

The History of Mascots

Furry, larger-than-life, foam-headed mascots may seem normal at sports and community events now, but they are quite a modern development.

The idea of the mascot came from a popular French opera from the 1880s called 'La Mascotte'. The opera is about a down-on-his-luck farmer who's visited by a girl named Bettina; as soon as she appears, the farmer's crops start doing well, and his life turns around. In the English language 'mascotte' became mascot and became known as a person or thing that brings good luck. Soon after 1880 and up to the present day, the term mascot is most often linked to a good luck animal.

It was sports clubs that started to use animals as mascots to provide some extra entertainment for spectators. At first, sports teams brought along real live animals to the games. Most of these animals were predators expected to roar and strike fear into the hearts of their opponents.

The change from the use of live animals into the modern cartoon-like three-dimensional (3D) style was triggered by the invention of the Muppets in the late 1960s.

Today, mascots are used for states, countries, sports teams, community organisations, businesses and the Olympic and Commonwealth games.



Soohorang (left) and Bandabi (right) were the mascots for the 2018 Winter Olympics and 2018 Winter Paralympics, respectively, in Pyeongchang, South Korea.



The Muppets!

'Handsome Dan' the bulldog. Thought to be one of the first ever real animal mascots.

Handsome Dan was the official animal mascot of Yale University's sports teams.

