

The Psychology of Sports Uniform Changes

Written by Maury Brown

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Todd Radom has been part of some of the most recognizable sports logo designs in all of sports

The uniforms that athletes in sports wear are more than just some random selection. In pro sports, a design can define a club for generations. Many designs are a reflection of a city or region, while others instill a sense of competitiveness or have some deep tie to history.

And then there are the redesigns.

Beyond general tweaking to add some flavor and drive up new merchandise sales, there are rebranding efforts that are done for other, more direct reasons, according to Todd Radom, a graphics designer that has created logos for the Washington Nationals, Super Bowl XXXVIII, the Los Angeles Angels redesign in 2002, the World Baseball Classic logo, and many more (see <http://www.toddradom.com/> , he also designed [The Biz of Baseball logo](#)). With the psychology of uniform change occurring often in pro sports (the Carolina Hurricanes

[introduced new ones](#)

today), I thought it would be interesting to get Radom's take on the psychology behind rebranding in sports. -

Maury Brown

Are there psychological reasons an established club changes uniform branding?

Rebranding generally happens for one of two reasons. Either, 1) a change in ownership and the desire to institute proprietary look, or; 2) a visual reboot in a time of failure on the field of play. Relocation is also a reason, of course, as is the move to a new facility (Twins in 2010, Brooklyn Nets.)

What, in your opinion, are some good examples?

For ownership, take a look at the recent Jacksonville Jaguars change, the New Orleans Pelicans scenario, and the Houston Astros. For the desire to reconnect with the fan base look no further than what's happening in Dallas with the Stars today, look at the Tampa Bay Lightning, or the Cleveland Cavaliers a couple of years back, etc.

How many of the rebrands are tied to getting fans to remember "the good old days?"

Right now it's the thing to do. I have a theory that difficult economic times and societal uncertainty lead all sorts of consumer brands-including sports franchises-to look backwards. Consumers crave "comfort food" in times like these. The Baltimore Orioles, Toronto Blue Jays, Houston Astros, Philadelphia 76ers, Golden State Warriors, Buffalo Bills and Sabres-all have retrenched toward imagery from their respective pasts. When the Atlanta Braves essentially threw back to their Milwaukee roots in 1987 they started a movement that cannot really be called a trend-trends are by nature fleeting and ephemeral.

What are the best uniform redesigns?

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This is a purely subjective question! I personally love what the Blue Jays did a couple of years back-a wonderful refresh of all of the elements that made their original identity great; both relevant and reverent to their unique visual culture.

Read The Biz of Baseball interview with Todd Radom [from 2009](#) , plus our interview with him [from 2006](#) .



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