

FUNGO

Mascot and Logo of the New Hampshire Fisher Cats

WHEN NEW HAMPSHIRE FIRST ANNOUNCED that their new team name would be the Primaries, it seemed perfectly befitting. The title encompassed the qualities that every Minor League Baseball team looks for—it captured the local tradition while gaining nationwide attention and popularity...

Okay, so two out of three turned out to be true. Indeed the Primaries did an excellent job of capturing the heritage as New Hampshire does host the first presidential primaries every election year. However, the name was met with heated opposition by fans everywhere, especially in the Granite State.

Ironically, it was only weeks before that an online poll had ranked the Primaries as top choice for the new team's name. Intrigued by the simplicity, cleverness and sheer uniqueness of the idea, New Hampshire's management ran with it. Logos of Uncle Sam with a baseball bat, and a donkey (for the Democrats) and an elephant (for the Republicans) with bats had already been created by the time the media got its hands on the new idea... and completely tore it apart. The predominant reason for opposition was that the name was not politically correct; there are many other smaller, independent parties that the donkey and elephant do not represent. Another argument was that the nickname had to be something tangible. All other minor league teams are animals, people, things and places—not one was named after a local event.

To solve this unexpected debacle, the very democratic system of a name-the-team contest was held with the top five finalists from previous online voting: the Granite State Mountain Men, the New Hampshire Granite, the Manchester Millers, the New Hampshire Fisher Cats, and—to many people's dismay—the New Hampshire Primaries.

Not surprisingly, the Primaries finished dead last, with 85 percent of voters opposed to the name. On the other end of the spectrum was the New Hampshire Fisher Cats, not only the winner of the contest (closely followed by the Manchester Millers), but also the new (and now



Fungo



THE "PRIMARY" IDEA for New Hampshire's minor league logos that never happened.





Photographs Courtesy of the New Hampshire Fisher Cats

permanent) name for the New Hampshire ball club.

And just like that, baseball fans everywhere began to scratch their heads and ask the obvious—just what in the world is a fisher cat?

A fisher cat, scientifically named *Martes pennanti*, has absolutely no relation to a fish or a cat. Rather, it is the fastest member of the weasel family. Measuring in at approximately three to four feet in length, New

Hampshire's namesake can outrun just about any animal... and eat it! The voracious, nocturnal predator's diet consists of anything from small birds and rodents, to raccoons and fox, to small deer and lynx—and even porcupines! That's right; fisher cats are the only animals on Earth that can eat a porcupine, quills and all.

Upon first sight, the Fisher Cats' logo is clearly one of the coolest in the minor leagues this season, filled with countless intricacies that capture the local culture. The team has a plethora of emblems; all of them bearing a fisher cat and displaying the team colors of dark green, white, black, silver/gray, and bronze. The official team logo shows an angry fisher cat with a baseball bat, "New Hampshire Fisher Cats" written in a specially designed font, and a forest of pine trees in the background.

This is a logo with countless intricacies that capture the local culture.

The pine trees are symbolic of the three-dozen Christmas tree farms in the Granite State and the significance they play in a fisher cat's life. While adult fisher cats live and hunt in them, babies are always born in the hollowed out trees.

The team's font also has its share of subtleties. The letters are white with a black border and black slashes on the edges, resembling both the claw marks of a fisher cat and the markings of the state's official tree, the white birch.

The team recently unveiled its number one cheerleader to the public, but unlike other mascots, this one debuted nameless. After ideas were submitted, five potential names for the human-sized fisher cat remained: Klawz, Tracks, Fungo, Fletch, and Fisky. Once again, the fans were compelled to sign on to their computers and vote on another important decision for New Hampshire baseball. After the votes were tallied, Fungo came out on top.

After growing up as a kit (a baby fisher) in the woods of New Hampshire and attending Fisher College in Boston, Mass., Fungo settled down in Gill Stadium to watch his favorite team every night. So if you are in northern New England, follow the sound of children's voices and you will be sure to find this perpetually smiling overgrown switch-hitting New Hampshire Fisher Cat. **|| Eric Karlan**



HATS OFF!

