

JIM C – SPORTS TERMS

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Believe it or not, the fall season is here, and once again the reference to a gridiron means American football, not cooking.

HOW DID THE TERM “*GRIDIRON*” ORIGINATE?

***Definition:* 1. A football field or the game of football itself.**

2. A metal structure high above the stage of a theater, from which ropes or cables are strung to scenery and lights.

3. A flat framework of parallel metal bars used for broiling meat.

***Online Etymology:* Cooking utensil, early 14th century, *griderne*, alteration (by association with *iron*) of *gridire* (late 13th century), a variant of *gridil*. Confusion of "l" and "r" was common in Norman dialect. Also, a medieval instrument of torture by fire.**

The metaphorical use of the term for a U.S. football field dates back to 1896, when someone in the bleachers must have noticed that the parallel yard lines marking the field resembled a gridiron.

The first use of this sense in print came in an account of the annual Harvard-Yale game carried in the Boston Herald.

Conventional Wisdom: *Gridiron* = American Football

Zen: *Gridiron* folklore has provided a tasty treat to football fans