

# The origin of the CHARGERS

## A look into Oxford High School's history

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editor-in-chief

The Oxford school colors, blue and gold, mean a lot more to the history of Oxford than meets the eye. Integration between the University High School and Central High School marked a period of innovation and culture developed throughout the late 20th century. Traditions such as the Charger mascot and school colors were implemented throughout the new district forming a meaningful glue between the once-divided district.

Current Oxford High School teacher and coach Bobby Sanders has been a part of the Oxford School district since birth, as his father worked as a coach and teacher while he attended Oxford High School as a student. Sanders notes that the current school colors and charger bolt reflected the integration of the two Oxford schools.

"Oxford High School started in 1964. Before that it was University high school; the public school was owned by the university and it was a teaching school for their student teachers. The original Oxford High School's mascot was the coronel and their colors were blue, red and white. The other high school was Central High School and Central High School's colors were purple and gold. Their mascot was an eagle. In 1969 integration occurred and the two schools combined and that's when the now Oxford High School was formed," Sanders said.

Sanders' father was a major contributor to the startup of the early-on activity traditions as he had influence over the culture developed through the athletics department.

"At the time my father was the head football and baseball coach and they had to pick the new colors and new mascot for the new school. They got a committee together and decided to take the blue from the original Oxford High School and the gold from Central High School and that's how we got our colors," Sanders said. "When they were trying to search for a mascot they decided that they didn't want a human mascot because that's what Oxford had been and they didn't want to have an animal mascot because that's what Central had been. My father liked the design of the O Bolt that the San Diego Chargers used and it was his suggestion that we go with the lightning bolt. The committee had picked the top

three choices and let the student body vote on which one was their favorite and the student body voted to go with the lightning bolt San Diego Chargers style."

While the long and complex history of Oxford High School and its numerous long-standing traditions have remained a mystery to the majority of our community, figures such as Sanders are crucial to better understanding our traditions and the history of integration in our town. Sanders' reflected

athletically but he's really proud of the way the athletic programs have grown and how successful they are. He's proud of what the school has become."

The Oxford football team has changed drastically throughout the past few decades, acting as a symbol of the immense growth and prosperity of the school and program.







"I think integration happened in the spring of 1969 and the first football team played in 1970. This was the first time they had played as the Oxford Chargers. Back then there were two coaches total. There was an offensive coach and a defensive coach, my dad was the head coach and did the offense and he had a guy that did the defense. Now we've got 12-14 coaches. Back then the team was good if you had 30 players and now we've got about 150 players in the program. It's simply the growth and the size that has changed; how much bigger Oxford's gotten obviously with the school and the football program" Sanders said.

The legacy of the Sanders family and their contributions to the school has lived on through many generations.

"I can remember at 10 years old getting to be a waterboy for my dad's football team and thinking I was something special. And then just to go from that to playing here back in the early 80s to coming back as a coach for the past 14 years and for the past few seasons getting to watch my son play. It's been neat to see my family over the generations being a part of Oxford football," Sanders said. "I've got a sister who graduated 3 or 4 years before me and I had uncles who attended the original Oxford High School. Oxford's a special place for my family. All my family graduated from Oxford High School. My dad coached here and now I am getting to coach here. It's just a special place and holds a lot of fond memories throughout the years."

The O Bold and Charger blue and gold don't just mark a brand identity but instead have historical meaning and symbols of unity in our school.

"It's tradition. It's the joining of the two schools and the joining of the blue and the gold from the two previous high schools. It's just tradition to me and I believe that tradition is important and to remember the past you can always go back and remember the people before you who have laid the foundation for what we have now. We've got probably the best high school in the state of Mississippi and it all started back there in 1969," Sanders said.

<b>CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL</b>		
School colors: 	The all-black high school, formerly Oxford Training School, that closed due to court-ordered integration. Years open: 1939- 1969	Nickname: Eagles 
<b>OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL</b>		
School colors: 	The current high school that integrated in 1970. Today, it is located at 101 Charger Loop. Years open: 1963 - present	Nickname: Chargers 
<b>UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL</b>		
School colors: 	The all-white high school that opened as a laboratory school for student teachers at the University of Mississippi. Years open: 1930 - 1963	Nickname: Colonels 

specifically on his father's experience with integration and the transformation of Oxford.

"The biggest thing he said is that he feels like Oxford succeeded with integration a lot better than other schools did. He has told me several times that from his point of view as the head football coach that there weren't any problems and he didn't see any that were brought to his attention. The two schools merged somewhat successfully and somewhat easily," Sanders said. "He's proud of the success that Oxford's having now. In the early years, Oxford was an average school