

Editorial Writing

District Meet • 2023



You are a reporter for the **Leaguetown Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the high school newspaper.

Remember that as an editorial writer, you should **support or oppose** policy or action; you should not sermonize. You have **45 minutes**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 3,600 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Since 1900, the high school's mascot has been the Leopards. After Title IX was passed in 1972, the athletic department made the decision to name all girls teams the "Lady Leopards," and for the past 40 years, that has not changed.

The "Lady Leopards" logo is on a wall-sized mural in the gymnasium. It's on jerseys, T-shirts and bumper stickers throughout campus and the community.

While attending a basketball tournament in San Antonio this December, varsity girls captain and senior Nicole Moutry observed the other teams in attendance and took note of their mascot names and logos. Over the next month, Moutry wrote a proposal and produced a petition to formally drop the word "Lady," so all high school teams would be known as the "Leopards." Her petition has more than 2,200 signatures from students, parents and community members.

Moutry presented her proposal and petition to the school board in February and the board will vote on the proposal at its meeting Monday, March 27. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Thursday, March 23.

THOSE SUPPORTING THE MASCOT CHANGE

There is no reason to distinguish between the gender of each mascot. A Leopard is a Leopard. Adding the word "Lady" diminishes the ferocity and power of female athletes and makes the name of the team sound diminutive. Female athletes are just as strong as their male counterparts and should not be treated differently.

THOSE OPPOSING THE MASCOT CHANGE

The Lady Leopards mascot has been around for more than 40 years and is ingrained in the tradition of the school. There is no plan in place to pay for this change. The expense it would take to repaint the mural in the gym, purchase new jerseys and equipment and replace every iteration of the words all over the school is not worth the effort just to make some students feel better about the name of the mascot.

■ NICOLE MOUTRY, senior varsity basketball captain

“When I was at a tournament in San Antonio, I wrote down every mascot of the teams in attendance, and more than 60% of the teams had some sort of feminine qualifier to their name like ‘Lady Dragons’ or ‘Bisonettes.’ And I looked out on the court and saw all these tough girls taking elbows, playing through injuries and sweating all over the court and I thought, ‘this ain’t it.’ We are not Lady Leopards. We are Leopards. We are every bit as competitive and tough as the varsity boys. So, I want us to change our our name to the Leopards.

“As far as paying to make all these changes, some of the other members of my team as well as members of the volleyball and soccer teams have made a group chat, and we are coming up with a list of local businesses we could contact to sponsor our jersey replacements. So hopefully that would give us a starting point to pay for some changes.

“Every girl on all three teams signed the petition, as well. This is something that is really important for our mindset, especially as our season is winding down and as my team looks ahead to next season. I want to leave a legacy for the girls coming after us. I want them to know that they are athletes, and they are no different from the male athletes at the school.”

■ VICTORIA MOMOA, athletic director and varsity girls basketball coach

“Nicole has been a tremendous athlete for us all four years of her high school career, and I’m proud to say that she earned a scholarship to the University of North Texas to continue playing in the fall. It was no surprise after her grit and leadership throughout our season that she would want to make a change like this and send a clear message to our community that our female athletes are here to dominate just as much as our male athletes. As athletic director, I have some concerns about the budget and how those details would be worked out if the school board does decide to accept her proposal. But regardless of the decision, I’m proud of Nicole’s team. I’m proud of the season they had and now I’m proud that here at the end of her career, she is choosing to make a stand about something she believes in.”

■ CJ POCOCK, junior boys soccer player

“I know lots of girl athletes, and we do lots of events and team-building stuff with the girls soccer team. They practice hard and play hard, so I don’t have any issues with a change to the mascot name. I’ve never thought of them as any different than us.”

■ CEDRIC MACK, principal

“I understand and empathize with the students looking to change the name of the mascot. The problem is, when you have such a long-standing tradition like a mascot name, people don’t realize the expense that the school community will have to go through in order to enact these changes. All our forms will need to be re-created. We’re talking about changes to our facilities and changes to our website. It’s not a simple switch we can just flick and change the name of a mascot. This is something that will need to be done over time. I’m not convinced that now is the right time to take on some of these monetary expenses and additional challenges.”

■ JACK BLAKEY, junior

“This seems like a waste of time and money. Our school needs a computer lab and new science equipment. I don’t think it should be the school’s responsibility to waste money on these superficial things when what we have is fine.”

DO NOT PASS OUT TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST**Editorial Writing/District Meet • 2023
Contest Tips and Sample Editorials**

Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critiquing/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.

1. Lead with a statement of the situation and then take a clear, definitive staff stance. The situation is whether or not the school should change the mascot for girls sports.
2. As a general rule, use third person. If you must use a pronoun, use first person plural (we, meaning "we, the newspaper staff"). Do not use first person singular (I, me, mine) or second person (you). Avoid unnecessary use of pronouns. Rather than "We believe the district should..." write instead, "The district should."
3. Don't waddle into the editorial. Get right to the point and, as a general rule, don't ask questions. An editorial should answer questions, not ask them. Above all, remember that your purpose is to make thoughtful, logical arguments in support of your position, not to engage in a tirade. The editorial should not be long — 450 words at the most. Although it's not recommended all the time, sometimes a writer could use a feature opening to grab the reader's attention and draw them into the story.
4. Look for the future angle. Your paper comes out before the school board meeting.
5. Once you've stated your position/stance, the body of the editorial should support your stance and refute the opposition.
6. After the body of your editorial, complete the editorial with a specific solution.
7. Avoid direct quotes unless the quote adds substantially to the editorial. You can pull information from these quotes, as has been done here, but it's not necessary to attribute that information unless the person has substantial credibility.
8. Watch for factual errors. Pay attention to minor details. Also, stay focused.
9. Don't clutter up the editorial with clichés or trite phrases such as "adults don't understand teens" or any variation thereof. Also, edit out the name of the school unless it is necessary for clarity. It isn't necessary to say "Leaguetown Independent School District" or "Leaguetown High School." Students know the name of the school. They don't need to be reminded.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/SUPPORTING

Girls sports teams could have an adjustment to their mascot if the school board approves a petition by senior Nicole Moutry to drop the word “Lady” from the Lady Leopards team name at its March 27 meeting.

The school board should vote to change the names of girls sports teams so that all school teams are known as the “Leopards.”

Moutry is the varsity girls basketball captain and during the team’s tournament in San Antonio in December, she realized more than 60% of the teams add a feminine qualifier to their mascot names.

However, adding these words is unnecessary and diminishes the power and grit of the female athletes. Removing “Lady” will resolve this disconnect and make for a better representation of the team’s strength.

It’s not uncommon for an organization to have had to deal with name and mascot changes, such as the Washington Commanders and Cleveland Guardians, who both changed their names after public dissent showed that their names were insensitive to indigenous communities.

If huge organizations with large fan bases can make such changes to their names to be more respectful of marginalized communities, the school can make the effort to consolidate the boys and girls teams into one mascot.

While it may take time, fundraising and hard work, changing the names of the girls sports teams is possible. Moutry has even suggested reaching out to local businesses to sponsor jersey replacements as an option.

Every girl on the volleyball, basketball, and soccer team has signed the petition. It is imperative for the school board to listen to its athletes and how they want to be represented in their community. Teams should drop the “Lady” and all be Leopards together.

SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING

A big change could come to the girls sports mascot if the school board approves a petition by senior Nicole Moutry to drop the word “Lady” from their Lady Leopards team name. They board will decide at its March 27 meeting.

The school board should reject the proposal to change the names of girls sports teams and keep the mascot the way it is.

Moutry is the varsity girls basketball captain and during a tournament in San Antonio in December, she realized more than 60% of the teams add a feminine qualifier to mascot names.

If 60% of the teams use the feminine qualifier, it is obviously popular among high schools and therefore, the school should stick with the current mascot.

The renaming process would include new jerseys and equipment, and repainting the mural in the gym as well as other iterations of the words in the school. The money and time that would be taken by this proposal could be used for other school needs like a computer lab or science equipment. Instead of redundantly redecorating the school, the district should invest in improvements that will benefit all students.

Feminine qualifiers are not necessarily negative, nor do they diminish players’ ferocity. Players should embrace their femininity, not reject it or run away from it. Animals in the wild, such as lions and elephants, often operate in a matriarchal system, in which the females are the leaders of the pack. The feminine qualifier adds to the power of the team.

There’s nothing wrong with being a lady. The school board should reject this proposal and keep the traditional name the way it is — the way it has been since 1972.