Marquette University News Briefs for May 4, 2005

Marquette “Gold” selected as new athletics nickname; new athletics monogram also announced

Marquette’s Board of Trustees announced today that the new athletics nickname will be the Marquette “Gold.” This name was chosen for its unique blending of the university’s old and new athletics traditions, and was one of the names suggested during nickname discussions in both 1994 and 2004. The change will be effective on July 1 when Marquette enters the BIG EAST Conference.

“Gold” boldly represents Marquette’s proud athletics traditions such as Golden Avalanche, Golden Eagles and Gold Rush, the current student fan section for basketball games. It has also become the signature color for Marquette athletics worn proudly around the country by Marquette students, alumni and fans. In athletics, the mark of a champion is often a gold medal or trophy.

The Board of Trustees voted not to reinstate the Warriors athletics nickname stating that as a Catholic, Jesuit university, it would hold itself to the highest possible standards of its mission, which include recognizing and appreciating the dignity of every person. Further, data collected in an online survey last fall of opinions and attitudes indicated that even 10 years after its introduction, the Golden Eagles nickname, logo and mascot have not generated with the Marquette community a strong sense of pride or identity. In the survey, the terms respondents most often used to describe the Golden Eagles nickname are boring (57 percent), weak (55 percent) and common (52 percent).

In the same survey, respondents indicated that Warriors signified strong, competitive and winning. The Board chose a nickname that represented those same strengths and that had been suggested in prior nickname discussions. Marquette “Gold” was the Board’s overwhelming favorite.

“I am really pleased that the Trustees have chosen this direction for Marquette athletics. The Board has chosen a name that reflects our desire to be champions,” said President Robert Wild, S.J. “With Marquette ‘Gold,’ the Board has captured decades of traditions in one profound term that symbolizes the high standards always set by our student-athletes and our coaches.

“While I recognize that some people will be disappointed that we are not reinstating the Warriors nickname, we cannot teach one principle about respect for
human dignity in our classrooms and then fail to act by that same principle when making decisions,” Father Wild said. “The Warriors nickname will always be part of our proud athletics tradition, and we will honor that tradition. But we live in a different era than when the Warriors nickname was selected in 1954. The perspective of time has shown us that our actions, intended or not, can offend others. We must not knowingly act in a way that others will believe, based on their experience, to be an attack on their dignity as fellow human beings.

“We have all taken up this question in a serious manner. I am satisfied that people of good conscience will agree we have given this issue thoughtful study and consideration. I fully support the Board’s decision and am very excited about our future as the Marquette ‘Gold’ in the BIG EAST Conference,” Father Wild concluded.

The Board made its decision after nearly a year of gathering feedback from students, alumni, faculty, staff and the community.

“As an alumnus of the 1960s, it is probably pretty obvious where I stood on the Warriors question when we opened our discussions,” said John Bergstrom, chair of the Board of Trustees. “But after my own conversations with tribal leaders, I became convinced that the Warriors nickname could not be separated from past imagery. As the Board moved deeper into this process, it became clear to all of us that as stewards of the university’s mission, we had to be guided by conscience, not emotion. When we looked at the opportunity to give our teams a name that captures excellence in a single word, we knew we had our answer. Our alumni and our traditions matter. And I can tell you that the Board stands overwhelmingly behind this decision.

“Now let’s grab hold of this golden opportunity as Marquette heads into the BIG EAST Conference,” Bergstrom concluded.

The new nickname can launch a renewed effort to celebrate Marquette’s athletics traditions and its winning future. The Board specifically directed that alumni, students and fans be fully engaged in the development of the Marquette “Gold” identity and mascot. Plans for a new mascot will be announced at the start of the new school year this fall.

The university also introduced today a new “MU” monogram that will be used to visually identify Marquette athletics. The creation of the “MU” monogram is a direct response to last fall’s survey respondents’ desire that Marquette have a distinct “MU” symbol. The “MU” monogram will appear on uniforms, printed materials, merchandise, and on the floor of the McGuire Center and the Bradley Center. Work on the McGuire Center floor will begin this week in order to use the small window of time between the end of the last season and the start of the summer basketball camps. More information about the new “MU” monogram is available at the university’s Web site at http://www.marquette.edu/nickname.

Background:

Marquette University reopened discussion of the athletics nickname issue following Commencement in May 2004 when Wayne Sanders, vice chair of the Board of Trustees, offered a $1 million gift, which would be matched by another, anonymous trustee, if the university would change its nickname back to Warriors “in an honorable way that would offend no one.”

Marquette President Robert Wild, S.J, immediately declined the gift but agreed to put the question on the table for the Board to consider.

In September 2004, the Board of Trustees decided that it would consider the question of returning to the Warriors nickname and passed a resolution prohibiting all future use of Native American references or imagery in the Marquette athletics
nickname, mascot or logo.

The Board also asked for an open dialogue to gather viewpoints on this issue. The process included:

An extensive online survey taken by more than 9,000 Marquette students, alumni, faculty and staff. Participants were asked for their attitudes, emotions and viewpoints about the “Golden Eagles” and “Warriors;”

Ongoing dialogue with members of the Native American community;

A fact-finding committee made up of Trustees, students, alumni, faculty and staff;

Focus groups of students, alumni and faculty;

A series of stakeholder forums;

Consideration of letters, e-mails and calls from the community; and

A dedicated Web site informing members of the Marquette community on this issue.

News Briefs is published each Monday and as news warrants by the Office of Public Affairs for Marquette students, faculty and staff.

Comments? Questions? Is there news you would like to share? E-mail mu.e-news@marquette.edu, call 8-1988, fax 8-5936 or send your note in campus mail to Holthusen, 419F.

Go to http://checkmarq.mu.edu for the latest Marquette news and useful information for students, faculty and staff.