

Redskins Announce Name Change Ahead of NFL Season

Ronn Torossian, CEO, [5WPR](#)

After more than a decade of active protests demanding a name and mascot change, the Washington Redskins have become the latest major national brand to shift away from [branding](#) that some found racially offensive. Now, the team is faced with the prospect of placating legions of fans who did not support the change, while coming up with a new brand for one of the oldest franchises in the sport.

Suggestions for a new name are coming from many different directions: from fans, from protesters, from the media, and from the Native American activist groups that have been calling for the change for many years. Examples offered that have been gaining a following online include “Redhawks,” “Redtails,” or “Red Wolves.” The Redtails or Red Tails name has fans who feel the nod to the famous Tuskegee Airmen would be a fitting tribute from a team that has been embroiled in this controversy.

The announcement will bring to a close one of the longest and most contentious [consumer PR](#) controversies in professional sports. From the very beginning of Dan Snyder’s term as the team owner, which began in 1999, there have been ongoing protests about the name. Native American groups have called the “Redskins” name a “dictionary defined racial slur,” and more than a dozen leaders from various Native groups called on NFL commissioner Roger Goodell to force a change.

For years, Snyder resisted. The team had a long, rich history as the “Redskins,” and he did not feel inclined to retire the name. But, times changed. Sponsors have been very outspoken in recent weeks and months, challenging brands across many

industries on their use of trademarks and brands, which some find objectionable. According to various media reports about this case, it was this pressure from advertisers that finally tipped the scale, causing Snyder to announce the change.

Out front on that effort was FedEx CEO Frederick Smith, who is part-owner of the Washington NFL franchise. FedEx also holds the current contract on naming rights to the stadium where Washington plays, at least through 2027. And that was just the first domino to threaten to fall. Pepsi, Bank of America, and Nike all pressured the team to make the change. So Snyder, who grew up a Washington fan and said he would never change the name, announced he would be conducting a “thorough review” of the name and logo.

As of this writing, there’s no word yet on what the new brand will be, but team officials said Snyder and head coach Ron Rivera are “working closely” on a new name and look for the team.

Many in and out of the world of sports have commented publicly since the announcement, including current Washington quarterback, Dwayne Haskins, who tweeted, “As a kid who grew up in the DC area, it’ll always be #Redtail but looking forward to the future...”

Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, who has led the charge for the ‘Change the Mascot’ campaign, celebrated the news, “The NFL and Dan Snyder, we have to commend them on making the right call to change the name... Snyder won today because now he has a legacy that will be different from the racial slur that was the team name. I know that’s not an easy thing to do, but it was the right thing...”



About the Author: Ronn Torossian is CEO of [5WPR, PR agency of the year](#) according to American Business Awards.