

Newark High School Yellow Jackets

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Fay and Oscar Pickett, NHS Class of 1945

Where did “Yellow Jackets” come from? Nobody remembers, for sure.

A few “old” Newarkers, after much head scratching, recalled the football team had new uniforms one year with jerseys that had yellow and black stripes on the arms and then they were called “Yellow Jackets”

“You could look it up.” A search of the Newark Post and the Wilmington Morning News yielded the following information:

First use of Newark High School “Yellow Jackets”:

Newark Post, December 1, 1932: It was a Newark football team, OK, but NOT Newark High School. They were called a semi-pro team and played on the John F. Richards farm east of Newark on the Ogletown road; home games started at 2:30 PM on Sunday afternoons.

First use of Newark High School “Yellow Jackets”:

Wilmington Morning News, October 20, 1933: This was our team, Newark High School Yellow Jackets, and the game was with Wilmington High School; Wilmington was favored. We won! They called us famers and hicks and hayseeds. So be it. We won, 8-0!

First use of Newark High School “Yellow Jackets” by Newark Post:

October 26, 1933: Review of the Newark –Wilmington game; they called it an “upset.” Do you remember these names? Daly, left end; Egnor, left tackle; Beers, left guard; Bayard Perry, center; Cage, right guard; Brimijoin, right tackle; Harold Tiffany, right end; E. Smith, right half back; Mayer, left half back; F. Wharton, quarterback; Ray Smith, full back; Wm. K. Gillespie, coach. That same Newark Post reported, during September, over 500 marriages had been performed in Elkton – an all-time record. It was a depression business in Elkton, you know, not a hobby. One young couple, before they could say anything, was snatched from a restaurant and transported to a wedding chapel; they had been married 17 years before.

Photographs:

Newark Post, November 24, 1932 – our team had all-black uniforms. They sure looked mean and menacing.

Newark Post, June 4, 1993 – Special Section, “Newark High School, Celebrating 100 Years, 1893-1993: 1926 football team had all-black uniforms. “in the 1930s” football team, had striped sleeve jerseys and stockings. The stripes are narrow, perhaps ½ inch yellow and black alternating stripes.

So What?

The Newark High School football team became “Yellow Jackets” in the fall of 1933; they had new uniforms with ½ inch alternating yellow and black striped sleeves on black jersey and matching yellow and black striped stockings. Uniforms for previous years had been all black; no stripes.

The curious thing about all this is that Newark’s semi-pro football team had been called “Yellow jackets” the year before Newark High School adopted the same name. Maybe Newark High adopted jersey similar to the semi-pro team and all Newark football teams became Yellow Jackets. At least the newspapers called both, the semi-pro and the Newark High School team, Yellow jackets when reporting on team events.

Who named them? Here, again, maybe the NHS team adopted the name, maybe coach Gillespie, maybe a newspaper sports writer, it’s lost in the game dust.

In April 1935, the “Yellow Jacket Buzz,” Newark High School’s monthly newspaper made its debut. In the lead editorial, Arthur Huston says, “The name was selected by the staff. Newark High School’s football teams have been termed the Newark Yellow Jackets so often that the name has come to be closely associated with the school. As a “buzz” would be a true yellow jacket’s way of communicating, we decided to call our publication ‘The Yellow Jacket Buzz’.”

If you have any interest in perusing old issues of the “Yellow Jacket Buzz” look in the Wilmington Public Library; they are in the Reference Section on the 3rd floor. You’ll find issued from April 1935, the first issue, to December 1943. June 1937, is a special issue, it contains pictures of senior and junior classes and simulates the yearbook of later years.

The first Newark High School yearbook was published in 1941; we weren’t even freshmen yet. You guessed it, they called it the “KRAWEN.” You’ll have to figure out for yourself why they chose the name. Thought you’d ask that – yes, the football team of 1941 had black jerseys with narrow yellow and black stripes on the sleeves and also matching stockings.

Were other athletic teams from Newark High School called Yellow Jackets? Maybe. We don’t know. You could look it up.