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At Boston bars, excited Patriots fans leave deflated

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JANUARY 20, 2013

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The scenario was reminiscent of so many other Sundays. At bars around Boston, fans of the New England Patriots cheered the hometown team as the Patriots battled for the American Football Conference Championship for the seventh time since 2001.

But the result was unfamiliar.

What started as an enthusiastic evening ended with many bar patrons leaving in silence with looks of shock, anger, bewilderment, and disappointment on their faces, as the Pats fell to the Ravens, 28-13.

Fans who gathered at the Cask 'n Flagon in the Fenway were optimistic during the first half. But after a third quarter dominated by the Ravens, many faces began to show signs of serious concern.

Some headed for the exits. Others for bathroom breaks.

When a throw by quarterback Tom Brady was intercepted with less than seven minutes in the game, many fans worked to finish their drinks and food, pay their tabs, and head home.

Like many, Charles Williams was crushed.

The superstitious Roslindale resident sat at the bar at the Cask 'n Flagon, just as he had for each of the Patriots' past six AFC Championship appearances.

He wore his usual outfit: a Patriots hat, jersey, and a fleece jacket. His watch: red and blue. Inside the pocket of his jacket, a Patriots snow cap.

He said the lucky garb rarely failed him.

"Depressed and stunned," he said of his mood after the loss.

Fans packed into the Cask 'n Flagon early, first watching the Atlanta Falcons fall to the San Francisco 49ers, who the Ravens will square off against in the Super Bowl in New



DINA RUDICK / GLOBE STAFF

At the Cask 'n Flagon, Timothy Pesa comforted Danielle Shiner (right) and Kristin Feltz, all of Brighton.

Orleans in two weeks.

Most fans wore some sort of red and blue clothing to show support for the Patriots.

David Benevides, 30, and Michael Contois, 27, had high expectations. Anything but another championship would be a failure, they said during the first quarter.

“At the end of the day, we always think Brady is going to come through and [Bill] Belichick will have a winning game plan,” said Benevides.

But as the game wound down, the packed bar grew silent. Some stared at the screens in disbelief. Others buried their heads in their hands.

Some said high expectations from fans has led to a lack of appreciation for the franchise’s remarkable success over the past 12 seasons. And, despite falling short again this season, fans have a lot of recent wins to reflect on and be proud of.

“It will never be this good again,” said Shaun Dawson, 26, of Boston.

His buddy, Mike Andruszkiewicz, 25, of Beverly, agreed.

“We’re living in a really special time right now,” he said. “And, I think we take it for granted around here.”

“I’ve listened to stories from my granddad and my dad. It certainly wasn’t always this way,” he added.

A small number of Ravens fans showed their allegiance to their team, at first discreetly.

Baltimore native Jen Kent, 23, did not wear anything with a Ravens emblem on it, opting for a nondescript purple and black plaid shirt. But as the Ravens pulled ahead in the second half, Baltimore fans began to make their presence known, clapping and cheering louder.

By the end of the game, Kent had grown bolder.

“I did not expect them to win by this much,” Kent said. “If we can beat the Pats we can beat the 49ers.”

Four San Francisco natives who attend college in Boston left the bar smiling after their hometown squad defeated the Atlanta Falcons to move on to the Super Bowl.

For Josh Gorelick, 28, and his wife, Shayna, 34, a Pats-49ers matchup would have been particularly unnerving.

He is a lifelong 49ers fan. She is a Pats fan.

But in two weeks, she plans to root for the Ravens, not the 49ers, she said Sunday.

“What?” exclaimed Josh.

He had rooted for the Pats to beat the Ravens.

Because, he said jokingly, “I don’t want to get divorced.”

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