

History of cheerleading essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Rah rah rah! Tiger, Tiger, Sis, Sis, Sis! Boom, Boom Boom! Aaaah!

Princeton, Princeton, Princeton! ” Just like anything else, cheerleading has quite a history behind it. From the first chants at Princeton University to one of today’s most popular National pastimes, cheerleading has come a long way the past ten decades. In ancient times spectators cheered for runners in races held during the first ever Olympic Games in ancient Greece. In the 1860’s students in Great Britain began cheering at competitive sporting events and soon the idea spread to the United States. In 1884, Thomas Peebles, a graduate of Princeton University, took that yell and formed the first pep club. They created the first-known cheer sport of football to the University of Minnesota.

It was from that campus that organized cheerleading began. According to the book, History of Cheerleading, cheerleading as we know it today was initiated in 1898 by Jack Campbell, an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota. The football team was having a pitiful season and was looking for a way to send positive energy to the players. Campbell stood in front of the crowd and directed them in a chant. Campbell became the first ever cheerleader.

Therefore, cheerleading officially began on November 2, 1898. Soon after that, the university organized a “ yell leader” squad consisting of four males. Cheerleading was dominated by men in its early years. However, when large numbers of young men went off to fight in World War II, the tables turned. More than 90% of cheerleaders were female from that point on. The evolution of cheerleading as a sport, again led by The University of Minnesota, started in the 1920’s.

As skills dramatically increased, cheerleading began to receive recognition as a serious athletic activity. Gymnastics, tumbling, pyramids, partner stunts, and advanced jumps became incorporated in cheers. According to Cheer Magazine, the 1930's brought on the growth of showmanship in cheerleading and cheerleading became more entertaining to watch. Several colleges offered scholarships, college credits, and a four year letter program. Widespread use of the megaphone began the 1900's as a way to increase the sound of the voice so that it carried throughout the stands. During this time, the first cheerleader fraternity was organized, an all-male organization called Gamma Sigma.

Women finally came into the scene in the late 1930's. Paper pom pons were also discovered in the 1930's. They were brightly colored strips of crepe paper in the school's colors. The poms made the arm movements stand out so that fans even in the highest and farthest seats from the field could see the cheerleaders. Paper pom pons did not hold up in rainy weather. In the 1960's Fred Gastoff invented the vinyl pom pon.

It remains the cheerleader's most used prop. Who would have guessed a man would have the largest impact on the growth of cheerleading. Well its true and his name is Lawrence Herkimer. Herkimer has done much for cheerleading in the United States. He founded the National Cheerleading Association at Southern Methodist University. He also taught the first cheerleading camp at Sam Houston College.

The first year fifty two girls attended and by the next year the size of the camp had grown to 350. Herkimer had no idea that he would end up with 20,

000 girls attending cheerleading camp in the summertime. Herkimer also was the inventor of a very popular cheerleading jump which was named “the herkie” after him. Once the cheerleaders were trained, they needed a source for sweaters, skirts, and other cheerleading gear.

In the early 1950s, Herkimer opened the Cheerleaders Supply Company to offer apparel, equipment, and fundraising items. Today, the Cheerleaders Supply Company and the National Cheerleaders Association have combined to become a multi-million dollar operation. Herkimer also invented the spirit stick, one of the most important cheerleading camp traditions. In 1954 during an NCA Cheer Camp, the first spirit stick was awarded. The first stick was a simple tree limb that had been cut, then painted in Herkimer’s garage. From such humble origins, the spirit stick has become one of the most coveted camp awards.

I bet many of you thought cheerleading was just about looking pretty and standing on the sidelines while yelling chants and performing stunts, but there is actually many different types of cheerleading. According to the magazine a Cheerleaders Guide to life, in the 1960’s, the National Football League teams began to organize professional cheerleading teams. It was the NFL’s Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders who gained the spotlight with their revealing outfits and sophisticated dance moves. They were first seen widely in Super Bowl X.

This caused the image of cheerleaders to permanently change, with many other NFL teams emulating them. Most of the professional teams’ squads would be more accurately described as dance teams. They don’t usually lead

cheers instead, they are crowd pleasers themselves. In the 1980's, National cheerleading competitions for junior and senior high school as well as collegiate squads took place across America. The first nation-wide television broadcast of the Collegiate Cheerleading Championships on CBS-TV in the spring of 1980, initiated by the International Cheerleading Foundation. The University of KY has won more National College Championships than any other college.

In the early 1990's, All-Star teams emerged. These are cheerleading teams not associated with schools or sports leagues, whose main objective is to compete. An All-star squad prepares almost year-round for many different competition appearances, but they only actually perform for up to 2 ? minutes during their routine. They are invited to competitions across the country. During a competition routine, a squad performs carefully choreographed stunting, tumbling, jumping and dancing to their own custom music. All-star cheerleading is a relatively young sport, but it is gaining popularity at a rapid pace.

Now that you know how cheerleading began, lets take a look at how it is today. Cheerleaders in the 21st century do not just stand on the sidelines; they perform center stage. They are dancers, stunters, gymnasts, choreographers, and artists. Some are bases strong enough to lift people their own weight way above their heads.

Others are so light they can be tossed twenty feet into the air. Cheerleaders not only cheer for football and basketball, but also various sports such as

wrestling, swimming and track. They have also begun cheering for both male and female teams. Males are also making a comeback in cheerleading.

In 2002, 95% of all cheerleaders were female, and 5% were male - Up 3% from the year before. Kentucky Wesleyan also made an addition of 4 males onto their squad last season. Cheerleading promotes enthusiastic, positive attitude and school spirit within schools and the community. A person must be highly skilled and competitive in order to achieve the honored and respected position of cheerleader. This list includes former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, actors Jimmy Stewart and Kirk Douglass, and actresses Meryl Streep and Halle Berry.

Today, cheerleading enjoys a reputation of being an important leadership force on practically every high school and college campus in America. Cheerleading attracts elementary, high school and college men and women across the United States. According to Cheer Magazine there are nearly 3.5 million cheerleaders in the United States alone. Their common goal is to effectively lead a crowd in support of an athletic team and to generate spirit and pride. Whether you view cheerleading as a sport or a student activity, it remains one of the most popular across the United States and throughout the world.

Whether an all-star or a member of the varsity squad, cheerleaders are graceful, strong athletes and gymnast with plenty of bounce, energy, and coordination. These yell leaders are no longer all male, but they still can bring a crowd to their feet. They tumble, flip, and fly. Some of today's best gymnasts aren't sprinting across a mat or perching dangerously on a

balance beam. Instead, they are wearing a cheerleader uniform. References
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