

Lancaster - What is a Golden Gale?

What is a Golden GALE?

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What is a GOLDEN GALE? According to Webster's Dictionary: A gale is a very powerful wind, a forceful outburst. [The Golden...must be with the sun shining through]. Since moving to the Lancaster area nearly 15 years ago, I have been coaching basketball at the high school. Many times opposing coaches have asked me,what exactly is a Gale, where did the name originate? After asking everyone I thought might know and getting the same answer, "You know, I have always wondered where the name came from myself. If you find out, let me know." During the summer of 1998 I decided to try and find out for myself where this unique nickname came from. I asked some of my teaching and coaching colleagues if they didn't know the origin, who might I ask. Dave Blume, another assistant basketball coach, gave me several names to approach. Ron Johnson, former sports editor for the Lancaster Eagle Gazette was one of the contacts mentioned. This led me to Mrs. Ginny Hazelton. Mrs. Hazelton's husband was the owner of the Lancaster paper for many years.

During the time I was trying to make contact with these people, I went to the Fairfield County Library and researched the microfilm of the County newspapers. In those papers, I noticed a daily column called "Sports Simmerings" written by Wilber Kilbarger. Wilber would talk about upcoming games, or chats he had had with local citizens or coaches on both local and national sporting events. I first noticed these articles appearing in the late 1920's and up through the 1950's. All through this period of time, I saw that the nickname of the Lancaster athletic teams was mentioned many times.

Through the middle 30's, it was always the "Golden Tornadoes" or "The Purple and Gold". Then in the September 28th 1935 issue of the Eagle Gazette, the Lancaster "Golden Gales" were defeated by the Logan team. This was the first night game at Logan and the game drew over 3,000 fans, 500 of which were from Lancaster. The Golden Gales name then became more and more prevalent after that date but nothing was mentioned stating any type of announcement of a name change. Going back to my conversation with Mrs. Hazelton, she asked if I had talked to Wilber Kilbarger about the Golden Gales name change. I had mistakenly assumed that 65 years after the articles Mr. Kilbarger had written, he might have passed on. I told Mrs. Hazelton I had not talked to Mr. Kilbarger and had no idea where he might be. She asked me to wait a minute; she thought she had his phone number! She did, and I immediately called the number and found Mr. Kilbarger alive and well and living in Florida part time and spending the summers in Columbus. He told me he moved to Columbus and started writing for the Columbus Dispatch, retired after several years there and now split time between Ohio and Florida. After some time telling him who I was and how things in Lancaster were going, I finally asked someone who really might have some first-hand, solid information about the mystery of "The Golden Gales" nickname. When I asked Mr. Kilbarger, he stated, "Well, I believe it was in the early to middle 30's, the Eagle-Gazette changed their printing presses over to a new style print. I guess on computers now days the call it fonts.

We changed style and size and when we did that, Lancaster Golden Tornadoes did not fit in one column. To newspaper writers, that was a problem. So, I think we just changed it to Golden Gales and the name kinda stuck." That was it I asked myself!?! Then I asked him, "That was it?" "That is as near as I can remember." Mr. Kilbarger stated. I thanked him for his time and information and hung up. I continued to try and verify or substantiate Mr. Kilbarger's recollections, but found no other source. So, as far as I know, that is the story. If anyone knows of anything different or can add to or substantiate this story, please contact me at Lancaster High School, email d_davis@lancaster.k12.oh.us