

Newburgh Free Academy Goldback Legacy

The “block N” that the Newburgh Enlarged City School District is known for was made famous by NFA alumnus Walter Allison, a local sports hero who was killed in war in 1918. Walter had brought his NFA football sweater, which was made of heavy wool at that time, with him for warmth. A fellow soldier from Newburgh who knew Allison found the sweater and brought it back home. The Allison family donated the sweater to the Newburgh Academy Athletic Association in 1919 and it was later restored by the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor. There is no official documentation as to how the term “Goldbacks” came to identify our district. It has been suggested that as players flew down the field, announcers and guests would only be able to differentiate Newburgh players from the opposing team by the large gold N emblazoned on their backs.

A mascot resembling an eagle first appeared in a yearbook in 1981. Since then, there have been hundreds of versions of the Goldback. In the fall of 2018, the district decided to unify all 14 schools and unveiled one uniform mascot. The design was inspired by the most recent student-created version in use at the time. A younger version of the Goldback, affectionately called “Goldie,” was also unveiled for our younger scholars. Additionally, the district returned to the original style of the “block N” from that famous sweater from the early 1900s. Walter Allison’s original sweater is now proudly displayed in the lobby of Newburgh Free Academy, where Walter Allison once walked the same halls as our children do today.