

I Couldn't Be More Excited About Brett Favre

by Joe Mulder

I'd almost forgotten how big a sports fan I was until yesterday morning, when the news came down that my Minnesota Vikings – yes, they're *my* Minnesota Vikings, not mine alone by mine nonetheless – were going to sign Brett Favre to play quarterback for them.

Sports fandom can be a grind, particularly in mid-August, when your baseball team is falling out of contention, basketball and hockey aren't on the radar, all of the golf and tennis majors are over and you're as far removed as possible from having watched NFL football. Oh, and if none of your teams have won anything in 18 years (and I don't count USC football, since although we all know the Trojans would have won at least six or seven national championships this decade if the NCAA saw fit to settle such things on the field, the sad fact is that they don't).

But the Vikings have Brett Favre now. Now, I'm excited.

And why wouldn't a Vikings fan be excited to welcome Brett Favre into the fold in this, his 19th NFL season? The response to the Favre signing was overwhelmingly positive among Minnesota faithful; fans swarmed the team's complex in Eden Prairie to get a good look at their new hero, and Vikingsfanshop.com was overwhelmed with traffic at times the minute merchandise bearing Favre's name and famous #4 went on sale.

Still, inexplicably, there remain those who are less than enthusiastic. Thanks to the modern joys of social networking (and the not-quite-as-modern joys of the telephone), I can report that supposedly die-hard Vikings fans with whom I've acquainted have, over the course of the last 24 hours, wondered what they did to piss God off so badly that he made Brett Favre a Viking, threatened to ritualistically burn all of their Vikings paraphernalia on the front lawn, vowed to remember the date 8/18/09 as if it were Pearl Harbor or 9/11, and threatened to kill themselves, respectively.

Such reactions strike me as very strange, because a month ago any conversation with a Vikings fan would have gone thusly:

PERSON: I'll give you two options.

VIKINGS FAN: Okay...

PERSON: Option A, you go into the 2009 season with Sage Rosenfels and Tarvaris Jackson battling for your starting quarterback job. Or, Option B, you –

VIKINGS FAN: Option B! I'll take Option B!

Turns out Option B is a future Hall of Famer coming off of a

Pro Bowl campaign, half of which he gutted out with an arm that would need to be surgically repaired after the season was over. Call me crazy, but I feel better about that guy that I do about Rosenfels – a career backup who delivered one of NFL history's worst-ever 4th quarter performances at a Texan in choking away a game against the Colts last year – or Jackson, a quarterback so undistinguished that a photo caption on yesterday's *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* website identified him as "Tarvarius Jackson," still misspelling his name in this, his fourth year with the Vikings (also, Tarvaris certainly didn't do his team any favors as they choked away a game against the Colts last year).

Also, signing Brett Favre really, really seems to have pissed off Green Bay Packers fans. And any Vikings fan who isn't delighted at the notion of Packers fans being pissed off is, quite frankly, not a Vikings fan I understand particularly well.

Personally, I just want the Vikings to win a Super Bowl. And really, beyond that, as long as none of the players do anything illegal or bring shame upon the game itself, I don't care what it would take to get that done (and there's even considerable wiggle room on the illegal and shameful stuff; ask a Red Sox fan if he'd even consider trading 2004 for Mani and Big Papi's positive tests).

Besides, fellow Vikings fans, we didn't really hate Brett Favre, did we? We just "hated" him, right? That's what sports rivalries are, right? You don't *actually* hate someone who plays for your team's biggest rival, do you? I mean, in some sense, he can't help it, right? What would you have had such a player do? Call a press conference immediately upon being drafted or traded for by your rival team and announce that he refuses to play for them, because of how badly they suck and because of what huge gaywads their fans are, especially when compared to your team and its fans?

No, you don't hate your rival, you just "hate" him, with the tacit understanding that of *course* you'd want that player on your team if he's better than what your team has. Well, Brett Favre is better than what my team had, and guess what? Now my team has him.

And so, in the friendly spirit of sports rivalries, let me conclude by saying: Suck it, Wisconsin! Your pain amuses me.
