

Fear and loathing in the NFL

by Tim Enger

I've never been a big fan of the New England Patriots. So why was I doing a victory lap around the house after their 27-20 victory over the L.A. Raiders in the AFC semifinal? Simple, I HATE THE RAIDERS! Their kind of spit-in-your-face-screw-the-rules-we'll-do-what-we-want-I'd-play-without-a-helmet-if-I-had-to attitude combined with the world ugliest uniforms have made me a Raider-hater even since I first realized who and what they were.

My life has been dotted with little personal tragedies involving the Raiders. In 1977 I went into deep depression after Ken Stabler (what kind of organization nicknames their quarterback "The Snake") and his boys destroyed my Vikings in Super Bowl XI. Another example is January, 1981. It was one of the worst months of my life because the Raiders beat Cleveland in the AFC semi-finals on an interception in the end zone with time running out when all Cleveland needed was a field goal (Dammit Sipe! Run the ball!). Then they went onto maul the heavily favoured San Diego Chargers in the AFC final then kill the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl XVI. This upset me to no end.

Lets start at the top with Al Davis, the Managing General Partner, Cor something like that). A fancy way to say majority owner. He's the grease-

ball who took over control of the Raiders by ousting the man who brought him into the organization. He's also the guy who decided to move the team from Oakland to Los Angeles to increase his profits, much to the displeasure of the city of Oakland and the NFL. This guy (who looks like a bad impersonation of Jerry Lee Lewis) is not known for his understanding, caring and kindness, and the strange thing is that that's the way he likes it. Funny, I find it hard to respect a man like that no matter how good a job he's done with his team. "Just win baby" indeed!

Next let's look at coach Tom Flores, the guy with a face that looks like its posing for a mug shot. The main knock against him over the years is that he's only been a figure head, and that lovable old Al Davis was really running the team. A vicious rumor, true, but its never been disproved. So how am I supposed to like a man who treats each interview like his wife's funeral, and might only have his job because they needed someone to fill a space? I'm not, and I don't.

Lastly, lets look at the players, the scourge of the NFL. I've never really been able to describe the way they come across as human beings until I watched "professional" wrestling from Madison Square Gardens. Now every time I watch a Raiders game I expect to see Hulk

Hogan and his cohorts warming up on the sidelines. I mean these guys talk ugly, win ugly, lose ugly, and above all ARE ugly. Even at the so-called "pretty-boy" position, quarterback, they are ugly. Jim Plunkett and Marc Wilson won't be making guest appearances on "Dynasty" after their careers are over, having the faces of a fishwife and a weasel respectively.

Real football fans need only take a look at Matt (cry baby) Millen punching Patriots GM Patrick Sullivan after the game ended on Sunday to realize how classless the entire organization is. I'm glad they lost, and hey Al, TOUGH LUCK BABY! HA HA HA!

by Mark Spector

I love the Raiders. I don't care where they come from, L.A. or Oakland or wherever. I still love them.

You're probably enjoying a good laugh at my expense since the Raiders were upset by the lowly New England Patriots. But unless you're a Dallas or Miami fan, it's no salt in my wounds.

Raider haters are just like the old Montreal Canadian haters. In the seventies you were either a Habs fan or a Chicago-Boston-Philadelphia-New York Islanders fan.

In the NFL only two other teams have maintained the consistency of the Raiders: the Dolphins and the

Cowboys. These three teams have been winners year in and year out. And that's because they haven't wasted their time looking over their shoulders at who's got the fast new running back or the high-priced young quarterback. Because of these teams' constant success, they annually end up with the worst draft selections. But smart management (a la Al Davis) has kept these teams at the top of the heap.

That's the key to the Raiders — they couldn't care less about any body else.

When NFL teams started going to these flashy uniforms with all sorts of stripes and loud colors the Raiders paid them no mind. Their attire of basic black and silver, no frills, makes up by far the most intimidating uniform in the league. And when those uni's get dirty they're a thing to behold.

I know it may seem inconsequential, but the Raiders have always played on grass, and I like that. Clubs like the Patriots, who, by the way, are the owners of the gaudiest sweater in the NFL, just fail to look as mean as the Raiders. And half of the reason is that, no matter how hard they play, at the end of the game their uniforms are still one hundred percent clean!

Damn that artificial turf.

I also like the personality that comes along with wearing the black and silver. You've got to be mean.

Just ask any unfortunate receiver who's fate it was to play against the retired Jack (The Assassin) Tatum. His punishing hits and dirty play made him one of the most feared Raiders of all time.

How about Lester (The Molester) Hayes? The king of stickum, the goo found on every conceivable part of his uniform seemed to almost suit the Raider demeanour.

Or Howie Long. Raised in the project housing in Boston, Howie has got a genuine chip on his shoulder when he steps onto the playing field. And his defensive teammate Matt Millen. When I saw that owner's son on the Patriots' bench yelling at the Raiders I had a feeling that I wouldn't want to be that guy when the game was over.

But spoiled brat or not, only a member of the NFL's meanest football team would have the guts to hammer on the other team's G.M.

One other thing. Remember in the 1981 Super Bowl when Philadelphia Eagles' coach Dick Vermeil imposed an 11:00 p.m. bedcheck for his team while denouncing Raider Lyle Alzado's practice of touring New Orleans' Bourbon Street until all hours with his teammates? Do you remember who won that game? The Raiders would win the big one again three years later.

As owner Al Davis would say, "Just win baby, win."

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