

Press Release
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San José Unified School District
"Inspiring and Preparing for Success"

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Light the Lights and Ring the Bell
San Jose Unified High School Sports are Under the Lights!

SAN JOSE, CA- Friday, September 12, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. begins a series of San Jose Unified's High Schools flicking the switch on their long awaited stadium lights. Pioneer High School, 1290 Blossom Hill Road, San Jose, 95118, is the first school of the season to power on as they host Gunderson High School in a traditional rivalry that has been named the "Bell Game."

The "Bell Game" originated 29 years ago when the principals of both schools, fishing buddies, Ralph Sleight from Gunderson High School and Ed Barrows from Pioneer High School, decided to hook the students into a spirited rivalry over the "bell." In 1976, Gunderson High School was established. Gunderson's boundary neighbors Pioneer. The opening of Gunderson had former Pioneer students moving into Gunderson as upperclassmen, creating a natural rivalry. For all these years, the Bell has rung loudly between the Grizzlies and Mustangs, and now with the opening of their first Friday Night Lights, the community is waiting to see who gets to keep the spotlight on the bell for the 2008-09 school year.

Stadium lights have been installed at all of San Jose Unified High Schools, with San Jose Academy's being the first in 2007. Schools will be allowed 10 night events, 5 of those can be football games.

Last year, the district administrative team and sites worked with the communities to ensure enthusiasm and support for the positive school and community climate that can result from Friday Night Lights! The funds for the stadium lights are from Measure F bond funds.

Please see the following page for detailed facts on the history of the Bell.

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Two principals, Ralph Sleight from Gunderson High School and Ed Barrows from Pioneer High School, often went fishing together, but in 1978 they hooked an idea that cast two schools into a rivalry entering its twenty-ninth season. When Gunderson High school opened its doors in 1976, many of its upperclassmen had roots at Pioneer. Naturally, a rivalry was born. To solidify community bragging rights, Mr. Sleight and Mr. Barrows established the first ever “Bell Game” during the 1979 season.

The new school on the block not only won the first ever “Bell Game” in 1979, but also went on to win eleven straight match-ups through the 1989 season. The Grizzlies were led by quarterbacks Ron Capurso (1983-84), Freddy Morales (1985-86), Mark Alsobrook (1987-88) and Matt Andree (1989). Many of the great Grizzly and Mustang players from the 1980’s went on to fantastic collegiate careers. Some of those players are still coaching high school football in Los Angeles, Morro Bay, San Jose, Sacramento and elsewhere. The coach who had the greatest impact on his players and their ability to net the Bell year after year was Myron Zaccheo.



Myron Zaccheo coached the Gunderson football team from 1982-1992. He was 8-0 in Bell Games, the last coming during the 1989 season. The reconfiguration of the Santa Teresa Athletic League in 1990 meant the Grizzlies and the Mustangs would not play again until the 1996 season. As fate would have it, coach Zaccheo was now the football coach at Pioneer. He brought with him a former Gunderson player and coach, Steve Appleby, to coach his defense. The Mustangs continued their coach’s undefeated Bell Game record and reeled in the Bell for the first time in Pioneer history. Nate Jackson, currently a tight end in the NFL for the Denver Broncos, fueled that 1st victory for Pioneer. Ironically, that victory came against two Gunderson coaches, brothers John and Matt Andree, who had both played for coach Zaccheo. The pride of the Bell was so strong at Gunderson that the Grizzlies quickly took it back in 1997, coinciding with the end of Coach Zaccheo’s storied football career and his Bell Game record of 9-1.

In 1998 and 1999 two more victories for the Grizzlies allowed the Bell to remain in the long hallways of Gunderson High School. Coach Mark Krail of Pioneer brought the bell back to Mustang territory in 2000. Jacob French, who led the running attack, went on to play running back/receiver at San Jose State alongside current NFL receiver James Jones, a former Grizzly. In 2001 the Grizzlies grabbed the Bell back, again, with a 33-7 victory. The Mustangs tenacious ground attack brought the Bell back to Pioneer for the third time in school history during the 2002 season with a 35-26 score. For the next three seasons defensive coordinator and former Pioneer linebacker Eric Perry led Pioneer’s defense by scores of 42-22 (2004), 37-13 (2005) and 34-8 (2006). In 2006 and 2007 the schedule again brought no bites on the Bell.

September 12 will be the twenty-second ringing of the “Bell Game”. It also marks the beginning of a new era in San Jose Unified School District with its first “Friday Night Lights”.

Bell Ringers:

The Grizzlies lead the Bell Game with a 15-6 record.

Coach Krail has a 5-3 record in Bell games.