Branding a Professional American Football Franchise

John J. Ragone Jr.

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Thesis:

**Branding a Professional American Football Franchise**

**Candidate: John J. Ragone, Jr.**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Visual Communications Design

School of Design, College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

Rochester Institute of Technology

**Approval Date:** August 14, 2015
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Jason Klein and Casey White, baseball team identity designers
Brandiose (www.brandiose.com)

Ray Claxton, Visiting Professor, Graphic Design, Alfred University
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Abstract

The original intent of my thesis was to create a professional-level team identity that a community can embrace and emotionally bond with by utilizing contemporary design trends. As I researched the visual aspects of the brand strategy, it became apparent that current trends toward multiplicity of uniform designs could become a threat to an organization’s brand equity.

A corporate identity is the strategically engineered “personality” of an organization created to facilitate business objectives. How that identity is perceived and accepted supports relationship building between an organization and its audience or customers. Brand equity is developed through ease of recognition and repeatedly consistent visual presentation.

Sports branding is unique because it connects with its fanbase (customers) on a deeply emotional level by representing a community and its values, using its design as the primary vehicle to embody and communicate specific traits.

To its fans, a team identity is an emotional and personal representation of themselves, and van Schaik argues games are shared community experiences. Given that, tradition is vitally important to a team’s longtime fans. Among hard-core devotees, there is a tendency to dislike logo and uniform changes, far preferring history and folklore over transformation and upheaval.

However, over the last decade or so, sports organizations have turned to wearing a large variety of uniform designs as one aspect of strategic marketing and a means to create excitement, garner attention, and separate themselves from others in the crowded sports entertainment arena.

But with these innovative approaches to branding, identity brand equity may erode for organizations who employ this tactic. That current trend towards multiplicity may become a threat to a team’s brand equity by becoming more focused on variety and fashion, instead of consistent brand presentation and recognition. Constantly changing the “packaging” of a team identity in the form of on-field uniforms can potentially result in brand dilution, weakening of its brand though overuse, ultimately resulting in the brand losing its prestige and credibility.

As a result, the goal of my thesis has shifted to developing a professional football team identity by embracing innovative, contemporary design trends, but in a way that creates or respects a team’s (or league’s) existing traditions and folklore.
Introduction

The original intent of my thesis as stated in the proposal abstract was to create a professional-level team identity that a community can embrace and emotionally bond with by utilizing contemporary design trends. As my research became more extensive and I started to develop the visual aspects of the brand strategy, I realized that the current trend towards multiplicity of uniform designs could become a threat to an organization’s brand equity by becoming overly focused on variety and fashion.

A corporate identity is the strategically engineered “personality” of an organization, created to facilitate business objectives. That identity supports relationship building between an organization and its audience or customers. Wheeler asserts that how an identity is perceived will determine its ultimate success. Sports branding is unique in that it does more than represent an organization’s philosophy of sports business, but also represents the community that it plays in along with its supporting fanbase. It is the most intense kind of brand love, and few other businesses can claim this unusual kind of relationship. Sports entertainment is one of the few business environments where customers literally wear their hearts on their sleeves in the form of team-branded merchandise.

To its fans, the team they cheer for is an emotional and personal representation of themselves (van Schaik) and games are shared community experiences. Given that, tradition is vitally important to a team’s longtime fans. Among hard-core devotees, there is a tendency to dislike identity and uniform changes, preferring history and folklore over transformation and upheaval. Familiarity is an important and reassuring aspect of a team’s identity. When a team chooses to update its brand, they quite often deliberately maintain a historical connection with their past by wearing “throwback” uniforms at some point during the season.

As part of my research, I contacted Jason Klein of Brandiose, who identified history, legacy, and tradition as key elements of successful sports identities. It’s important that franchises be perceived as an integral part of league history and heritage, regardless of whether they are a new franchise or longtime member.

However, over the last decade or so, sports organizations have turned to wearing a large variety of uniform designs as one facet of strategic marketing to create excitement, garner attention, and separate themselves from other teams in the crowded sports entertainment arena.

But with innovative approaches to branding, identity equity may erode for organizations who employ this tactic. Brand equity is built through ease of recognition and consistent visual presentation. Brand dilution is a term usually applied to company product lines and is typically defined as a weakening of brand value though overuse, ultimately resulting in loss of prestige and credibility. If we think of a team’s uniform as product packaging, frequent changes of this package can make product identification increasingly difficult. Ultimately, this strategic policy toward uniform design may be signaling a transition away from reinforcing and strengthening brand identity and recognition, toward one purely based on fashion alone.
Another issue to consider is that a high-profile collegiate or professional team’s “stage” is television, or is viewed at a long range within a stadium environment. While the recent Seattle Seahawks redesign is colorful, unusual, and dramatic, the helmet stripe and uniform’s textural detail is nearly impossible to identify even on high-definition television broadcasts, or at a significant distance from a stadium seat.

Academia has always been the proving ground for innovative and revolutionary thinking for intellectual, scientific, and cultural change. As such, college sports has long been the test-bed for the evolutionary development of new design trends and aesthetics.

Nike’s partnership with the University of Oregon is the most visible and recognizable example of new design trends within collegiate football. It could be argued that Nike’s unique brand strategy effectively represents Oregon’s innovative style of game play through a large variety of unusual uniforms. As a stand-alone strategy utilized by one organization, this can be effective in building a unique brand identity assuming they are the only team employing the tactic. But like nature, marketing success abhors a vacuum. As these innovations have proven popular with TV audiences and fans alike, these trends have migrated outward to other collegiate programs and are starting to emerge in professional sports. As this tendency continues, brand dilution may result because no clear, singly identifiable look is consistently present.

In 2012, the University of Oregon wore 12 different uniforms for 12 games (BusinessInsider.com) and, overall, has amassed 66 different combinations (UniformCritics.com) since employing the uniform tactic. Oregon’s vast array of uniforms may ultimately harm their brand equity as a result of dilution, overextension, and creation of so many uniform alternatives that a television audience cannot quickly identify who they are watching until the game score is displayed onscreen.

This intense period of design experimentation has created some fresh, innovative and even controversial results. But this raises an interesting question: How can this design trend be tamed and utilized to create a strong, unique identity that is contemporary and distinct, but also balances innovation and tradition? That is what my thesis endeavors to explore.
Research

Location research

The first stage of my process focused on identifying a city for my team to represent that would also create interesting opportunities for building an identity that a fanbase could embrace. I will briefly review my naming methods here to place my design process in context. Detailed city research and naming process description can be reviewed in the proposal document provided in the appendix.

The original intent was to place the team in Los Angeles since it is a hot prospect for relocating an existing team or placing a new expansion franchise. When the Los Angeles Rams moved to St. Louis, Missouri for the 1995 season, it left a void in a huge sports market for professional football. As of this writing, there is no team in Los Angeles, making it a prime location for placing a team since it is the second largest media market in the United States (NewsGeneration.com). Therefore, it is greatly coveted by current and potential owners.

Los Angeles (LA) is the second largest city in the U.S. (Wikipedia) and has a rich but highly diverse ethnic culture, which would make developing a new brand that unifies the community unusually challenging. This factor ultimately resulted in no uniquely creative opportunities to develop strong team identity. When I showed my naming options to friends of mine who lived in Los Angeles, they reinforced my opinion by saying they didn’t find living there very remarkable. Those individuals suggested I try researching other cities instead.

In order to identify better options, I changed my perspective from that of a football fan to one of a franchise owner. That forced me to alter my research tactics and consider favorable locations based on their potential for financial success, and required me to examine each area as a business case. This approach yielded better, more interesting options. Since professional football currently has teams in 20 states, I researched locations that had strong college sports fanbases, but no professional sports franchises. Based on this, the states with strongest potential consisted of Alabama, Kentucky, Nevada, and Oklahoma.

Final name decision

After creating my team nickname list (see thesis proposal for details), I determined which names resonated most with football fans by sharing the ones listed below to random patrons at Buffalo Wild Wings on opening day of the 2013 NFL regular season. I also e-mailed the list to friends of mine who are dedicated football fans, as well as consultant Jason Klein (Brandiose) to get a general idea of how sports fans would respond. At the time, this was not intended to be a formal test, but only meant to get a general indication of interest. It did, however, result in a clear winner. Given the outcome, I didn’t feel it was necessary to investigate further and chose Kentucky Copperheads as the state location and team nickname.
The team names that gathered the most responses were:

- Alabama Hammersharks (1 vote)
- Birmingham Stallions (3 votes)
- Birmingham Stampede (1 vote)
- **Kentucky Copperheads (10 votes)**
  - Kentucky Mountain Cats (1 vote)
  - Louisville Steeds (1 vote)
  - Los Angeles Pilots (1 vote)
  - Las Vegas Red Dogs (2 votes)
  - Los Angeles Stingrays (3 votes)
  - Los Angeles Wings (1 vote)
  - Los Angeles Scorpions (1 vote)
  - Oklahoma Thunderbirds (1 vote)

The unlisted names from my proposal received no votes and are left off this list of finalists.

**About Kentucky**

In order to develop a brand that connects with the people of Kentucky, I needed to understand the mentality of its residents. Jason Klein of Brandiose recommended that I visit the state for a few weeks as part of my design process, to understand the community and see if there were any interesting subjects or themes to create a brand with. Since this was financially impractical, I opted for an alternate method and searched web sites for people who are relocating to a different part of the United States. This gave me a balanced perspective since it contained a variety of opinions about the region’s culture. This helped me develop a persona for my audience.

I was able to generate a word list from these comments which described the people of the state as conservative, gentle, kind, and friendly. Kentuckians are steadfast in their religious beliefs, and honoring heritage and tradition is important to their culture.

Kentuckians think of themselves as underdogs and identify with working-class people, regardless of financial status. Rebelliousness and independence are significant aspects of their self-identity and as a result are proudly defiant, tenacious, stubborn, and “hell-raising.”
Copperhead research

Copperhead research

Copperhead snakes are common in Kentucky, often found on farms, and are frequently misidentified as other similar-looking but harmless snakes. As such, copperheads bite more people than any other U.S. species of snake, according to the North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension Service (ces.ncsu.edu). A copperhead bite is extremely painful but rarely fatal since the venom is not very potent.

SurvivalistBoards.com indicates that most venomous snakes prefer to escape down a hole or hide beneath something in an effort to go unnoticed. If this proves ineffective, they will usually first warn oncomers of their presence by displaying some type of warning behavior in an effort to be avoided. But if they can’t escape, most snakes will hold their ground and prepare to defend themselves.

Like other venomous snakes, copperheads take a defensive posture first, would prefer to escape and not to fight at all. However, they are different from other kinds of snakes in that they can be unpredictably aggressive and strike without warning. If the snake is close enough, it will bite but will only inject a small amount of its venom reserve because the snake intends to scare but not kill. A copperhead will not waste venom that it needs for defense and hunting unless it has to.

Associations

Associations

Considering the word list I developed previously, I believe there is a correlation between the mentality of the region and the personality of the copperhead snake. Both Kentuckians and copperheads prefer to be left alone and take a defensive posture first, but are unafraid to defend themselves when necessary. Simply put, the attitude of both is, “Leave me be. If you don’t mess with me, I wont mess with you.”

This relationship reminded me of Christopher Gadsden’s 1775 “Don’t Tread on Me” coiled rattle-snake flag of the American Revolution. While the flag is not contemporary to the Civil War or the Kentucky region, the flag does represent the regional population’s way of thinking and is appropriate to become the basis of a snake-based team identity.
Design process

Primary team logo

I started the process by doing an image search of copperhead snakes in Google Image and on wildlife and survivalist web sites until I found one where the snake looked particularly dangerous and threatening. I especially liked the wild-eyed look for the final image I chose to use for inspiration. The image which inspired my marker renderings can be found at wildlifetrappersandrescue.com/nuisance-animals/snakes/snake-photos/.

I began by rendering my interpretation of the image on marker paper, transforming it into one that was more of a caricature and mascot-like. Once I was happy with the black-and-white marker drawing, I retraced it in color on marker paper (fig. 1), trying to capture the character and attitude of the photo. This was scanned into Adobe Photoshop, then recreated in Adobe Illustrator where I could begin to rework the image into a more logo-like appearance.

The completed logo (fig. 10) uses three colors chosen based on the original snakeskin image used to create the skin pattern (fig. 41) discussed on page 22. Those selections were converted to PMS colors by using the eyedropper tool in Photoshop to convert them to the closest Pantone match, then using a PMS chip book to select the final colors (fig. 13). The resulting choices are more saturated, giving the final snake head a richer and warmer appearance compared to the developmental colors. Two alternate versions (figs. 11 and 12) were created as options for use on dark colors, or if one with greater mass or ornamentation is needed.
Primary logo development

Figure 1. Original marker rendering.

Figure 2. Initial sketch redrawn in Illustrator.

Figure 3. Simplified, fewer scales.

Figure 4. New marker rendering.
More angular and aggressive.

Figure 5. Redrawn in Illustrator. Looked robotic and mechanical after conversion.

Figure 6. Marker drawing merging aspects of both drawings.

Figure 7. Redrawn in Illustrator.

Figure 8. Pointed lip details removed.
Exaggerated fangs.

Figure 9. Replaced some pointed lip detail. Fangs enlarged.

Figure 10. Final design
Eye more threatening. Colors converted to PMS 143 Yellow, PMS 1807 Red and PMS 497 Brown.

Figure 11. Alternate version 1.
Added enclosure surrounding head.

Figure 12. Alternate version 2.
New enclosure fills in mouth.
Figure 13. Final color palette

Primary brand colors

Secondary brand colors
Logotype design

A wide variety of typeface options were evaluated when developing the logotype, concentrating on typefaces that connote the history and traditions of the region (fig. 14). Jim Beam and Four Roses Bourbon labels were used for reference, along with Kentucky invention posters I found on KentuckyForKentucky.com’s web site. In addition, typefaces designed with crisp serifs and details which imply the danger of snake fangs were also considered.

Letterheadfonts.com’s (LHF) Boston Truckstyle was originally chosen because it has a vintage appearance, pointed features, and its form is open and bold (figs. 15 and 16). The resulting design’s proportions were too wide for most applications, so Letterheadfont’s Phantom typeface replaced Boston Truckstyle. Phantom’s features are similar to Truckstyle, but are more compact horizontally, sharp, razor-like, and strongly evoke copperhead fangs.

Phantom’s standard uppercase letters are too ornate for this application, so a lowercase C was redrawn as an uppercase letter using the standard uppercase character as reference (fig.18). I also adjusted its proportions to work better with the other existing lowercase letters. A new small capitals version of the lowercase R was drawn using portions from lowercase letters. This filled the awkward gap between the E and H and created an uninterrupted baseline which gives the word a better outside shape. The typeface Freehand 521 was used for the state name (fig. 20) as a flowing complement to the primary type.

Figure 20 illustrates a variety of color explorations used to determine the final configuration. The completed designs were created in three different versions: a logotype (fig. 21), a horizontal version integrating the typographic logo and snake head (fig. 22), and the primary logo which is configured vertically using the waving typography stacked above a large snake-head mark (fig. 23).
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Figure 15. LHF Boston Truckstyle type experimentation

Kentucky Copperheads

Kentucky Copperheads

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Kentucky Copperheads
Figure 16. LHF Boston Truckstyle with integrated logo
Typeface converted to LHF Phantom

Figure 18. Typography adjustments.

Figure 19. Typography style revisions.

Figure 20. Final logo experimentation using LHF Phantom typeface.
Final typography development and logo integration

Figure 21. Final typography.

Figure 22. Final typography with integrated logo.

Figure 23. Final primary logo.
Secondary logo

The previously mentioned 1775 Christopher Gadsden “Don’t Tread on Me” flag of the American Revolution and its rattlesnake motif presented an irresistible opportunity to develop a secondary logo based on the rebellious flag’s theme, but redesigned in a way that specifically relates to football as a game. The resulting graphic (figs. 30 and 31) has a defensive nature, expressing possession and protection. This is consistent with the attitudes of Kentucky’s people, the copperhead snake’s personality, as well as the game of football’s strategic nature.

Additionally, I wanted to create an inaugural season logo based on this concept, replacing the football with an egg to symbolize birth. At this stage, the unfinished design needs extensive rework because viewers repeatedly mistake the egg for a football, in spite of the fact I changed the color of the egg shape from brown to white. Even though I did not complete this design, I feel that the concept has merit once it is redesigned with appropriate adjustments.
Secondary logo evolution

Figure 24. Original marker rendering.

Figure 25. Color marker rendering.

Figure 26. Marker rendering redrawn in Illustrator.

Figure 27. Color changes for scales and ball. Posture repositioning.

Figure 28. Redesigned with new skin pattern.

Figure 29. Posture adjustments and integrated head scales.
Secondary logo final designs

Figure 30. Final “Don’t Tread” logo.

Figure 31. “Don’t Tread” logo with yellow enclosures for use on dark color backgrounds.
Snakeskin graphic

The snakeskin image used for reference can be found at www.flickr.com/photos/14133807@N04/2539168547, and clearly shows the hourglass design feature on copperhead skin. Illustrator’s Live Trace tool was used to convert the image into an abstract graphic (fig. 32) as a method of understanding the texture better, and to make it easier to develop a snakeskin motif. The results of this experimentation were excessively complex with too much intricate detail to be of any help. Examining sections of these results revealed that one region of the image was converted into a series of semi-elliptical shapes (fig. 34). This inspired a simplified and abstracted scale texture made from symmetrical ellipses (figs. 35 and 36).

Thesis committee advisor Brian Larson commented that the ellipses I used resembled footballs, so the ovals were redrawn as football silhouettes with pointed ends (fig. 37). After completing the full-width skin graphic (fig. 38), the overall width wasn’t required because only the middle portion is visible when a copperhead is viewed from above (figs. 38 and 39). Deleting the pattern’s outer edges converted the hourglass into a repeating pattern of X’s (fig. 40). The final stripe graphic features a tinted enclosure for use as a stripe on uniform applications (fig. 41).
Snakeskin graphic development

Figure 32. Image redrawn with Live Trace tool in Illustrator.

Figure 33. Simplified conversion.

Figure 34. Section of original pattern used for abstraction.

Figure 35. Section redrawn with ellipses.

Figure 36. Pattern module made from ellipses.

Figure 37. Ellipses converted to footballs.

Figure 38. Full width skin pattern.
Snakeskin graphic development

Figure 39. Pattern minus outer graphics.

Figure 40. Simplified snakeskin graphic.

Figure 41. Final snakeskin graphic.
Uniform

The helmet and uniform were designed simultaneously using colors already established in the snake-head logo, secondary logo and word mark designs.

In the original concept, the helmet was conceived using the full surface as a canvas for graphics, similar to the way a motorcycle helmet is painted. In theory, this was a unique way to design the headgear. A marker rendering pasted to a half-sized helmet (fig. 43) revealed that my original concept, which would superimpose a snake head on the player's helmet, was flawed. It confirmed my suspicions that, while fine for a motorcycle helmet, it would not be acceptable for a helmet viewed in a stadium environment where it is seen from all directions simultaneously. In this configuration, the graphics become foreshortened and distorted depending on the angle of view. I opted to take a more traditional design approach given these results.

Copper was chosen for the helmet to play off the snake name, giving players a “copper head.” A copperhead’s skin color is often described as pinkish-copper, so I researched several commercially available metallic copper paints, and narrowed my options to three colors which might work with the color scheme I had already established.

Since the color of metallic paint appears different on curved surfaces than it does on flat ones, it was important to test the paint on a 3-D helmet surface to get a realistic idea of how the paint options might appear in a real environment. To get an understanding of this behavior, I purchased a bag of eight 2-inch-sized miniature party-favor helmets (the ones sold in gumball machines) on eBay, and repainted one in each test color using an airbrush (fig. 46).

Graphics were added by printing out the helmet graphics to scale on an inkjet printer, cutting them out and adhering them to the helmets using double-stick tape. This process created a series of small mockups for comparison. The gumball helmets I bought had black face masks which unexpectedly complemented the copper paint nicely, so black was added to the uniform and overall brand color palette (fig. 13).

When developing the uniforms, templates were used to create the design, which is the same method used by Nike and can be seen in Nike’s “How We Work” video series on YouTube. I originally started with a generic uniform template found online (fig. 48), but research indicated that it was incorrect for the construction of a modern-day uniform. A new template (fig. 49) was created by watching the Nike video series and making screen captures of the videos whenever close-ups of the uniforms were shown. These screen grabs gave me a good understanding of how uniforms fit players and stretch over pads, and clearly show the seaming and panel construction used on modern-day uniforms.
For the balance of the uniform, there was an opportunity to integrate the snakeskin pattern developed earlier into the stripes along the sides of the pants and jersey. Instead of keeping them as traditional stripes, they were redesigned as snakes climbing up the player’s body, starting at the knee, wrapping around the player’s legs, moving up the sides, and terminating in the snakehead logo on the sleeves. This allowed me to keep the traditional logo location on the sides of the sleeves within sideline camera view, but still retain the customary stripe in a new form. I also continued the use of the snakeskin pattern on the helmet in the traditional stripe, and also added it to the cleats.

For the number typography, reusing the typeface chosen for the jersey numbers confirmed that changing the typeface from Truckstyle to Phantom strengthened the identity, since the sharp typeface details complemented the climbing snakes and gave the overall uniform an aggressive look.

To this point, the copper color had not been used anywhere other than the helmet, so I extended its use to metallic copper fabric used on the pants, numbers, trim on the collar and sleeves, and player’s name on the back of the jersey.

The white (fig. 51) and dark version (fig. 52) on the uniform are the same with the exception of the socks. Their color changes to white on the white uniform, but utilizes the snakeskin’s base beige color on dark-jerseyed uniforms. The white socks are too bright with dark jerseys, and the beige colored socks look dirty in combination with the white jerseys. Replacing the black on the jersey and socks with PMS 343 green and changing the pants color to white created a special-occasion uniform (fig. 53) which represents Kentucky bluegrass. This color was added to the final team color palette (fig. 13) as a secondary option.

Design development was too extensive to show here and primarily consisted of subtle variations and adjustments, most of which were of no consequence to the final design. Therefore, I am only including key iterations.
Figure 42. Uniform number experimentation
Test trials of the original “motorcycle helmet” concept revealed helmet graphics became foreshortened and distorted when viewed from various perspectives. I abandoned this approach because football helmets are viewed in a stadium environment and on TV from every conceivable angle at any given moment, so distortion of the helmet’s graphics are unacceptable.
Figure 44. Helmet concept, revised using free online generic helmet template

Template by Mike Kersey can be found at http://www.mediafire.com/download/3mzmkh4jnm/EGOP+Style+Helmet.svg
Figure 45. Final design rendering

Figure 46. 2-inch helmet color test
Figure 47. Final helmet design prototype
Figure 48. Initial uniform options using free online generic uniform template

Template by Mike Kersey can be found at http://www.mediafire.com/download/2x1hejndwji/Uniform+Template.svg
Figure 49. New template reflecting current Nike uniform construction

All-new, original template created by viewing videos at https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=nike+how+we+work
Figure 50. New template reflecting current Nike uniform construction

All-new, original template created by viewing videos at https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=nike+how+we+work
Final uniform design

Figure 51. Dark uniform

Figure 52. White uniform
Figure 53. Special occasion bluegrass uniform
Merchandise brand applications

Merchandise options I designed were based on things I found on team web stores. Until now, the only place I had used copper was on the uniform itself in the form of metallic copper details. I felt it was important to add it to the primary color palette for consistency (fig. 13). To convert the metallic paint color to a PMS spot color, I airbrushed a test panel with the final helmet color, then scanned it into Photoshop. The paint scanned as a coarse texture due to the metallic particles reflecting the scanner light, which did not accurately replicate the actual appearance of the copper paint. To compensate for this, a Gaussian blur filter was applied to the Photoshop image to eliminate the texture and create a consistent color field. The eyedropper tool was used to sample the blended color and convert it into a PMS match. The PMS 484 conversion is a burnt orange color that is an acceptably close counterpart to the paint used on the helmet.

This color was added to a few of the merchandise pieces in the form of a vintage-looking sunburst motif that symbolizes the Kentucky sunshine and is found in some of my visual research. The two shades of PMS 484 used were chosen based on the way the metallic helmet color reflects light. The darker tone is similar to the helmet’s darker reflection, and the lighter shade one is similar to the mid-tone reflections. This composition was the first of two brand configurations that could be used for future applications. The sunburst was used on the team flag, license plate, bumper sticker, window clings, and one of the final T-shirts (fig. 61).

The most difficult item I designed turned out to be the pennant (fig. 61) due to its unusual triangular shape. The disproportionately large left side required altering the proportions of the horizontal logo lockup to make better use of the tapered format. In spite of this change, the composition had a large volume of negative space that needed visual interest. To compensate for this, the brand vocabulary was expanded by evolving the snakeskin into a brown variation for better contrast between the horizontal band housing the logo and typography, and the surrounding areas above and below this region. Since my research discovered a golden-brown variety of copperhead snake, this presents no inconsistency to the brand. This provided a second composition option which was later used on the magnet and coffee mug (fig. 61) creating a group of materials that adds variety to the brand but still families with the overall image.

Possibilities for developing apparel applications were numerous. Based on the persona I developed for the state and the many horse ranches and farms of the region, I felt there was a fun opportunity to design a rancher/cowboy hat (fig. 62). I created a black and brown version both using the brand’s snakeskin pattern on the hat band and placed the snakehead logo above it. While I didn’t create more similar items, this fits with regional interests and, therefore, could be expanded into camping, fishing and hunting gear like snakeskin-camouflaged jackets or vests. The hats were rendered using modified stock photos I purchased from istockphoto.com.
For a second apparel option, I chose the ubiquitous, fan-favorite T-shirt because it simultaneously makes a strategic brand marketing statement, expresses a fan’s passion for their team and makes a personal statement about the wearer. During the exploration phase (fig. 60), the personality of the shirts was intentionally confrontational and intended to stimulate league rivalries. This attitude also reflects the proud, steadfast, and tenacious mentality of the region.

Most of the concepts were intended to play off familiar, colloquial sayings about snake bites. One of two completed designs was based on the familiar adage about learning from past mistakes, “Once bitten, twice shy.” This was rewritten to make a statement about fans who are passionately proud: “Once bitten. Never shy. Always a Copperheads Fan,” intended to mean, “I was bitten by the fan bug, and I will never be shy about my favorite team.” The typeface I chose has a traditional feel, is tall and proud with sharp, pointed serifs (fig. 62). This reinforces the team’s aggressive identity while evoking snake fangs.

The second T-shirt (fig. 62) reuses the bright sunburst theme developed for the flag because it expands the use of the brand identity approach and is unusual and vaguely reminiscent of colorful tie-dyed shirts.

The last option I created was a golf/polo shirt (fig. 62) which is not uncommon for upscale team-branded merchandise targeted towards more affluent fans. In reality, this option was created purely for fun and replaced the classic alligator embroidery typically found on golf gear.

All of the final shirts were rendered using free Photoshop templates I found online at theapparelguy.deviantart.com/gallery/.
Merchandise brand applications

Figure 5. Pennant development

Figure 55. Magnet development
Merchandise brand applications (continued)

Figure 56. License plate and frame development

Figure 57. Bumper sticker development
Figure 58. Window cling development
Figure 59. Flag development

- Kentucky Copperheads
- Keep Off the Grass
  This is Our Turf
- Keep Off Our Turf
Figure 59. Flag development (continued)
Figure 60. T-shirt design experimentation
Figure 60. T-shirt design experimentation (continued)
Figure 60. T-shirt design experimentation (continued)
Figure 61. Final merchandise prototypes

- Pennant 30” x 12.25”
- Flag 60” x 36”
- Coffee Mug
- Bumper Sticker 11.5” x 3.75”
- License Plate 12” x 6”
- Magnet 7.5” x 4.2”
- Window Cling 11” x 17”
- Coffee Mug
Figure 62. Final apparel applications

- Rancher Hat—Black
- Rancher Hat—Brown
- "Once Bitten" Tee
- "Sunburst" Tee
- Golf/Polo Shirt
Web Store

Once I completed designing the merchandise, it was logical to extend the brand applications to a web store, since I could reuse the merchandise samples to create the store design. Since the overall brand is intended to have a Southern flavor, the site’s theme was conceived as a country store, leveraging the personality of the region and the interests of the state’s fanbase. While not overtly “country” in a cliché manner, the theme is conveyed on the home page through the use of working-class imagery with rural themes. The overall tone of the site is intentionally courteous, polite, and gracious in the genteel traditions of the region, substituting “ladies” and “gentlemen” for the more typical “men’s” and “women’s” titles.

The primary design goal for the entire site was to clean up the visual noise typical of web stores like Amazon or eBay, where shoppers are assaulted with an overload of information and merchandise in the form of “shoppers also bought” listings and item reviews. I wanted the site to be clean, easy to navigate, and a simplified shopping experience. Since the goal was to give a general idea of how the store might look and function within the context of the brand identity, I designed three pages typical of any web store—a home page, a merchandise catalog page which gives an overview of available items, and a item-specific drill-down that contains details and ordering information.

The home page (fig. 65) header is common to all the cascading pages and reuses the composition developed for the pennant, minus the brown snakeskin. Attempting to keep this detail resulted in too much visual activity, which proved distracting from more important information. The brown band at the top includes links to the team home page, and account-level information like customer service, gift certificate redemption, and account login, while the right side incorporates a search bar. The primary copper zone below houses the team identity and with shopping cart information featuring number of items in the cart, price subtotal and checkout button. The yellow band below contains merchandise subgroup links.

The primary navigation area of the home page is divided into quarters featuring merchandise prototype photos I shot and stock photos I modified to illustrate the rancher hats. The red banners used to house the image titles provide traditional celebratory fanfare for each, and evoke a snake’s forked tongue.

The merchandise menu page (fig. 66) subdivides the space beneath the masthead into horizontal bands. Each row contains three items with its name placed beneath each image.

The item detail pages (fig. 67) vertically divide the area below the masthead into a three-column grid. The left two columns are reserved for a large photo of the featured item with description and rating with ordering details placed beneath side-by-side. The right column is reserved for images and links to additional merchandise recommendations.
Figure 63. Web store wireframe options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>masthead</th>
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<th>title</th>
<th>image</th>
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<td>image</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 64. Web store masthead development
Figure 65. Web store home page

- **Brown band** houses account-level links and team home page link
- **Copper band** contains team identity and shopping cart
- **Yellow band** incorporates links for merchandise subgroups
- **Search bar**
- **Primary merchandise navigation images**
- **Group titles in forked banners**
Figure 66. Merchandise menu
Figure 67. Merchandise item details

Sunburst Tee

Wear your Kentucky pride on your sleeve with this Copperheads-embroidered Sunburst Tee. Covered on both sides with colors as bright as the Kentucky sun, the world will never mistake who your heart roots for:

• Machine washable
• Wrinkle caller
• Crew neck
• Short sleeve
• Screen print graphics
• 100% Cotton

In stock

Rating: 

Price: $27.95

Quantity 1

FOXänd FÖÌÅÈDÈÁS

Fans also bought

- 2-Sided Coffee Mug
- License Plate with Frame
- Game Pennant
- Collectible Mini Helmet
Stadium identity

Often, professional league expansion teams either play in pre-existing stadiums or build one in partnership with their home city. I chose the latter scenario to see how the team’s branding might develop in concert with a regional stadium complex. This could either focus on naming the stadium after the football team, or utilize regional associations instead. Either would be a likely approach until a corporate sponsor was established. To extend this thinking forward, KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) might be a potential corporate partner because the company’s home office is in Louisville, Kentucky, and heavily market to football audiences. In which case, the stadium name might become “KFC Field” or something similar, and new branding would replace the initial stadium identity.

For a team-named arena, I tried using “Copperhead Stadium” or “Copperhead Field” (fig. 68), and developed the identity using the brand elements I established previously. Some variations used the logotype, and others swapped out the written name in favor of the snake-head logo. I tried a few of the graphic options I had already created for the merchandise, but after seeing the results, I felt this didn’t expand the brand in any meaningful way.

The second strategy which leveraged regional connections proved to be more interesting (fig. 69). Bluegrass is commonly associated with Kentucky, so naming the arena “Bluegrass Stadium” or “Bluegrass Field” is appropriate. To avoid duplicating the football team’s brand verbatim, the primary stadium color is bluegrass green, but also makes use of the PMS 143 yellow and PMS 497 brown from the final palette (fig. 13). In an effort to maintain an association between the team and stadium, I retained the typeface used in the team logotype (LHF Phantom) but used the standard typographic forms and ornate capital letters instead.

Professor Chris Jackson suggested focusing on the snake tail as a means of connecting the team to the stadium. The tail from the snake-wrapped football is too organic compared to the sharply detailed typography, so I created a new tail using a swash from LHF Ballpark Swashes instead. Its contours mimic a snake tail and are similar to the other typographic forms. Adding copperhead scales to the swash reinforced the connection. Abstract blades of grass were integrated into the green enclosure above the type, so the final illustrates a snake in the grass (fig. 69).

After experimenting with both strategies, I selected the second concept because it establishes a separate identity which might provide greater business opportunities for promoters of concerts and other events.
Figure 68. Team-named stadium logo development
Figure 69. Regional brand-name logo development
Figure 69. Regional brand-name logo development (continued)
Stadium identity applications

In order to expand the identity usage, I designed a stadium facade (fig. 71). The elevation draws its influences from the University of Kentucky’s Commonwealth Stadium in Lexington, Kentucky, and Lucas Oil Stadium, the home of the Indianapolis Colts in Indianapolis, Indiana (fig. 72). I added an arch as a design element which could celebrate the placement of a structural truss. This became the location for the exterior stadium identification utilizing it as an arching banner. The yellow and copper bands were based on the team identity color palette (fig. 13), and became a primary graphic for the rest of the stadium branding.

Field graphics

The field graphics (fig. 74) were based entirely on the team identity. To maintain regional character, the grass itself is either real Kentucky bluegrass or similarly colored artificial turf. I replaced the standard yardage numbers with the team identity typeface (LHF Phantom), placed the full enclosure version of the snake-head logo at the 50-yard line facing the media suites and camera locations, and designed the end zones using the integrated typography and sunburst motif.

Stadium map

I extended the identity program by creating a seating chart (fig. 76). The configuration for the map was based on common stadium arrangements I found in Google image searches. It does not represent any specific stadium and is a generic representation of typical arena plans.

This was designed simultaneously with other components, so early layouts were based on initial ideas for the overall stadium brand. The final design reflects the changes I made for the exterior signage using the final logo, color palette, and color bands.

Wayfinding signage

When creating wayfinding signage, I realized that it would be impossible to develop a complete program for a theoretical stadium, since wayfinding is based on the needs of a specific location. Given that, I could speculate what types of signs might be required and develop formats that would be needed at any typical arena. Based on research and the plan used for the stadium map, I chose to create one for eye-level corridor viewing, an overhead corridor sign that indicates the direction of concessions or seating, and smaller overhead signs at seat sections.

Early concepts experimented with a variety of substrate materials like brushed or polished copper sheet metal, and were designed using color schemes and elements from the other branded components (fig. 77). Google image searches uncovered photos of wayfinding systems currently in use at actual football and baseball stadiums. Locations where direction signs are placed tend
to be visually noisy with ads, graphics and architectural elements creating lots of distractions. After seeing those images, I realized that metal copper signs could be difficult to locate and read in that kind of environment, so I opted to design for high contrast and maximum visibility in chaotic environments.

In an effort to simplify the designs, I tried using the physical shape of the sign as a directional element, thereby eliminating additional arrows (fig. 77). After experimenting with this, I realized this might be misleading to fans who are either not paying close attention or are intoxicated. The contours of the sign may inadvertently conflict with actual directions provided with arrows. The final sign shapes are nondirectional to avoid such incongruities. For all sign types, the directional information is consistently presented in reversed white Futura Bold typography with triangular direction arrows on a PMS 484 copper background.

Eye-level corridor signage (fig. 78) reuses the curved color bands from the exterior identification and provides a consistent presentation for the stadium brand. Directions are separated with dotted rules created from the snake’s football scales. The snake pattern also anchors the bottom of the sign.

Both types of overhead signs I created use the snake-wrapped football from the team’s brand. The overall shape of each is derived from the curves of the exterior arch. For the overhead corridor application (fig. 79), information is presented on a wide PMS 484 copper band with a centrally located snake. The seat section signs (fig. 80) also PMS 484 copper but are bowtie-shaped to highlight and complement the snake since minimal information is required in these locations. In-situ illustrations of each are provided to give context for environmental usage.
Figure 71. Stadium facade with title signage

Figure 72. Stadium facade concept diagram
Figure 73. Field design development
Figure 74. Final field design

- Horizontal brand mark with sunburst end zone
- Snake-head brand logo at the 50-yard line
- Bluegrass field (real grass or artificial turf)
- Branded yard markings
Figure 75. Stadium map development
Figure 76. Stadium layout final design

- Stadium brand logo and stripes
- Lower level
- Futura stadium brand typography
- Upper level
- Corporate suites
- Media suites
- Stadium footprint
Figure 77. Wayfinding sign development
Figure 77. Wayfinding sign development (continued)
Figure 77. Wayfinding sign development (continued)

[Image of wayfinding signs with locations and sections listed]
Figure 77. Wayfinding sign development (continued)
Figure 77. Wayfinding sign development (continued)
Figure 78. Final eye-level sign

- **Arched top from stadium architecture**
- **Copper brand color stands out from surrounding visual noise**
- **Triangular arrows**
- **Brand’s snakeskin stripe**
- **Main gate A**
- **Main gate D**
- **Sections 101 — 111**
- **Sections 412 — 531**
- **Corp. suites C1—C11**
- **Restrooms**

- **Final stadium logo**
- **Rainbow stripe from stadium architectural feature—uses brand colors**
- **Futura Bold typeface**
- **Dashed rule created from snakeskin’s football shapes**
Figure 79. Final overhead sign

- Rounded sign ends not pointed to avoid implying direction
- "Don't Tread" brand graphic
- Copper brand color stands apart from overhead visual noise
- Triangular direction arrows
- Futura stadium brand typeface

Sections
- 313-330 415-427
- 100-120 200-220
- 358-345 445-461
- 145-158 246-258
Figure 80. Final seat section sign

- "Don’t Tread" brand graphic
- Rounded sign ends not pointed to avoid implying direction
- Copper brand color stands apart from surrounding visual noise
- Triangular direction arrows
- Futura stadium brand typeface

101 102

101 102
**Testing Summary**

The goal of the overall project was to develop a team brand which resonated with longtime, traditional fans and younger, more progressively minded ones alike.

To facilitate user testing, I created a survey (fig. 81) to solicit responses during my exhibit at ImagineRIT. The goal was to separate longtime traditional fans from younger, more progressively minded ones who prefer the contemporary uniform and brand identity designs, and see how they responded to the material.

I took a few key factors into consideration when developing the survey. I attempted to assess age, gender, degree of interest in American football (considering that some respondents could be from countries outside the U.S.), their preference for tradition, questions which addressed uniform likability, if the identity conveyed the personality of Kentucky, if the responder found the brand interesting enough to follow during football season, and what aspect of the design each person liked most.

It should be noted almost everyone who stopped to fill out a survey was a sports fan to some degree, with few exceptions. Given that, it should be no surprise that the brand received strongly favorable responses.

The snake climbing the sides of the uniform seems to be the most controversial aspect of the entire project. The jersey itself, however, seems to be universally liked as designed, but the snake wrapping around the player’s legs is interpreted in a variety of ways. Some people like this detail and interpret it as a statement of power and strength. More than a few times this detail was described as “creepy,” making the player look as if he’s being attacked or eaten, preferring that it follow the leg straight, then curving inward just above the knee similar to the way the stripes do on the pants of the current Denver Broncos’ uniform. That is a totally reasonable option which would have minimal impact on the overall uniform design. However, my intent was to be experimental and unexpected, and I think this detail is effective in accomplishing that goal as I created it, and the diverging opinions bear that out.
**Team Identity Survey**

**What is your age?**
- [ ] Under 18
- [ ] 18–34
- [ ] 35–44
- [ ] 45–54
- [ ] 55–64
- [ ] Over 65

**What is your gender?**
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

**Do you follow American Football?**
Check all that apply
- [ ] Professional
- [ ] College
- [ ] Prefer other sports
- [ ] Don’t follow sports

**What type of fan are you?**
Check all that apply
- [ ] I prefer teams with long histories and traditions
- [ ] I prefer modern-day names and uniforms
- [ ] Both are great

**Please rate the following items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team name</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team logos</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snake theme</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helmet</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player uniforms</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team colors</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field design</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandise</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Does this team look like it plays in Kentucky?**
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

**Does this look like a professional football franchise?**
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

**Would you follow this team?**
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

**What do you like MOST?**
Check all that apply
- [ ] Name
- [ ] Colors
- [ ] Uniform
- [ ] Merchandise
- [ ] Helmet
- [ ] Don’t like the team
- [ ] Other (list below)

**Any other comments?**
Figure 82. Survey results (20 total responders)
Figure 82. Survey results (continued)

**Average Ratings**

- Team Name: 4.35
- Brand Logo: 4.7
- Snake Theme: 4.5
- Helmet Design: 4.8
- Uniform Design: 4.6
- Team Colors: 4.4
- Field Design: 4.25
- Merchandise: 4.4

**Does this team look like it plays in Kentucky?**

- Yes, 50% (10 responses)
- No, 15% (3 responses)
- Not Sure, 35% (7 responses)

**Does this look like a professional football franchise?**

- Yes, 75% (15 responses)
- No, 5% (1 response)
- Not Sure, 20% (4 responses)

**Would you follow this team?**

- Yes, 55% (11 responses)
- No, 30% (6 responses)
- Not Sure, 20% (4 responses)

**What do you like most?**

- Team Name: 5
- Uniform: 7
- Colors: 10
- Helmet Design: 11
- Merchandise: 6
- Other: 2
- Don’t like: 0
Conclusion

At the beginning, I stated that the goal of the project was to create a strong, unique identity that is contemporary and distinct, balances innovation with tradition, and has appeal for both traditional and progressively minded fans. I think I achieved that goal based on my test results. The team I created was enthusiastically accepted by football fans young and old alike. Brandiose designer Jason Klein told me that the way he knows he did great work is when the community takes “ownership” of the team identity, and it’s no longer his baby. That response did become apparent during the course of the project, as those who share my passion for football (or sports) were very enthusiastic as they saw the team identity develop. However, the truest test of the brand would have been to test the concept in Kentucky to measure the response of state residents to see how the team would be received, but time constraints prevented me from doing that.

Another facet which indicates success is that the brand grew organically, took on a life of its own and evolved as new ideas surfaced. Even though the focus of this thesis was creating the core brand itself, there were many opportunities for expansion which I did not pursue. These included a team blog named Snake Bytes, a Snakeheads Fan Club, an end zone club called The Snakepit (similar to Cleveland’s Dawg Pound), a stadium restaurant named The Snake Den, a snake-head hand gesture (make a fist with either hand, then point only your forefinger and pinky downward to form fangs), and snakehead hats similar Green Bay’s Cheeseheads.

More functional ideas included designing season tickets, collectible player cards, stadium motion graphics, and converting the stadium map into an interactive, GPS-enabled smartphone or tablet application that could help fans with parking and stadium navigation.

I also would have liked to develop a home page to complement the web store, but I had difficulty creating the right message that would support an expansion team launch. Designing effective marketing requires creating a verbal personality which feels authentic and transparent. A strategic mistake I made is that I should have worked with a writer to create a charismatic personality for marketing at an early stage. That would have opened up better opportunities for marketing-oriented components.

Lastly, some assert that my thesis is frivolous and devoid of meaningful content. I would argue nothing could be further from the truth. Art and design endeavors to improve people’s lives through beauty, creativity, functionality and clarity. It also has the power to make life more enjoyable whether it takes the form of a gallery painting, music on a vinyl record, or a play on a theatrical stage. Had I chosen to do costume and set design for a Broadway play, I doubt anybody would claim my topic is devoid of meaning because that application enriches culture, but because sporting events are considered pop culture phenomena, suddenly my ideas are dismissed. For all intents and purposes, I created the costuming of team uniforms for a stadium stage where the drama of a sporting event unfolds.

Ultimately, design is a powerful way of connecting people who have common interests and values, and sports design effectively does that. Given that definition, sports design is meaningful content.
References (New research)


Appendix
Thesis Proposal
Sports Identity Branding: The Alchemy of Capturing Hearts and Minds

Candidate: John J. Ragone, Jr.
MFA Visual Communications Design, School of Design
Rochester Institute of Technology

Committee Members

__________________________ Date
Marla Schwegge, Professor, School of Design

__________________________ Date
Carol Fillip, Associate Professor, School of Design

__________________________ Date
Brian Larson, Assistant Professor, School of Film & Animation

MFA Thesis Candidate

__________________________ Date
John J. Ragone, Jr.

Professional Consultants

Mark Verlander, NFL identity designer
Verlander Design (www.verlanderdesign.com)

Jason Klein and Casey White, Baseball team identity designers,
Brandiose (www.brandiose.com)

Ray Claxton, Visiting Professor, Graphic Design, Alfred University
Thesis:
Sports Identity Branding: The Alchemy of Capturing Hearts and Minds

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Fall 2013
Thesis Proposal
Sports Identity Branding: The Alchemy of Capturing Hearts and Minds

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Ray Claxton, Visiting Professor, Graphic Design, Alfred University
Abstract

A corporate identity is the “personality” of an organization strategically engineered to facilitate business objectives (Wikipedia). People connect with and relate to brands and how that identity is perceived affects its success (Wheeler).

Sports branding is a unique type of corporate identity that connects with its customers on a deeply emotional level by representing a community and its values, and design is the primary vehicle to convey those traits. I will develop a brand identity for a theoretical major league professional football expansion franchise that attempts to make an emotional connection to the new city’s fanbase by using sports psychology and successful college and professional football case studies as components of my design solution.
Problem statement

Alchemy: A power or process of transforming something common into something special.
—Mirriam-Webster Dictionary

“Brand equity is the sum of all the hearts and minds of every single person that comes into contact with your company.”—Christopher Betzter

A corporate identity is the “personality” of an organization strategically engineered to facilitate business objectives (Wikipedia.org). People connect with and relate to brands and how that identity is perceived affects its success (Wheeler).

Sports branding is a unique type of corporate identity. Not only does it represent a company’s philosophy and attitudes towards the business of sports, it represents the community in which it plays as well as its audience—also known as the team’s fans. Few other business can claim this unusual kind of relationship. It is brand love that has almost no equal. Professional sports is one of the few business where customers literally wear their hearts on their sleeves in the form of team-branded merchandise.

Unlike Coca-Cola or Apple computers, it’s not a consumed product nor a physical thing people use. To the teams’ fans, it’s an emotional and personal representation of themselves (van Schaik) and a shared community experience.

Why do some professional teams capture devoted fans immediately, while others are nomadic searching for new homes every few decades? The obvious answer would be a winning team is a successful business. But there are franchises that are lifelong losers, yet have millions of passionate devotees. Somehow, they have remained successful in spite of their on-field records. How is it possible that perennially losing teams still have passionate fans that live and die with their team every weekend? How can there be fans of a team that plays hundreds of miles away and doesn’t have any connection to their community? I believe part of the answer lies in a team’s chosen corporate identity.

I will create the logo design, uniform and other identity elements for a major league professional football expansion franchise. In order to build a strong team image that closely relates to its community and fanbase, I will use sports psychology as well as case studies of highly successful college and professional football as elements of my design solution.
Review of Literature

1. **Author** Wheeler, Alina  
**Title** Designing Brand Identity: An Essential Guide for the Whole Branding Team  
**Publisher** Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons; 4th edition, 2012

Discusses research and analysis through brand strategy, design development through application design, and identity standards through launch and governance. This book contains 55 case studies and discusses the project’s goals, concept and strategies and showcases successful world-class brands. This Fourth Edition brings readers up to date with a detailed look at the latest trends in branding, including social networks, mobile devices, global markets, apps, video, and virtual brands.

Designing Brand Identity, Fourth Edition offers brand managers, marketers, and designers a proven, universal five-phase process for creating and implementing effective brand identity.

2. **Author** Carter, David E.  
**Title** Big Book of Corporate Identity Design  
**Publisher** Watson-Guptill; 2001

The Big Book of Corporate Identity Design details how nearly 200 companies have carefully created their logos-the very heart of their corporate identity and brand image. This guide is filled with over 1,500 extraordinary full-color examples of these innovative logos, along with practical examples of just how they are being used on a variety of items in order to help develop a high-profile brand image. The companies featured in this guide run the gamut from global giants to mid-sized corporations. This guide discusses how they consistently and creatively apply their corporate identity to vehicles, signage, uniforms, stationery, Web sites, packaging, and more. Highlighting the work of more than 100 design firms.

The Big Book of Corporate Identity Design is a reference for ad agencies, graphic designers, and marketing professionals.

3. **Author** Wiedemann, Julius (Editor)  
**Title** Logo Design Volume 3  
**Publisher** Taschen; 2011

This volume in the Logo Design series brings together diverse logos from around the world, organized into chapters by theme, such as creative industry, events, fashion, media, music, retailers, and service. A full index lists each logo’s company, designer, and designer’s website. Also included is a case study section, concentrating on logo application and development.
Creative professionals will appreciate this resource of visual ideas. Volume 3 features include: an interview with H5, the makers of 2010 Oscar winner Logorama, Neville Brody’s Research Studios on the redesign of Music for Youth, Sasha Vidakovic on the new identity for Victoria Beckham, leading Canadian design studio Concrete on the launch of SUPER cosmetics, British studio Kent Lyons on Jarman film award, HB Design from Argentina on the country’s 200th anniversary logo, and Helmut Langer on universal identities.

4. **Author** Airey, David  
**Title** Logo Design Love; A Guide to Creating Iconic Brand Identities  
**Publisher** Pearson Education; 2010

Logo Design Love is a guide for designers (and clients) who want to understand what the business is all about. This book is written in reader-friendly, concise language, with a minimum of designer jargon, Airey gives a clear explanation of the process, using real-life examples to support his points.

Graphic designer David Airey fills each page with simple, modern-looking book with logos and real world anecdotes that illustrate best practices for designing brand identity systems that last.

Creative professionals interested in brand identities will learn:

- Why one logo is more effective than another
- How to create their own iconic designs
- What sets some designers above the rest
- Best practices for working with clients
- 25 practical design tips for creating logos that last

5. **Author** Krause, Jim  
**Title** The Logo Brainstorm Book: A Comprehensive Guide for Exploring Design Directions  
**Publisher** Cincinnati, OH, HOW books; 2012

The Logo Brainstorm book discusses creative approaches and systematic concept exploration of logo design elements including symbols, monograms, typographic logos, type/symbol combinations, emblems and color palettes for developing raw concepts into polished material.

6. **Author** Evamy, Michael  
**Title** Logotype  
**Publisher** Laurence King Publishing Ltd.; 2012

Logotype is a collection of logotypes, monograms, and other text-based corporate marks. The book features 1,300 international typographic identities, by approximately 250 design studios.
This is a handbook for graphic designers, featuring a variety of typography techniques and strategies for developing brand marks as well as providing a visual resource to draw on in branding and corporate identity projects. This is an excellent quick reference guide for creating wordmarks and typography-based brand marks.


   This blog features an in-depth discussion of current professional and collegiate uniform changes and documents major and minor rebranding updates. Discussions include MLB, NFL, NBA, NHL, NCAA baseball and football uniforms as well as Olympic uniforms.


   In this interview, designer Mark Verlander discusses how he first got involved developing identities for the NFL and other professional sports leagues, his inspiration, philosophy, design process, development issues and challenges.


   Jason Klein is a sports identity designer and co-founder of Brandiose, whose list of design credits include Major League Baseball’s Cincinnati Reds along with a plethora of minor league baseball teams. This interview discusses how he got started in the business of sports identity design and how his philosophies of hard work and “rockstar service” won sports clients and overcame lack of experience. An interesting portion discusses how the fans become the owner of his work after its completion.


    Sportslogos.net thoroughly documents major and minor league professional sports team identities. Includes historical references and images of team logos for every professional league for both current and now-defunct franchises.

Barry discusses professional football and how its history of team names developed. Often, team nicknames are derived from people, places or things that are indicative of the area’s culture. This article is a brief discussion of the histories of each team and how their names were derived.


Blog article discusses the history of the top 50 collegiate NCAA football programs got their team nickname. Some were decided by student vote, others by natural usage, but regardless, the origins are discussed here.


This blog article discusses 10 cities that could be considered for future teams, including Los Angeles, CA, San Antonio, TX, Portland OR and Las Vegas, NV.


The NFL has avoided placing teams or hosting preseason games in cities tied to gambling, including Atlantic City, NJ and Las Vegas, NV.


The blog article discusses how people initially become sports fans, what makes them tick, and which psychological, sociological and philosophical factors drive the fan phenomena. The conversation goes into how fan involvement deepens using Professor Daniel Wann’s Sport Fan Motivation Scale starting at the lowest level of “suspect” and elevates through the top, most deeply invested level of “raving fan.” The article also covers the topics of escapism, disinhibition, fan socialization, community and sharing and parasocial relationships.

This web site discusses the history of Los Angeles from pre-city history, Spanish colonial period, Mexican period, U.S. statehood in 1846 through today.


This web site discusses the history of California divided into 7 parts: the Native American period, European exploration period (1542 to 1769); the Spanish colonial period (1769 to 1821), the Mexican period (1821 to 1848), and United States statehood.


Galleries and descriptions for more than 450 species of LA marine life are represented here, covering a geographic area from San Diego to Santa Barbara.


This is a list of California animals and birds. The species list is a modification of the one from the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) dataset. Species data was populated using the CWHR species lookup table. Data is cross referenced with ITIS to provide full taxonomic information about each species.


Wikipedia article briefly outlines the history of the NFL in Los Angeles from the early days of the city through modern times.


A brief listing and description of locations described as “most haunted places” in Las Vegas.

Brief history of Alabama beginning with Native American tribes, pre-European settlement, through the Civil War and its war activity and Confederate occupation of the state, through today.


Brief history of Kentucky beginning with Native Americans, 19th Century Civil War involvement and battle activities, and the 20th Century through today. Also includes Kentucky sports history.


Histories, biographies, and tributes to famous race horses from around the world.


Brief history of Oklahoma including Native American origins, cowboys and cattle trails and the resulting railroad infrastructure, and the Land Rush of 1889 which led to the “Sooner State” nickname.
Design Ideation

My research, so far, has focused primarily on defining states that are the best prospects and developing team names for them. Professional football has teams in 20 states. I researched the ones that could present the best business cases based on the strength of their football fanbases, and ones that don’t already have professional football teams. Alabama, Kentucky, Los Angeles, Nevada and Oklahoma have the strongest potential. Names followed by an asterisk are candidates that have the most opportunity for interesting uniform designs for each state.

Alabama

Alabama has fanatical football fans. It is also the Yellowhammer state, named after yellow trim on Confederate cavalry soldiers’ uniforms (Wikipedia). “Cavalry” might have been a good name but is already used by a few teams. Two of the names could use an elephant as a logo/mascot, but is potentially a trademark infringement.

1. Birmingham Stallions*—A well supported, now defunct USFL team.
2. Birmingham Bulls—Male elephants are called bulls, but Alabama also has cattle in the state. The name also was used for a failed, defunct hockey team in Birmingham. Other teams have used the name Bulls, so the Chicago NBA team doesn't have a monopoly on the name, even if they are the most well known.
3. Alabama Hammersharks—There are hammerhead sharks in Mobile Bay. The names Hammerheads, Yellowhammers and Hammers is taken. The name Alabama Sledgehammer was considered, but it has a derogatory meaning.
4. Birmingham Stampede*—An elephant charge is known as a stampede, but could also be used as a cattle stampede reference.

Kentucky

Kentucky also has rabid sports fans, especially for basketball. The best options for locating a team are Lexington or Louisville. The state has most productive coal mines in the United States (Wikipedia). Panthers and cougars from the mountain regions regularly threaten populated areas (Wikipedia). Kentucky has a population of several of venomous snake species. Chevrolet builds Corvettes in Bowling Green and is a source of pride in the region. The Kentucky Derby is run in Louisville at Churchill Downs in early May.

1. Louisville Steeds—A reference to derby race horses.
2. Kentucky Ranchers—Horse ranches are common in Kentucky.
3. Kentucky Admirals*—A Kentucky Admiral is an honorary commission given for extraordinary service to the Commonwealth. It was also the name of a famous racehorse. Kentucky Colonel is also an honorary title, but that is used for a team already.
4. Kentucky Twisters—Tornados are common in Kentucky.
5. Kentucky Storm Chasers—Storm chasers are tornado researchers that regularly place themselves in harm’s way to gather weather data.

7. Kentucky Stingers — I’d prefer the name Stingrays for the Corvette plant, but it’s already being used.
   (Kentucky continued)

8. Kentucky 427’s*—A 427 was the one of the most powerful engines ever offered in a Corvette, and a legendary powerplant among car enthusiasts.

9. Kentucky Mountain Cats — Panthers and cougars live in the mountain regions and threaten populated areas of Kentucky.

10. Kentucky Cougars — A lot of high schools use the name, but no pro teams in Kentucky currently are.

11. Kentucky Copperheads*—Kentucky has venomous copperhead snake population.

12. Kentucky Cottonmouths — There is also a venomous cottonmouth snake population in Kentucky.

13. Kentucky Kingsnakes*—Not a venomous snake, but the alliteration sounds cool, and there are kingsnakes in Kentucky.

14. Kentucky Coalminers — The Miners name is in already used by a team, so this is the next best thing.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles is the second largest city in the U.S. (Wikipedia). When the Los Angeles Rams moved to St. Louis for the 1995 season, it left a void in a huge sports market (NFL.com). Therefore it is a prime location for an expansion team. LA has a rich culture, but is very diverse ethnically (Wikipedia), which would make developing a brand that unifies the LA population behind a team very challenging.

LA is called the Creative Capital of the World and the center of the Hollywood entertainment industry (Wikipedia). It's also the U.S.'s largest shipping port. Earthquakes are a common occurrence since the city is located along the Pacific Ring of Fire on the San Andreas Fault (Wikipedia). LAX in LA is one of the busiest airports in the world.

1. Los Angeles Stingrays — There is a population of stingrays off the coast of LA (LADiver.org).

2. Los Angeles Pilots — LAX reference

3. Los Angeles Wings — LAX reference


5. Los Angeles Aliens — Reference to WWII “Battle of Los Angeles” in 1942. Most commonly thought of as a failed attempt by the Japanese Navy to attack the U.S.’s media center. UFOlogists have speculated it could have been a UFO incident.

6. Los Angeles Scorpions — The region surrounding LA has a scorpion population.

7. Los Angeles Roadrunners — There have been 2 rejected attempts to start professional teams in LA named Roadrunners (Wikipedia).

8. Los Angeles Shorejacks — The nickname for a manual laborer in the early 20th Century was either “Jack” or “Joe,” so a shore jack is a dock worker; Port of Los Angeles reference
Las Vegas Red Dogs
Nevada

Las Vegas has traditionally been avoided by the league due to its connection to gambling, but is coveted by team owners (ProFootballTalk.com). Most of the best names like Black Jacks, Gamblers, Aces and Wild Cards are already used.

1. Las Vegas Red Dogs*—Red Dog is a poker game variant.
2. Las Vegas Dealers
3. Las Vegas Roulettes
4. Las Vegas Phantoms*—Las Vegas is apparently a very haunted place (lasvegas.cbslocal.com).
5. Las Vegas Spirits—A girls softball team uses this name, but that doesn’t preclude the use for a professional football team.

Oklahoma

The University of Oklahoma Sooners and the Oklahoma State Cowboys football attendance averages well over 50,000 fans attending games, and the University of Oklahoma’s football program ranked 12th in attendance nationally, with an average of 84,738 fans attending games (Wikipedia). In 2008, the Seattle Supersonics NBA team relocated to Oklahoma City and was renamed Thunder, and averages over 18,000 per game (Wikipedia). With that kind of devotion to sports, it’s surprising that no professional football team has located there.

1. Oklahoma Storm—A reference to the dust storm kicked up by the wagons in the Land Rush of 1889.
   A photo found on Wikipedia shows a lot of dust created by wagons and horses during the land rush.
2. Oklahoma Spikes—19 railroads in Oklahoma haul freight over more than 3,200 miles of track. (Association of American Railroads) A reference to the spikes used to anchor railroad tracks.
3. The Wrath of Oklahoma*—Named for the John Steinbeck book Grapes of Wrath in which the Joads are driven from Oklahoma to California by drought and financial hardship.
4. Oklahoma Wranglers*—This nickname references the area’s cowboy history.
5. Oklahoma Thunderbirds*—Nickname of the 45th Infantry Division based in Oklahoma.
6. Oklahoma Warbirds*—Nickname derived from Native American cultures from the area.
   Oklahoma is also the home of several Air Force bases.
Methodological Design

To start, I will pick states where no professional football currently exists, but could present a solid business case for locating a team. Strength of fanbase support for current professional teams in other sports, as well as enthusiasm for college and high school football will be the primary indicator of which states to investigate. Based on that information, I will choose possible city locations for a team, and will research them for appropriate naming options. Selections for my final choices will be submitted to my advisory committee and professional consultants to select the strongest ones with the most potential for interesting design options.

At that stage, I will start with the most visible features of the identity which are the helmet logo, wordmarks, team colors and uniform. The early stages will be done with pencil sketches and/or marker renderings of several possible strategic directions. Then I will choose 2 or 3 to develop into more fully evolved designs using Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop and InDesign. I will be select 1 from those with assistance from my advisory committee and professional consultants.

For the final selected team, I will start developing the balance of the applications consisting of the stadium identification signs and on-field graphics. From there, I will determine if any additional applications are needed with my advisory committee and professional consultants.

Deliverables

A professional team’s primary reason to exist is on the field in front of fans and TV cameras. The deliverables will focus on the elements that create the on-field presence including:

- Team logos (primary and secondary)
- Wordmarks (primary and, if necessary, secondary wordmark)
- Team colors
- Helmet and uniform design (Home and away light/dark uniforms) utilizing repurposed action figures to model the final uniform designs
- 50 yard line and end zone field graphics utilizing scale models
- Stadium identification graphics utilizing scale models
Implementation Strategies

The designs concepts themselves will be developed through sketching the initial design stages, then further refining and developed using Adobe InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop.

Since the large majority of the audience views the games on TV or in person at the stadium, the best way to evaluate the final designs would be to create them in 3 dimensions. Creating real-world, physical models of the final designs and stadium graphics would be an ideal way to illustrate and evaluate the uniform and stadium applications.

I am a model builder with more than 40 years of experience and have the skills and resources necessary to execute my ideas in physical form. I have made models from kits, completely from scratch and have also repurposed and modified existing things to meet my needs. I own several airbrushes and have a spray booth at home.

Photographing them should be an appropriate method to simulate real word exposure and to evaluate how they will translate to video and still photography. Shooting the final models at a distance will simulate how the uniform appearance translates to a stadium crowd.

Helmet graphics can be created in 3 dimensions by purchasing blank mini helmets for $12-15 (or full size ones for $40) and applying graphics to them. The primary helmet color can be airbrushed and the markings created by printing graphics on waterslide inkjet decal paper or self adhesive transfer paper with a photo-quality inkjet printer, then applying them to the painted helmet.

For the uniforms, I plan to purchase and apply the uniform design to action figures or inexpensive collectible football figures as the foundation for creating them.

Dissemination

For dissemination, I plan to enter my thesis in design competitions including, but not limited to:

- Rochester ADDY Awards student competition
- Adobe Achievement Awards
- 2014 Hiiibrand Awards
- HOW Logo Design Awards
- Art Directors Club Annual Awards Competition
- Communication Arts Student competition
- AIGA annual student design competition
- Imagine RIT
- Submit to online sports design blogs
- Online portfolio
Evaluation Plan

For the evaluation, I plan to a variety of methods to gather feedback on the project as it progresses.

First, I was able to contact Mark Verlander of Verlander Design. Mark has done many sports-related design projects, including 4 NFL team identities and several NFL league projects. They have included the expansion Houston Texans and renamed Tennessee Titans identities, and developed rebranding elements the Arizona Cardinals, Atlanta Falcons and Cincinnati Bengals. He has agreed to be a consultant for my thesis, and I will send him pdfs and jogs of the project for recommendations and feedback as the project progresses.

Jason Klein and Casey White of Brandiose Design, who have done several sports identities including the Cincinnati Reds identity update have agreed to do evaluations of my work as well.

Additionally, I plan to get feedback from professional colleagues, RIT instructors not directly related to the project but specialize in certain applicable aspects (e.g., stadium environmental graphics), classmates and solicit comments from attendees at ImagineRIT and my thesis exhibition.

Pragmatic Considerations

Purchase considerations
- Action figures for the final uniform executions
- Helmets for final helmet execution
- Modeling materials for stadium representation (possibly foamcore)
- Any required fonts
- Paint for uniform design (if opting to render on figures in paint)
- Fabric for final uniform swatches (if special sports jersey fabric is available)
- Water-soluble decal stock or printable self-adhesive material for final helmet graphics
- Inkjet cartridges for printing decals
# Thesis Timeline

**Sports Identity Branding: The Alchemy of Capturing Hearts and Minds**

**John Ragone**

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**Milestones**

- Proposal accepted
- Flow chart finished
- Web site started
- 1st committee mtg
- Content finalized
- Storyboards done
- 2nd committee mtg
- 1st prototype done
- 3rd committee mtg
- Pass thesis defense
- Beta prototype done
- 4th committee mtg
- Complete final project
- Thesis report online
- Last committee mtg
- Thesis show
- Graduation

**Timeline**

- End of fall Semester
- Beginning of Spring Semester
- Thesis Defense
- Graduation

**Graduation—May, 2013**

**End of fall Semester**

**Beginning of Spring Semester**

**Thesis Defense**

**Graduation**

**Write Abstract**

**Flow chart**

**Thesis Prep**

**Show Prep**

**Report Revisions**

**Publish Report**

**Develop Logos and wordmarks**

**Develop uniform and helmet**

**Feedback/Testing**

**Develop stadium and field graphics**

**Finish Final Project**

**Complete Beta Version of Project**

**Committee meeting**

**Committee meeting**

**Committee meeting**

**Committee meeting**

**Document Proposal**

**Literature Review**

**Research Content**

**Final Proposal**

**Finalize committee**

**Finalize committee**

**Finalize committee**
Bibliography

3. Wiedemann, Julius (Editor), Logo Design Volume 3, Taschen; 2011


