

The air buzzes with excitement as crowds gather beneath the Friday night lights, eager to cheer for their school. No matter the differences that may exist between the students of Texarkana's high schools, Friday night football games serve as a unifying force.

Despite high school football existing as early as 1870, and the founding of Texarkana occurring a mere three years later, high school football didn't take root in the twin cities until the early 1900s. However, our late start did nothing to dissuade enthusiasm, and by 1918, a rivalry was born.

The Texas-Arkansas football game was a tradition that lasted over a century. Held in the same esteem as the homecoming and playoff games, the community looked forward to it all year. Students enjoyed the build-up as much as the game itself, including special events that were held in preparation for the game—a bacon fry at Texas High and Tiger Tails at Arkansas High—but at the game itself, the level of excitement mimicked most other Friday nights.

Students fill stands across this city weekly, dressed in their school colors, proudly representing Texarkana schools, regardless of the opponent.

As contradictory as it may sound, football games aren't just about football. Some fans of Friday night lights might not even understand the intricacies of the game. Yet, the entire community shows up just the same.

They watch the drill team perform their perfectly synchronized routines. They listen to the band belt notes in time to their steps and the color guard flags spinning to the beat. They cheer with the cheerleaders and mascots, their faces painted in Tiger orange or Razorback red, black and gold, or covered in leopard spots.

Driving past Tiger Stadium, Razorback Stadium, Harris Field, or Hawk Stadium, all aglow under the Friday night lights, one can witness the packed stands, hear the drumming of excitement in the air, and feel the rush that comes from being a part of something bigger than oneself.

The high schools of Texarkana are made up of varying demographics, yet none of that matters when everyone is wearing the same colors, yelling the same chants, and cheering for the same team. That is what football games do; they unify us. Once everything else fades away, whether we're Tigers, Hawks, Razorbacks, or Leopards, the Friday night lights show us we're all one community. 📍

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

BY SOPHIE KELLER

PHOTOS BY MATT CORNELIUS



“Woooooo Pig Soooooie! Arkansas Razorbacks!”

When you think of the name, you probably assume it originated with the University of Arkansas, but Arkansas High School first adopted the Razorback mascot as their own in 1873. In 1894, when the University of Arkansas team was formed, their mascot was a cardinal. The cardinal mascot stuck until 1910, when Hugo Bezdek, the football coach, stated his team played like a “wild band of Razorback hogs” after beating LSU 7-0. After the student body at the University of Arkansas heard this statement, they voted to change the name and mascot to the Arkansas Razorbacks.

In the 1920s, farmers rushed out to the team’s bus after returning from an away game, yelling, “Woo Pig Sooie.” This stuck with the student body, and the action of calling the Hogs was born.

Since the Texarkana Arkansas High School (AHS) was already known as the Razorbacks, the University of Arkansas made an agreement with the high school to “use” their Razorback logo as their mascot. In exchange, the University of Arkansas gave Arkansas High School used athletic equipment.

To protect the trademark of the “Arkansas Razorbacks,” the University of Arkansas has exclusive licensing rights to the Razorback logo and its related merchandise. Still, there is no quarrel with Texarkana Arkansas School District continuing to use the name “Texarkana Arkansas Razorbacks.” After all, we were the ones who came up with the name first—and today, we pride ourselves on being the home of the “original” Razorback mascot.

I have always been proud of being an Arkansas Razorback fan, and I have yelled “Woo Pig Sooie” with joy. I am entering my senior



MEET THE MASCOTS

ARKANSAS
HIGH SCHOOL

Ruby & Rowdy Red the Razorbacks

BY CARLY IRVIN, CLASS OF 2024
PHOTOS BY MATT CORNELIUS



year as a Texarkana Arkansas Razorback, and I know I will always have a home at AHS. The excellent education and world-class experiences that I have enjoyed will stay with me long after I’ve stopped walking these red and white halls. Dr. Robin Hickerson, the former TASD Assistant Superintendent and principal of Arkansas High School, always says it best... “Once a Razorback, always a Razorback.” ①



“Who ya with? LE!”

This resounding chant echoes with pride and enthusiasm if you are attending any sporting event in the Liberty-Eylau area.

The roots of LEISD trace back officially to 1955, but it was actually long before that when the community formed the school system that would become Liberty-Eylau. The first Liberty School was organized in 1886, by P.F. Murdock. The early buildings were makeshift dwellings and fairly primitive. Teachers and administrators were limited; however, every individual possessed a vision of something great for the area. Over time, several schools emerged, including Buchanan, Rocky Ford, Moores, Grandview, and

Macedonia, to name a few. Eventually, these schools merged to form the unified district LE is today.

In the year 1955, change was in the air, and decisions needed to be made. Among the crucial choices were the selection of school colors and an appropriate mascot. The entire district was encouraged to contribute ideas, resulting in numerous submissions. Although even a tarantula made an appearance, it was the mighty leopard, that perfectly embodied the spirit of the new school. This choice was unanimously voted as the perfect representation and remains unchanged to this day. Since 1956, LE’s Leopards have proudly showcased their spots!

LE stands as a community where people of all ages come together to support one another. When they catch sight of Leo the Leopard, they see more than just a leopard; they see a symbol of unity, evoking a deep sense of pride. ①



MEET THE MASCOT
LIBERTY-EYLAU
HIGH SCHOOL
**Leo the
Leopard**

BY LEHS JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT
PHOTOS BY MATT CORNELIUS



“Give me a black! Give me a gold!”

On a fall day at Pleasant Grove High School, this chant can often be heard echoing through the gym at the end of a pep rally. Different grade levels compete to show their school spirit and prove that black and gold is in their blood. For these committed fans, it might be hard to believe that just 50 years ago, Pleasant Grove students could have been chanting for green and white.

Pleasant Grove Middle School was established in 1977. Without a high school campus, there was not a large emphasis on sports, as the school only offered basketball, football, and track. As years passed and the middle school grew, they added baseball, volleyball, and cross-country teams.

With the addition of multiple sports and a desire for greater school spirit, Pleasant Grove Middle School's first student council created an identity for the district that was inspired by the community. A little league baseball team called "Bill Hart's Hawks" served as the inspiration for our



MEET THE MASCOT

PLEASANT GROVE HIGH SCHOOL Grover the Hawk

BY KAYLYNN SHARP, CLASS OF 2025

PHOTOS BY MATT CORNELIUS



school's mascot. The colors of the team, however, were green and white. The students decided that green and white did not properly represent our school. The student body suggested that black and gold better represented the achievement and sophistication of the district.

The home of the Hawks and love for black and gold have remained over the years. That is not to say the traditions, logos, and colors have not changed over time. In 2009, the Iowa Hawkeyes noticed similarities between their logo and our past logo. This inspired the first change in the presentation of the Hawks. Just three years ago, Pleasant Grove worked with Varsity Brands to update to our current Hawk logo and enhanced school colors. Vegas gold can now be seen on the newest letterman jackets and trim of graduation gowns.

While the logo and colors of Pleasant Grove have undergone change, the success and ideals of our district triumph over other identifying factors. Our high levels of learning inside and outside of the classroom have created our legacy through local and state accomplishments. The history of Pleasant Grove's school spirit creates a sense of pride in me; I am always excited to cheer for my Hawks and represent black and gold! 🦅



Set back from Summerhill Road, the pulsing orange of the Texas High pyramid illuminates the night and marks yet another win for the Tigers.

A mere two miles away, the bright lights of Grim Stadium shine on a cheering crowd, highlighting what it truly means to be a Tiger and keeping alive the traditions of Texas High's past.

Founded in 1888, Texas High has an obscure history, with most information pertaining to the early years of its Pine Street location (home of the high school until 1967) all but lost. That leads to a question many don't think to ask: has TISD always been the Texas Tigers? The earliest Texas High records can be found in *The Half Shell*, the Texas High yearbook published from 1911 to 1913. However, there is no mention of tigers or the colors

so proudly worn by thousands of students during this last century.

One notable piece of information from *The Half Shell* is the formation of a football team in the 1910-1911 school year, but even then, the photograph of the grim-faced team of 11 didn't bear any distinguishing symbols; the color of their uniforms isn't distinguishable because of the limited technology of those years.

It can only be assumed that Texas High didn't truly become the Tigers until the 1913-1914 school year when *The Half Shell* was replaced by a newspaper: *The Texas Tiger*. Yet even then, we see nothing of school colors until a song of unknown origin in 1926, preaching the meaning of orange and white and the virtues of Texas High...

"Here's to the orange of Texas. The hue of the rising sun. Here's to the white for Texas. It stands for might and right."

These colors would eventually be found in the uniforms of Texas High's various spirit groups and their mascots (children dressed

MEET THE MASCOT

TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL Trochia the Tiger

BY SOPHIE KELLER, CLASS OF 2024

PHOTOS BY MATT CORNELIUS

up to match the group they represented). These mascots first appeared in the 1937 yearbook. In the 1960s, a live tiger, Tawyna, would be brought onto the football field; however, that ended in 1964 when an 8-AAAA conference ruling barred live animals from the football field.

This merely sparked a new tradition. In 1964, Margaret Westerman, a senior, became the first student to serve as Trochia the Tiger, a name decided on by a contest run by the Tiger Times staff.

Today, Texas High students more than make up for the lack of spirit from their predecessors over a century ago. Every fall, they don their orange shirts on pep-rally days to cheer with Trochia and paint their faces with orange and white for games each Friday night. While they may not know why they are Tigers, they are without a doubt proud to be one. ①

**All information can be found in "Pages from the Past," compiled in 1992.*



2023 FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS