand more visibility on digital platforms. This trend is also seen in the Atlanta Falcons' and Baltimore Ravens' script logos, who eschewed stylization in favor of legibility and visibility.

Retrobranding

The only overt case of retrobranding present in the NFL since 1997 is that of the New York Jets. Departing from the team's original look in 1978, the team went back to its roots – with a few modifications – with a rebranding in 1998. This was a result of veterans from the Jets' only championship team (1968 AFL-NFL Superbowl) wanting the team to return to the imagery that defined them at that time.

Though retrobranding has not been prevalent in the NFL in the past fifteen years, other leagues have seen a handful of teams returning to historic imagery that marked success in their past – the Jets join them in celebrating again an era of winning and tradition.

Conclusion

Entertainment is a business, and the franchises belonging to the National Football League treat it as such. With the objective of increased revenue from fans, advertisers, and stakeholders, recent changes in branding by NFL teams show an adherence to trends that will net them points with their fans.

Verlander Design Studio's impact on NFL wordmarks is a great example. According to Scott Coulson, drive or inspiration to win can be a motivator in teams' rebranding. This is reaffirmed by one survey participant when asked what fans and media think of dramatic logo changes: *"They can accept it when the team is losing and want to send the message they are changing to a winner."* After the Denver Broncos' and Baltimore Ravens' Superbowl wins under their respective new imagery, it would be hard to argue that other franchises did not take notice. Their drive to win potentially motivated them towards similar imagery – and nothing helps an organization's popularity with fans like a winning team.

With the internet and social networking carrying huge cultural weight, teams like the Carolina Panthers use bold new imagery to increase visibility and legibility for web and mobile platforms. As part of a survey question, participants were asked to identify differences between the newer and older Carolina Panthers brand; responses included: *"The left [old] logo is very 90s. The right [new] logo is bolder and more modern looking. The type is also easier to read."* and *"Right logo is more sleek. It's more effective because it's more legible."* When asked about typical advertising methods for their hometown teams, participants replied: *"In today's world, internet advertising through facebook and twitter is probably the best way to advertise,"* and *"The newspapers all have the local sports teams somewhere on the front page, but internet advertising has to be the most effective."* Teams know that the internet and social networking are very big parts of modern culture; they also know that visibility in these media is extremely important. More legible wordmarks and cleaner imagery makes for better online branding, which in turn fuels internet storefronts for merchandise and ticket sales. An online presence is turning from a "good" idea to a mandatory one; this is reflected exceptionally well by the Carolina Panthers' recent image change. It would be a safe prediction that teams will continue to update or rebrand their imagery to lend themselves more to online media.

Major League Baseball

“Baseball Script”

Major League Baseball has a distinct visual culture that dates back to its origins in 1869. One common element that many teams in the league share is a flowing script logo, typically characterized by a swash trailing the last letter and forming an underline below the wordmark. Almost every MLB team uses a “baseball script” logo in the form of either a wordmark or alternate logo, and since 1997 four more teams were added to that collective: the Cincinnati Reds, Houston Astros, Milwaukee Brewers, and Washington Nationals.

Interestingly, the Houston Astros and Milwaukee Brewers rebranded to include a classic baseball script at the same time (2000) – just after the New York Yankees, one of the most prominent brands in the world let alone sports, had won back-to-back World Series. The Yankees have used a baseball script since 1947 and went on to win a third straight World Series in 2000.

The changes by these individual teams may not be highly original, but serve to further cement baseball’s unique, cohesive visual culture.

Departure from Cartoon Imagery

Scott Coulson’s observation of teams moving away from cartoony imagery can be witnessed in recent changes by three MLB franchises.

First, by the Anaheim Angels: purchased by The Walt Disney Company in 1996, the Angels changed their name from “California Angels” to “Anaheim Angels” with the switch in ownership and move to a new stadium. Accompanying those changes was a new brand for the Angels: a flowing wordmark featuring a cartoony, illustrated angel wing emanating from the capital “A.” Before the 2002 MLB season, the Angels were again rebranded – this time to a cleaner, more traditional baseball style featuring the gothic-inspired lettering used prior to the team’s purchase by Disney. With the new look, the Angels went on to win the 2002 World Series.

The second instance of modernization comes from the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, who changed their name to simply the Tampa Bay Rays in 2008. Departing from the illustrated devil ray and stylized wordmark logo, the Rays rebranded to a much cleaner and professional look that includes a modern slab serif wordmark. The same season of this logo change the Rays had their first ever winning season, advancing in the playoffs to the World Series which they eventually lost to the Philadelphia Phillies.

Finally, the Toronto Blue Jays recently rebranded before the start of the 2012 season. Prior to that change, the Jays’ primary logo featured a shaded “Jays” wordmark with an illustrated cartoon bird appearing behind the capital “J.” Responding to pressure from fans, the Blue Jays adopted a new look similar to their original logo from the team’s founding, which features very clean lines and no shading. At its reveal, the new logo was an instant hit with fans and the media.

MLB and Circular Logos

The imagery of a circular brand has become increasingly popular in Major League Baseball in recent years. With the addition of Milwaukee Brewers in 2000, the Washington Nationals in 2011, and the Toronto Blue Jays and San Diego Padres in 2012, the league totals 12 teams that utilize a round primary logo. Some of MLB’s highest profile teams, such as the New York Yankees and Chicago Cubs, are among those to use a circular brand.

The round brand is another aspect of baseball’s visual cohesion that, like the baseball script, serves to unify the league aesthetically.

Retrobranding

Two teams in MLB have retrobranded since 1997: the Anaheim Angels in 2002, and the Toronto Blue Jays in 2012.

The Anaheim Angels (as they were known from 1997 to 2004) used gothic-style lettering as part of their team's brand since the Angels' founding in 1961 until 1970, and again from 1993 to 1996. In 1997 following the team's purchase by Disney, the Angels rebranded to a highly stylized, illustrated look that forewent the team's gothic lettering. However, in 2002 the Angels again rebranded, returning to the typographical style that had defined them for the majority of the team's existence. The retrobrand was followed by the Angels' first and only World Series win.

The second MLB team to retrobrand within the past 15 years is the Toronto Blue Jays. The Jays, who used the team's original brand since its founding in 1977 until 1996, underwent a series of image changes from 1997 until 2011. Important to note is the Blue Jays' only championships are back-to-back World Series won in 1992 and 1993 – under their original logo.

Responding to pressure from fans, in 2012 the Blue Jays unveiled a retrobrand whose primary logo was an updated version of the team's original logo – marking the return to imagery representing the Blue Jays' championship era. Toronto's updated logo has quickly become one of the most well received rebrandings ever, drawing rave reviews from fans and media.

Conclusion

Being America's pastime, baseball has deep roots in United States' culture. With those deep roots come an established visual tradition; Major League Baseball and its associated teams have created a distinct look with recognizability that is difficult to rival. This is evidenced by results of the survey conducted as part of this research: only MLB and NBA teams had their isolated letterforms accurately identified in both of their respective questions.

Anything liked by fans is sure to influence sports franchises, and MLB is no different. Teams' appeals to fans (and by association, their wallets) can be observed in the design decisions in recent rebrandings of baseball teams. In the past fifteen years, many "classic" elements of baseball aesthetics were revisited. These include the Milwaukee Brewers' and Houston Astros' new "baseball script" wordmarks, as well as many teams incorporating a circular design in their logos.

Fans have a lot to say on the matter: when asked what elements contributed to an iconic logo, survey participants had responses like: *"It's simple, yet clean, classic, and historical."* and *"The most memorable logos are CLASSIC."* Classic, historical logos are the name of the game in MLB. From the gothic-inspired lettering of the Boston Red Sox to the flowing script of the New York Yankees, baseball's aesthetics are steeped in tradition – tradition appreciated by fans.

Scott Coulson notes that the 21st century is seeing a departure from cartoony, 90s-inspired imagery. This is true in MLB, as demonstrated by the Tampa Bay Rays, Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, and Toronto Blue Jays. All of these teams eschewed decorative illustrations in favor of clean, professional brands – indicated in the survey to be a fan preference, as well as having increased viability in digital media. In the case of the Angels and Blue Jays, we can also see the trend of retrobranding: Scott Coulson observes the popularity of throwback uniforms and logos across teams and leagues. For the Blue Jays, fan pressure led to an eventual rebrand to the franchise's original imagery. When asked what fans' reaction would be to any team's rebrand, one survey participant noted: *"If it was a retro design it would probably work."*

National Basketball Association

The Move Away from 3D

The late 1990s saw four NBA franchises update their brand to a highly stylized, three-dimensional look. It also saw the founding of the Toronto Raptors and Vancouver Grizzlies, the latter also electing to represent their team with a dimensional wordmark. Chronologically, the Grizzlies were founded in 1995, the Houston Rockets and Detroit Pistons rebranded in 1996, and the Golden State Warriors and New Jersey Nets rebranded in 1997.

After the turn of the century, these teams all rebranded again to much cleaner, simpler logos without the use of 3D: Scott Coulson would suggest that a possible reason for this would be a departure from the visual culture of the 90s, as well as teams' desires to easily apply their logo to a variety of media – including the ever-increasing presence of the internet and mobile platforms.

In 2003, the Houston Rockets rebranded to a much cleaner look with less graphical frills in its wordmark. The primary logo also saw the inclusion of motion lines, design aspect used by the high-profile Los Angeles Lakers, as well as the Los Angeles Clippers and Indiana Pacers.

In 2004, the Grizzlies (who moved to Memphis in 2001) dropped the depth present in their logo, electing for a simpler wordmark with high legibility.

In 2005, the Detroit Pistons dropped the gradient and perspective shift in their wordmark in favor of the script arched and imposed on a basketball – with no three dimensional aspects.

In 2010, the Golden State Warriors dropped their angular, stylized three dimensional wordmark and returned to imagery from earlier in the history of the franchise. The decorative typeface was removed and replaced with a transitional serif.

In 2012, the New Jersey Nets moved to Brooklyn and redubbed themselves the Brooklyn Nets. The name and location change also brought about a new brand, takes the “simple, clean, and modern” ideal to hyperbole, using only the colors black and white and electing to have zero visual depth in any of the teams' branding.

Retrobranding

Since 1997, two NBA teams have undergone a retrobrand: the Detroit Pistons in 2005, and the Golden State Warriors in 2010.

The Pistons' rebrand came just two seasons after the team won its third NBA Championship in the 2003 / 2004 season. The teams' first two championships were won back-to-back in 1989 and 1990, when the team carried the nickname “Bad Boys” – a tribute to their aggressive, defensive play style. The image change in 2005 is intended to be an update to the brand of the “Bad Boys” era.

The Warriors' rebrand returned the team to the blue and yellow color scheme as well as the circular motif the franchise had used from 1962 to 1997. It also included the eastern span of the San Francisco Bay Bridge, a nod to the team's imagery from 1969 to 1971 – a brand very popular with fans.

Conclusion

The last fifteen years saw a number of NBA teams move away from complex, dimensional, illustrated designs in favor of clean, simple, and bold imagery. A possible explanation for this change could be the departure from 90s imagery that Scott Coulson noted. Other motivations behind the image changes could be similar to that of the Carolina Panthers: cleaner, more legible imagery lends itself better to a variety of digital media – and a higher online presence potentially means more profit for the team through merchandise and ticket sales, as well as advertising and endorsements.

Another motivation behind the rebrandings could be adherence to fan preference. Throughout the survey, participants indicated their preference for clean, classic logos. Updates departing from 3D and illustrated imagery are indicative of this preference. NBA teams like the Detroit Pistons and Golden State Warriors recently retrobranded to aesthetics more reflective of each teams' history. In the case of the Golden State Warriors, one survey respondent explicitly noted *"The golden state warriors trolley car logo. It's not current but it was a perfect representation of the city."* Another participant commented on classic sports brands: *"You don't want to move it too far away from its roots. Don't want to 'reach' too far or you'll destroy the image."* Nostalgia is an emotion that permeates into the sports world, and enough of it among sports fans can make some franchises retrobrand to previous logos and wordmarks.

National Hockey League

The Angled Hairline Serif

A trait common across many NHL teams is the inclusion of angled, thin serifs protruding from letterforms in teams' wordmark logos. Though present in many of the leagues' teams prior to 2005, that year saw the NHL itself change its logo to include the hairline serifs – following the 2004 - 2005 lockout. Since that time, much of the official NHL branding as well as a handful of its teams have begun to utilize these extra strokes, which suggest fast movement and contribute an edgy, angular aspect to the league's visual culture.

Looking at the NHL as a whole, the look originated with the founding of the Florida Panthers in 1993. The Panthers introduced a wordmark with heavy application of the angular serifs – since then, 10 additional teams have included the serifs in their wordmarks, including the NHL itself.

After the lockout, the first team to win the Stanley Cup was the Carolina Hurricanes, who utilize the hairline serifs with a heavy hand. This, combined with the NHL's inclusion of the serifs in its own brand, saw the beginning of more teams utilizing the style: including the Anaheim Ducks' rebranding in 2006 and the Ottawa Senators' rebranding in 2007.

Retrobranding

Retrobranding is a trend more popular in the NHL compared to other sports leagues, evidenced by six teams that have reverted their brand to a previous iteration since 1997. These teams include the Boston Bruins, Buffalo Sabres, New York Islanders, Pittsburgh Penguins, Washington Capitals, and to a lesser extent, the Edmonton Oilers.

2007 saw the introduction of Reebok's new Edge jersey into the NHL; several teams rebranded or made brand adjustments to coordinate with this launch. The Boston Bruins were one of the teams to do so, introducing a new "B" insignia that departed from their sans serif typeface and instead utilized a slab serif – which the Bruins had used from 1932 to 1948.

In 2010, following fan dissatisfaction with a new brand, the Buffalo Sabres returned to imagery used from 1970 to 1996. During that time period, the Sabres had arguably some of their best players, earning them the nickname "The French Connection" for its three all-star forwards. The Sabres' most recent look is a nod to that time.

The New York Islanders after a botched rebrand that resulted in a media disaster in 1996, returned just one season later to the brand they had used since the teams' founding in 1972. That brand was used during the Islanders' four consecutive Stanley Cups from 1980 to 1983.

For a brief stint from 1993 to 1999, the Pittsburgh Penguins adopted a new logo with the objective of a more modern, contemporary identity. The team had used the "Skating Penguin" graphic in their logo since the team's founding in 1967, and won back-to-back Stanley Cups under the graphic in 1991 and 1992. In 2000, the team was purchased by Penguin hall-of-famer Mario Lemieux, who instigated a rebrand to return the team to its original imagery. The new 2000 brand also included an updated wordmark that used the NHL-signature hairline serifs. The Penguins went on to win another Stanley Cup under this graphic in 2008.

In 2007 the Washington Capitals also updated their look to coordinate with the launch of the new Reebok Edge jersey. Prior to that rebrand, the Capitals' wordmark was a modern serif typeface; a typographic style no other team in the league used besides the Ottawa Senators (prior to their own rebrand in 2007). The Capitals' new look was unveiled in 2007 to be a return to the team's original branding at the time of the franchise's founding: this was the identity that marked the majority of the Capitals' 14 consecutive playoff appearances from 1982 to 1996.

When the Edmonton Oilers updated their look in 2011, they left their primary logo unchanged aside from new colors. The colors are representative of the Oiler's image from 1972 to 1996; during that time, the Oilers won four

Stanley Cups – an effort spearheaded by Wayne Gretzky, the “Michael Jordan” of professional hockey. The new colors represent a revert to aesthetics that marked the Oilers as a championship team.

Conclusion

The National Hockey League is somewhat unique, in terms of its trend of retrobranding. In the last fifteen years the NHL has had the most retrobrands, two of which were an immediate result of a media disaster. The Buffalo Sabres and New York Islanders both had rebrands that generated immediate controversy, and as a result of the subsequent fan pressure both teams retrobranded within a few seasons. One survey participant was quoted earlier saying that teams should not “reach” too much when making changes – undoubtedly, the Islanders and Sabres saw the negative effects of reaching too far too fast.

The NHL had a few more retrobrands in recent years. These are generally well received across leagues: according to one survey participant, *“I think the media loves seeing older styles of logos return. Washington Capitals, Toronto Blue Jays, Buffalo Sabres, Baltimore Orioles have all recently gone back to their older logos to high acclaim.”* In the section of the survey that asked participants to select between a team’s retrobrand and its older [non-original] brand, almost all responses overwhelmingly favored the retrobrand. Scott Coulson also noted that throwback imagery is popular with fans – this desire for nostalgia mixes with generally popular media and fan disposition towards retrobrands; it could be a motivator for franchises who are looking to update their image. With the most recent hockey retrobrand occurring in 2011, it is a trend that is safe to assume will continue in the coming years.

Final Conclusion

The survey conducted as part of this study represents opinions. Opinions of potential merchandise buyers, potential television audience, and potential season-ticket holders. Teams use their brand as a way to visually represent themselves to their respective target markets; because so much money is on the line, the aesthetics of that brand are especially important. Thus, it is equally important to pay attention to the needs and preferences of fans – fans whose dedication monetarily fuels the franchise.

Fans dislike change. The NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL are all steeped in visual culture; as there exist franchises with over 100 years of history, there also exist fans already content with established tradition. Image changes are always a potentially dangerous move. This is especially apparent in hockey teams like the Buffalo Sabres and New York Islanders; shortly after each of their rebrandings, a negative fan and media fueled frenzy drove the franchises to retrobrand to previous iterations of their logos and typography.

Retrobrandings are typically hailed by media and fans alike – evidenced by positive reviews of the Toronto Blue Jays' and the Golden State Warriors' recent image changes. It also shows in the responses of questions 6-13 of the survey in Appendix 2; in every case but two, participants' preferences were overwhelmingly weighted to the more recent "retrobrand" than to the teams' previous imagery. As most views towards retrobrandings are positive, the research points to the idea that it is a trend that will continue in the future of American Sports.

Another trend present throughout sports rebrands in recent history is a move towards, cleaner, bolder imagery, as well as a focus on legibility in the typography of sports brands. The motivations behind these changes are twofold: first, moving into a new century has changed popular imagery and visual culture of the United States; the 90s had a classic visual "feel" that saw a downtrend in the earlier years of the 21st century. Teams like the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, Anaheim Ducks, and Tampa Bay Rays all saw a departure from cartoony branding and a move towards a more professional image. There are other benefits to adopting higher legibility and cleaner designs; with the internet and social networking carrying huge cultural weight, teams like the Carolina Panthers and Miami Marlins use bold new imagery to increase visibility and legibility for web and mobile platforms. As part of a survey question, participants were asked to identify differences between the newer and older Carolina Panthers brand; responses included: *"The left [old] logo is very 90s. The right [new] logo is bolder and more modern looking. The type is also easier to read."* and *"Right logo is more sleek. It's more effective because it's more legible."* When asked about typical advertising methods for their hometown teams, participants replied: *"In today's world, internet advertising through facebook and twitter is probably the best way to advertise,"* and *"The newspapers all have the local sports teams somewhere on the front page, but internet advertising has to be the most effective."* The most recent team to rebrand to extremely clean imagery is the Brooklyn Nets; research shows that as the popularity of social networking rises, so will franchises' desire to have a strong online presence.

Throughout research on the four major American sports leagues, certain facets of typographical design made themselves present in multiple brands across one league. After the research and during the authoring of the survey, a brief test was created to assess the one's ability to pick up on these trends across different leagues. This test manifested itself as isolated letters from the wordmarks of different teams, and asking the participant to identify which league that team was from. Typographical characteristics included ranged from Major League Baseball's gothic-inspired lettering, the National Basketball Association's elements of movement, the National Hockey League's angular hairline serifs, and the National Football League's similarly-styled "Denver Broncos" wordmarks. Six out of eight "isolated letter" questions on the survey resulted in a majority of participants selecting the correct league. This leg of the research suggests that typographic characteristics in logos are a large part in promoting franchise visibility; this is yet another trend that will continue for years into American sports' future.

What an exciting future it is for American sports, and especially to see the visual culture of franchises continue to evolve. Sports and its associated media is a huge part of United States culture; it's a form of entertainment that

has been around for centuries and will continue to be a part of our lives for years to come. With all the things that change in the sports world, it's certain one won't: fans acting as the lifeblood that fuels organizations, providing them with capital through ticket, merchandising, and advertising sales. Fans have so much pull on teams throughout different leagues, it's natural that their tastes guide the imagery that teams use for their branding. This is demonstrated by cases of retrobranding as a result of fan pressure, a departure from nineties aesthetics in favor of bolder, more professional designs, moves towards higher internet visibility, and the use of typographical characteristics to increase overall brand awareness. The research conducted in this project and in the survey suggest that these trends have been present, are present, and will continue in future rebrandings. It will be exciting to see how the visual styles of each league will evolve in the years to come!

Appendix I

Scott Coulson Interview

Name: Scott Coulson

Company: Dunbrook Apparel

Position: Director of Creative services – handles all imagery pertaining to branding (eblasts, printed ads, branding projects, any graphic branding)

Interview Conducted: 2/26/12

What sport have you done most of your logo design? Is that because your company targets that work or would you say that particular sport changes its image most?

NFL definitely, but also work with the other big 3. NFL has a big budget, plus with previous relationship with Reebok, continues to grow.

What do you think of the trend of a handful of sports teams retrobranding?

Possibly could be associated with team success – don't want to try to put words in the mouths of their marketing (throwbacks are always popular with every league and team). Anything that brings a fresh image .

At the start of the 21st century, Anaheim made some key re branding with its two major sports teams – in 02 the re imaging of the angels and in 06 the re imaging of the ducks (after the lockout and sale of the mighty ducks). What trends do you notice in these changes?

Definite move away from the 90s cartoon imagery. Set the stage for fresh approach: rebranding is a quick way to turn the image and public perception. New owners will want to bring own approach and leave their mark. Form and function play a big part of forming team brands. Want logos to be recognizable for target market – image is everything! Essentially left up to decision makers, trying to move their team forward.

Could recent success with Cam Newton be a reason for the Panthers' image change?

Could possibly be a factor in bringing a new image to the team, especially with recent success. Could be inspiration to win or drive to win, or change in public perception.

Miami Marlins, makes a big departure from the Florida marlin's more traditional slab serif and baseball pinstripes in favor of bold, bright colors and sans serifs – your thoughts?

Cool, subtle. Very graphic. Simplistic, deliberate. Have to think: whatever design you come up with has to be applicable on a variety of substrates and locations; reason for this simplicity. It's clean but has a little bit of an edge to it. Very forward.

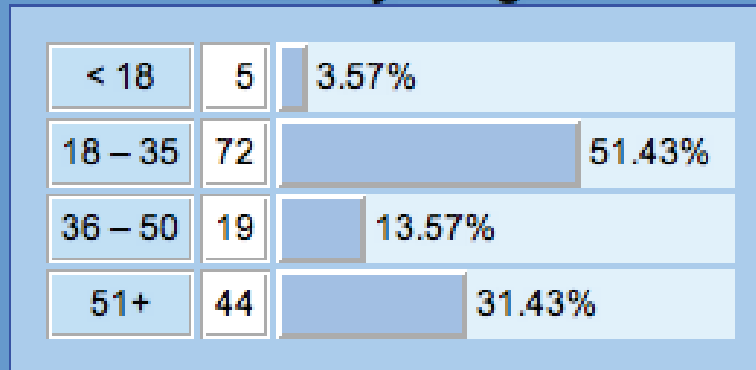
Appendix 2

Survey

The survey for this project was generated using the kwiksurveys.com platform

Question 1*

What is your age?



Pop-up

Question 2



What differences, both tangible and intangible, do you see between the logos on the left and right? Please describe for both the primary logo (top) and the script logo (bottom). Which do you see as more effective?

Question 3

Think of the most iconic sports team logo you can (NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL). What makes it memorable / noteworthy? What changes do you think could be made, if any?

Question 4

What methods of sports advertising are used around your hometown? Think newspapers, billboards, banners – as well internet advertising. Which of these is most effective at capturing your attention as a sports fan?

Question 5

What do you think the media's reaction would be to a drastic change to an established championship team's logo – both in the short and long term? Think the New York Yankees, or the Los Angeles Lakers.

Key answers for questions 2 - 5 are displayed and evaluated in Chapter 4.5

Question 6*

For the next eight questions, indicate your preference between the two logos shown:



Left	60	42.86%
Left Somewhat	17	12.14%
Neutral	8	5.71%
Right Somewhat	20	14.29%
Right	35	25.00%

Question 7*



Left	31	22.14%
Left Somewhat	16	11.43%
Neutral	10	7.14%
Right Somewhat	23	16.43%
Right	60	42.86%

Question 8*



Left	27	19.29%
Left Somewhat	17	12.14%
Neutral	24	17.14%
Right Somewhat	27	19.29%
Right	45	32.14%

Question 9*



Left	20	14.29%
Left Somewhat	3	2.14%
Neutral	4	2.86%
Right Somewhat	28	20.00%
Right	85	60.71%

Question 10*



Left	26	18.57%
Left Somewhat	14	10.00%
Neutral	15	10.71%
Right Somewhat	19	13.57%
Right	66	47.14%

Question 11*



Left	24	17.14%
Left Somewhat	16	11.43%
Neutral	13	9.29%
Right Somewhat	19	13.57%
Right	68	48.57%

Question 12*



Left	37	26.43%
Left Somewhat	21	15.00%
Neutral	17	12.14%
Right Somewhat	25	17.86%
Right	40	28.57%

Question 13*



Left	23	16.43%
Left Somewhat	13	9.29%
Neutral	13	9.29%
Right Somewhat	28	20.00%
Right	63	45.00%

Question 14*

For the next 8 questions, there is a letterform isolated from the logo of a sports team in either the NHL, MLB, NFL, or NBA. Indicate which league the letterform is from.



NHL	50	35.71%
MLB	46	32.86%
NFL	29	20.71%
NBA	15	10.71%

Question 15*



NHL	88	62.86%
MLB	4	2.86%
NFL	9	6.43%
NBA	39	27.86%

Question 16*



NHL	8	5.71%
MLB	119	85.00%
NFL	8	5.71%
NBA	5	3.57%

Question 17*



NHL	25	17.86%
MLB	36	25.71%
NFL	6	4.29%
NBA	73	52.14%

Question 18*

P

NHL	31	22.14%
MLB	44	31.43%
NFL	20	14.29%
NBA	45	32.14%

Question 19*

T

NHL	27	19.29%
MLB	11	7.86%
NFL	49	35.00%
NBA	53	37.86%

Question 20*

N

NHL	36	25.71%
MLB	29	20.71%
NFL	51	36.43%
NBA	24	17.14%

Question 21*

T

NHL	6	4.29%
MLB	101	72.14%
NFL	28	20.00%
NBA	5	3.57%

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