

Kansas Jayhawks

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KANSAS



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Learn about the bombastic birds behind the University of Kansas's basketball fame.



University of Kansas fans get to enjoy double the mascot fun, because their mascots come as a father-daughter pair.

Growing the Jayhawk Flock

For many years, Big Jay cheered on the sidelines by himself. But in 1971, he surprised the crowd at a football game by dragging a huge blue egg out to the 50 yard line. The egg wiggled, shook, and cracked open—and out jumped Baby Jay! She looked like her dad, but smaller, and instead of his #1 jersey, she wore #½ on her uniform. The two Jayhawks have been together ever since.

Baby Jay was created by a student named Amy Hurst, who got the idea when she saw a sticker showing Big Jay with a group of hatchlings. She designed and made the costume by hand, and became the first Baby Jay herself. “Big Jay can be imposing and fierce,” said Hurst, “but Baby Jay is just a little sweetheart.”

In 1996, the school tried to change the look of the jayhawk outfit, but students hated the new costumes, insisting they looked like chickens! So after a single basketball game, the new outfits were tossed aside for good.

FUN FACT

Amy made the first Baby Jay costume for \$53. Today's Jayhawk costumes cost \$5,000 each.



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A bluejay uses its sharp beak to grab a snack.

A Winning Combination

If you're wondering why you've never seen a jayhawk in the wild, that's because it's not a real bird. "Jayhawk" is a made-up combination of a bluejay and a sparrow hawk. The bluejay is known for robbing other birds' nests, and the sparrow hawk is a fierce fighter. During the 1800s, people in Kansas used the name "Jayhawkers" for any group of soldiers, fighters, or thieves.

The Jayhawk wasn't always the symbol of KU. In its early years, the school used a bulldog, and for one football season, a pig mascot walked the field. Finally, in 1912, a cartoonist named Henry Maloy drew the unique "jayhawk" bird, and students decided to keep it.

If you watch a KU game, you might see Big Jay and Baby Jay leading the crowd in the school's famous chant: "Rock chalk, jayhawk, KU." Fans have used the spirited jingle to cheer on Kansas sports teams for more than a century.

DID YOU KNOW?

KU's first basketball coach was none other than James Naismith, the inventor of the sport!

All that support has helped the school's basketball program. The KU men's team has won more games than any other in history, including six national championships. More than 80 Kansas players have been draft-

ed to play professionally in the NBA and WNBA, including Joel Embiid, Paul Pierce, and women's Hall of Famer Lynette Woodard.