

Titans Tuesday: A Call To Arms

I am sitting here in one of my favorite places to eat in Nashville, Thai Phooket, right next to Nissan Stadium, home of the Tennessee Titans. In the past few years, eating here has provided many more great memories than watching the Titans play. I find that to be almost unspeakably sad.

The first Titans' game I ever attended was in 2003. A good friend invited me to go to the season opener against the defending AFC champion Oakland Raiders. It was a Sunday night game, which meant it was a nationally televised affair. It was my first exposure to the sights, the sounds, and the buzz of a real life NFL game.

It was amazing.

I have been to many memorable games since, but this game still stands out in my mind. The crowd stood and cheered for the entire game. I think I sat down for less than 20 minutes total. The crowd was loud. Man were they loud! I completely lost my voice before the end of the game. We cheered. We screamed. We yelled. We booed. We did our part in helping the Titans get revenge on the team that had knocked them out of the playoffs the year before in the AFC Championship Game.

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I've seen some great wins and a few heartbreaking losses at Nissan Stadium. Recently though, my game day experiences have been pitiful things. For one, the team itself has been

terrible. No amount of crowd enthusiasm and participation can cover up a bad product on the field. And the product has been abysmal. In the past three seasons, the Titans have won five home games. Two in the past two seasons. Both of those against the almost equally terrible Jacksonville Jaguars. Secondly, the fans have been mostly indifferent. Even when the team has done something positive, the reaction from the stands has been less than impressive.

Last season, I took my two oldest boys to see the October 18 game against the Miami Dolphins. The Dolphins had recently fired their head coach, just a few games into the season. The Titans were 1-3 at the time, but were coming off two very close games against the Buffalo Bills and the Indianapolis Colts. We all had high hopes that the team was about to turn things around and finally catch a break. The Titans lost by 28 points. Newly drafted QB Marcus Mariota spent the entire game scrambling for his life, getting sacked five times before finally taking one too many shots and going out with an injury. He would miss the next 2 games.

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It was brutal to watch and depressing to experience. I had hoped my boys would have a great time watching their team win and getting to see the crowd explode with excitement when the Titans made great plays on the field. There were no explosions, unless you count Brian Schwenke getting his leg destroyed during the game. There was very little excitement either. The boys did their best to enjoy the experience, and I couldn't have been prouder of them when they said that even though the game was terrible they still had a good time coming to a game with me.

I have great kids, but that is not the point. They shouldn't have to look for reasons to enjoy an NFL game at Nissan

Stadium. The team and the crowd should provide that great time. To be clear, I don't expect the Titans to be great every season. I don't expect them to win every home game. But the level of ineptitude that has been on display for the past few seasons is unacceptable.

So here is what I am asking:

Let's make Nissan Stadium the home field advantage it deserves to be.

1. If you are a fan of the Tennessee Titans and are at a game: cheer, scream, yell, clap, and generally act like an insane person for as long as you can. I'm not the arbiter of who is or is not a REAL fan. I don't presume to make the rules. What I do know is that a dead crowd does nothing to help the home team. If you are there, you might as well try. I realize this is hard when the team consistently lets you down. I feel your pain. I really do. But if they are not going to strive for excellence, then that is on them. As fans, we can control what we can control and while that is very small and insignificant in the grand scheme of things, it is not without an element of power. Make it hard for the opposing team to hear the call at the line of scrimmage. Create so much noise that the other guys repeatedly false start. Be so loud when the Titans are on defense that the team feeds off that energy and takes it out on the other team. Shake the stadium when the Titans score a touchdown. You've done it before so I know it's possible. Let's get the rest of the NFL to start talking about our home crowd as they used to. Like they do about Seattle or Green Bay. Let's make Nissan Stadium the home field advantage it deserves to be.

*Tennessee Titans, players and coaches: Give the fans something to cheer about. **Make us care again.***

2. Tennessee Titans, players and coaches: Stop losing. Stop under-performing. Stop making so many mistakes. Stop inventing new ways to lose games. Stop sleepwalking through games and then smiling and shaking hands with the team that just publicly humiliated you in front of all of your dwindling fan-base. We have had enough. Clearly, based on the numerous empty seats at the stadium and the lack of noise during the games, the fans are in a state of apathy at this point. It's your job, literally, to win them back. No one else can do it. The fans can rally and get loud again, but it will be short lived if the team does not get better soon. Make us proud again. Give our kids a reason to continue the Titans' legacy. Give the fans something to cheer about. Make us care again.

Bottom line: We all need to do better. The players, the coaches, the team, the fans. We all need to step up our game.

Will we?