

How Did “Go Blue” Get Started?

Whether you’re at a football game in Michigan Stadium on a blustery football Saturday or you’re cheering on the women’s softball team on a sunny spring day, you’re sure to hear two things numerous times throughout the game: “The Victors” and the cheers of “Go Blue!” And while we know that Louis Elbel penned “The Victors” after a Michigan football victory in 1898, the origins of the oft-repeated “Go Blue” cheer are a bit less clear.

From summer 1998 to fall 2000, Michigan Today magazine published a series of letters debating the beginnings of every Wolverine’s favorite cheer. The following appeared there:

Margaret Detlor Dungan, ’48, MA’51, wrote that she witnessed the birth of this famous expression during the Wolverines’ first home football game of the 1950 season: “I was halfway up the stands, somewhere around the 40-yard line, when Paul Fromm, ’51, yelled out the now famous cheer ... at subsequent games, he kept using the cheer to encourage the team, each time gaining a few more voices from the surrounding fans.” Fromm himself later wrote that he first began using the cheer at Michigan hockey games during the 1949 and 1950 seasons. “At that time, the team uniforms were blue, so after playing the national anthem, it became a natural thing for me to call out ‘Go Blue!’ ... [it] then carried over to the football games, and over the years has become the hallmark for all Michigan teams.”

But not everyone agreed with Dungan and Fromm. Charles Moss, ’51, said he began the spirited tradition during the 1947 baseball season as an alternative to lengthier cheers that were popular at the time. And John S. Crandell, ’46, JD’49, believed the expression was a result of Fritz Crisler’s football scrimmages. “During our practices, all team members wore faded dark blue jerseys. The 11 defenders pulled on, over our jerseys, red knit sleeveless shirts. This made it easier for the first team to determine whom to knock over during the ‘longest hour’ of the redshirts’ day,” he wrote. “Usually, two dozen or so student spectators lined the field to enjoy the mayhem. They ... loudly supported the blue-shirted first team, shouting continuously, ‘Go Blue!’ ... I am convinced this was the beginning of our favorite cheer.”

Do you think you know how “Go Blue!” got started? Email us at alumnus.editors@umich.edu with your theory.

Life Sciences Grows Again

Six new faculty members were hired this spring for the Life Sciences Institute, bringing the number of LSI faculty to 17 out of an expected 25 to 30 scientists.

- M** Jason E. Gestwicki, PhD, will contribute to LSI’s small molecule research and drug discovery.
- M** Patrick J. Hu, MD, PhD, is investigating the genes involved in cancer by using a model organism. He plans to create new ideas about cancer gene function.
- M** Alexey Kondrashov, PhD, uses computing power to research evolutionary biology’s most difficult issues like why species rely on sexual reproduction.
- M** Noah Rosenberg, PhD, uses powerful software to explore genetics, using key markers of the human genome to develop better epidemiology.
- M** John Tesmer, PhD, investigates a class of protein molecules that carries signals across cell membranes, critical to physiological events. He also studies enzymes associated with leukemia and is part of the “dream team” of structural biologists at LSI.
- M** Lois Weisman, PhD, studies how a cell’s components are moved to the right place at the right time, a process that plays a role in diseases such as cancer and diabetes.

POLIO VACCINE 50 YEARS LATER

Scientists predict that polio, the crippling disease that attacks the central nervous system, will be completely eradicated by 2008. Fifty years ago, Dr. Thomas Francis Jr., the then-chair of the U-M epidemiology department, made that eradication a possibility with his historic announcement at the University of Michigan. At a crowded news conference at Rackham Auditorium on April 12, 1955, Francis declared that the Salk polio vaccine was “safe, effective and potent.” The announcement sent ripples throughout the world, and within two years, the incidence of polio had dropped by as much as 90 percent.



DR. WILLIAM FOEGE

The University celebrated the 50th anniversary of this historic event on April 12 by establishing the Thomas Francis Jr. Medal in Global Public Health. Carrying a \$50,000 prize, the medal was awarded to Dr. William Foege, a scientist who played a key role in the strategy to eradicate smallpox in the 1970s. Foege delivered a keynote address at Rackham, which was followed by video footage of the polio announcement, panels featuring leaders in public health and medicine, and a public reception.

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