

The Inevitable Letdown of Being a Fan (The NFL on REO)

Perhaps the defining attribute of being a sports' fan is the ever-present feeling of being let down. As fans, it is our burden to bear. We cheer on our teams, year after year, and most of the time, walk away disappointed. Of course, there are the occasional high points: The big win against a rival. The post-season run. Even, a championship if we are really fortunate. The truth is though, we are rarely fortunate in our fandom.

Two times in the past five years, Aaron Rodgers has been injured and unable to complete the season. This year, his Green Bay Packers were 4-1 when he got hurt early in the game against the Minnesota Vikings. You could argue that with a healthy Rodgers, the Packers had as much of a chance to make it to the Super Bowl as any other team in the NFC. Now, the team is done – looking at another season down the drain due to an injury to their star quarterback. Before you feel too sorry for the Packers' fans, it is good to remember that they have had great success for the past few decades and have won multiple championships in that time. Even so, that fan base feels the letdown. They feel as if they are cursed. It is the natural state for the majority of fans across the globe.

Or, you could take a look at the Cowboys. They spent a decade with a legitimately great quarterback and were never able to advance at all come playoff time. Then, a rookie quarterback and a rookie running back led them to a 13-3 record and the future looked bright. Turn the page to 2017 and their star running back gets suspended for off the field problems and the team is fighting for a playoff spot. Where would they be in that playoff picture if Ezekiel Elliott had not missed any games this season? Even if the Cowboys win out, they still need all sorts of things to happen to make the playoffs. Their

chances are slim. I'm sure Cowboys fans feel let down after an amazing ride last season that only looked like the beginning of a great run.

And what about the fan base of the Philadelphia Eagles who are without a doubt, some of the most passionate and loyal fans in the league. This season was like something out of a dream. The second-year quarterback, Carson Wentz, had the offensive humming along. The defense was improved. The team was clearly the team to beat in the NFC. Then Wentz got hurt a few weeks ago and now the team will have to try to carry on with Nick Foles at QB. Foles is good, probably the best backup QB in the league, but he is not Wentz. The loss of Wentz has jeopardized a potential Super Bowl run. Eagles' fans know this feeling all too well. They have been so close so many times, I'm sure there were many of them that just knew something bad was hiding in the shadows. That is the curse of being a fan.

Being a fan of the NFL in general, and the Titans, in particular, has provided its fair share of disappointments. My boys are big fans of the Titans. Sadly, they have no detailed memories of the Titans making the playoffs. The two oldest are both teenagers if that gives you any indication how long it has been. A few weeks ago, the Titans were 8-4 and looked like a lock for the postseason. Now, after two bad losses to below average teams, they are on the outside looking in. Yes, they are technically still in the playoffs if they were to start today, but they need help to make it to the NFL's second season. I've mentioned before that my oldest son will not celebrate a good play by the Titans until a few minutes have passed because he is sure there will be a flag thrown that will wipe the whole thing off the board. That is how this entire season has felt to me. I've been waiting to fully celebrate. I've enjoyed the wins for sure, but there has always been the nagging feeling in the back of my mind that something bad was waiting around the corner. We are feeling

the letdown. Hopefully, the Titans can give their fans a better Christmas than last year and make a surprise push to the playoffs. Miracles do happen.

So, what letdown have you experienced as a sports' fan? Let us commiserate with one another. Share your stories and your pain. We want to read it all and experience the crushing weight of disappointment with you.