

1926

## NAME FOR OBERLIN'S TEAMS SOLICITED IN CONTEST BY REVIEW

Some Term to Apply to all Athletic Aggregations Such as "Bishops" and "Pioneers" is Sought

### COMMITTEE TO CHOOSE

Will Select Five Most Appealing, Leaving Student Body to Name Most Desirable One

October 26, 1926

In an effort to devise some term by which to refer to Oberlin's athletic teams such as Ohio Wesleyan has in the "Bishops" or Reserve in the "Pioneers," the *Review* is soliciting suggestions from members of the student body in a contest to close Monday night, Nov. 8, the reward in which will be a free subscription to the paper.

A committee, composed of Director of Athletics C. W. Savage, Coach Ppaul E. MacEachron and Captain "Bill" Zwick, will select five of the

most appealing names from the suggestions offered and the student body will be given the privilege of naming the one of those five which they most desire.

At the "pep" meeting to be held Friday night, Nov. 12, just before the Miami game, the cheer leaders will present a new yell employing the selected name and the person whose suggestion was chosen will be announced.

All persons having names to submit should send them to "Shorts," care of the *Review*, or leave them at the office on South Main street, accompanied by their signature.

From  
FIVE NAMES CHOSEN  
BY COMMITTEE FOR  
OBERLIN'S ATHLETES,  
published November 12, 1926

"The High-O's was chosen because in the estimation of the committee it represented the habitual high standing of Oberlin's athletic teams both in sportsmanship and high caliber. Kingbirds was selected because of its reference to President H. C. King and since the kingbird is known to be "small but mighty."

Ocats was taken from the initial letters of Oberlin College Athletic Teams. Savages appealed to the committee because of its "scrappy" suggestion and because of its recognition of the head of Oberlin's athletic department.

Yeomen was derived from a combination of Ye-O-Men and was chosen because of its cleverness and implication of fighting warriors.

Some other names considered were Plummers, Alsatians, which referred to the original Oberlin and the sturdiness of that nationality, the Jasons and the Mariners.

A free subscription of the paper will be awarded by the *Review* to the person whose suggestion is finally accepted."

## YEOMEN WINS OVER SAVAGES IN CHAPEL VOTE TAKEN TODAY

Winning Appellation Submitted by L. Lee Shackson  
Leads 647--589 Count

### SECOND POLL TAKEN

Previous Voting Drew Small and Unrepresentative  
Number of Ballots

November 12, 1926

In a special vote taken after chapel today, the term "Yeomen," submitted in the appellation contest by L. Lee Shackson, Cons., was selected by a count of 647 to 589.

The second poll was taken because, in the estimate of the *Review*, the 290 votes cast in the first poll was not representative of the faculty and student body because of its smallness. The prize offered, however, is awarded to the person who suggested the winning name of that poll, which was likewise the "Yeomen."

Results of the previous poll gave the Savages only 103 as against 146 for the Yeomen and 41 votes were scattered among the other three suggestions, Ocats, Kingbirds and High-O's.

From a list of 40 suggestions submitted by 25 persons, a special committee consisting of Director C. W. Savage, Coach Paul N. MacEachron and Captain C. W. Zwick, selected the five which seemed to them to be the most appropriate. Ballooning has been carried on in Warner hall, Peters court and the library since then and the results ascertained last night.

2023

## Gendered "Yeo" Team Names Not Representative of Oberlin

John Elrod  
Sports Editor  
February 24, 2023

I don't think I would be wrong in saying that small, non-sectarian, liberal arts colleges like Oberlin are often at the forefront of progressive dialogue. So at a school that takes pride in being inclusive to transgender and non-binary students — a number of whom are on sports teams — it doesn't make sense to have team names based on the gender binary. I'm not arguing that Yeomen or Yeowomen as names are particularly offensive, but I think we can do better to represent the students. If Oberlin wants to maintain its status as a school known for social progressiveness that values inclusivity of people of all identities, dropping Yeomen and Yeowomen seems like a reasonable change to make.

Before I get into what a change would look like, I want to clarify that my issue is with

the "men" and "women" components of the names. I also want to acknowledge the extensive history of the Yeomen. As someone who grew up in Oberlin and went to the College's sports games as a kid, I understand why people would feel a strong connection to it. Hearing the late Oberlin football PA announcer George Abram say, "First down ... YEOOOOOOMEN," in his deep voice was a big part of my Oberlin sports experience growing up. There's no doubt that the unique name has become iconic in Oberlin sports.

The history of how the teams became the Yeomen is also really interesting. When Oberlin first introduced athletics teams, the athletes became known for the letter "O" on their jackets. This led to people referring to them as "Ye-O-Men," and the name Yeomen was chosen after a contest held in a 1926 issue of the *Review*. The cleverness of this decision — a yeoman is someone who holds and cultivates a small plot of land — was also considered. There is

definitely a strong history with the name, and the teams that have gone by the Yeomen and Yeowomen shouldn't be forgotten.

While all this history is important, we must also consider the present. Recognizing what other schools have done when faced with similar issues regarding sports team names should be a part of this process. Just last year, fellow North Coast Athletic Conference member and our biggest rival Kenyon College renamed its teams to the Owls from the Lords and Ladies. An article published in the Kenyon Collegian detailed the need for a name change in 2021 prior to the switch, citing the issue of the gendered binary that the names set.

It's also important to point out that many college athletic programs have never even had gendered names. In addition to names inspired by animals, there are other creative genderless college team names — just in Ohio there are the Ohio State Buckeyes, the Akron Zips, and the Denison Big Red. Having gen-

dered team names isn't the norm — and it's pretty odd that Oberlin, of all places, has them.

So, what else could Oberlin's sports teams go by? The answer lies in the albino squirrels that have been seen on campus for years. After all, there are already albino squirrel logos and merchandise used by the athletic department, not to mention the physical albino squirrel mascot named Yeobie — who uses they/them pronouns.

Because my main problem with the current name is the "men" and "women" part of it, the "Yeo" part can and should stay around in traditions and imagery for the teams. Many other college teams have nicknames and imagery that they are associated with that aren't their official team name. University of Auburn sports fans shout "War Eagle!" even though the actual team name is the Tigers, and the University of Alabama Crimson Tide teams have an elephant mascot and logo. We can keep the "Go Yeo!" chants and probably even GoYeo, the

website for Oberlin Athletics. As mentioned before, Yeobie, our mascot, has "Yeo" in the name. I am not looking to erase the "Yeo" tradition; rather, I just think we can better represent the diversity of gender identities on our teams with a new official name.

I know how much sports team name changes make people mad. Oberlin City Schools went through a name change when I was a kid, and my favorite baseball team, the Cleveland Guardians, adopted a new name just last year. A lot of people were angry at both these changes, making accusations that they were erasing history or just looking to appeal to people of certain political groups. To anyone who thinks I'm trying to cancel an important piece of Oberlin College history; I am not. I'm just asking Oberlin to reflect on whether having sports team names that follow the gender binary — when many of its students don't — makes sense.

## Crimson Athletes...

★ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

as men would be demoralizing to the male ego; and (3) There are not enough women interested in that kind of competition or in sports in general to make the proposal worthwhile.

### The Femininity Question

It is clear that the general consensus of opinion at Oberlin is different from that expressed at the OAC meeting last month. When asked whether or not they considered women jocks unfeminine, the most common answer is a very firm, "No."

According to swimmer Sue Bloomfield, "It depends on your definition of femininity. I think it's mostly bunk. If your definition of femininity is basically relatively unathletic, very introverted, well, I'd very much rather be in shape and feel good, and too bad if I lost my femininity in the process."

When asked the same question,

soccer tri-captain Bruce Wright replied, "No, I don't think women athletes are unfeminine." Kaya Hoshino, co-captain of women's field hockey team and captain of women's lacrosse, commented, "I think that's bullshit!"

Micki Scott, director of the Institute for the Study of Sport and Society, commented, "That's purely ridiculous. There's no way athletic competition necessarily defeminizes. Athletic competition is dehumanizing for anyone under certain circumstances, and hopefully women would tend to define their own competition in these situations."

### Fragile Male Ego?

When asked whether or not having a woman on the same team would harm the male ego, basketball captain Marty Dugan replied, "I think that people should be able to participate in athletic endeavors whenever they want and at whatever level they want. If a woman were good enough to par-

ticipate, I would look at her as just another teammate. If she were to do well, this might add a new dimension to sports in general."

Candy Croucher, a graduate student in physical education commented, "If it does, it's their problem, not the woman's."

### Opportunities and Interest

When questioned as to whether the amount of interested women was sufficient to warrant their admission into the OAC, Ms. Croucher said, "It's not a question of interest, it's a question of opportunity."

To the same question, student Nancy Aggers replied, "There isn't enough interest in women's athletics, but if you don't start somewhere, it'll never get going. So many women could be great jocks."

Micki Scott responded, "I don't know how anyone can say that. Look at the number of women in the Olympics; many are of high athletic competence and would

like to continue on the outside."

Student Fran Belknap responded with, "I don't think that's true. So many women swim and things like that anyway. If they want to compete they should be able to, and maybe even encouraged."

Anne Calby answered the same question with, "I don't think that's true. I'm just too lazy to participate."

Perhaps male dominance of sport in general is indicative that women are indeed more suited for minimal athletic participation, for a wide variety of complex reasons. It is much more likely, however, that opportunities for women athletes are so restricted that the number of participants is far less than the number that would take part if opportunities were even remotely similar to those extended to men.

When Ken Hirz, a member of the football and lacrosse teams, was approached with the question, he answered, "I never

watched women play anything."

Americans are generally unfamiliar with the whole concept of women jocks, and for the most part do not see women compete except in such sports as Roller Derby, which tend to give a warped impression, and the Olympics, which only occur every four years, and this necessarily complicates the issue as well.

In retrospect, three of the main objections raised by representatives of OAC colleges on the question of female participation in sports are certainly not representative of popular opinion at Oberlin; it is very doubtful that Oberlin is unique in housing such egalitarian views.

The crux of the argument is that circuitous speculation on women's participation in sports, which are necessarily derived from limited observations of unrepresentative participation, are absurd reasons for limiting future opportunities to what they have been in the past.