

## Steiniger is a total fanatic



Hans Steiniger wore Joker makeup and a Marques Colston Saints jersey. Mark Craig, Star Tribune

Superfan Hans Steiniger, a beer-drinking, Fantasy Football-playing, Sunday Ticket kind of guy, has completed his three-year quest to experience an NFL game in all 31 stadiums.

I met Hans Steiniger outside the Louisiana Superdome last Sunday because, even in New Orleans, Hans Steiniger found a way to stand out among 70,021 NFL fans.

With bright green hair, full Joker makeup and a Marques Colston Saints jersey over a pair of shoulder pads, Steiniger had to be the Saints' biggest fan. Right?

Well, not exactly. But he was, quite literally, a shining model of the kind of person who has made the NFL the undisputed king of sports in the United States.

Steiniger is a Bills fan living in Detroit who was willing to do whatever it took and pay whatever was asked to see a game, not only in New Orleans on that day but the league's 30 other stadiums as well.

Steiniger, 31, called it his "Quest for 31." He started in 2006 and finished last Sunday when he watched the Buccaneers upset the Saints 20-17 in overtime.

"I've completed the journey," he said. "It's emotional, bittersweet, but it's definitely not the end."

During the week, Steiniger is a husband, a father to a 9-year-old daughter and a program manager for a government contractor that builds prototype vehicles for the U.S. military.

On weekends and the occasional Thursday or Monday, Steiniger is an NFL fanatic in every sense of the word. On his website, [www.nflfootballstadiums.com](http://www.nflfootballstadiums.com), he describes himself as the typical NFL fan. You know, as

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he writes, the "moderately paid, tailgating, beer guzzling, hot dog-eating, Fantasy Football-playing, road-tripping, technically savvy, DirecTV NFL package-purchasing lover of this great American pastime ..."

Let's see the country's other three major sports leagues find a guy like Hans.

"What I did in my Quest for 31 was try to understand what it's like to be a fan of that team for that day, that event," said Steiniger, who drove his 1997 green Ford Explorer to many of the games. "If there are any game-day rituals or traditions, I wanted to be right in the middle of it."

Hans isn't a shy guy, so he had no trouble meeting fellow NFL fans who were quick to offer up a shot, a beer or some sort of red meat.

"I was overwhelmed with how kind NFL fans are," Steiniger said. "I come up cold out of nowhere and tell people what I'm doing and it's like I'm their long-lost friend. For the most part, I thought my journey was more about the condition of the human spirit and how these individuals are happy to welcome you in."

Immersing himself in the home crowd,

Steiniger found himself wearing a cheesehead in Lambeau Field and an Adrian Peterson jersey at the Metrodome for last year's 12-10 victory over the Lions. He did the Tomahawk Chop in Kansas City and donned a spike-filled, silver-and-black costume while joining Raider Nation in the Black Hole. He barked in the Dawg Pound in Cleveland and waived a Terrible Towel in Pittsburgh.

Before traveling to FedEx Field, he downloaded the words to "Hail to the Redskins" and spent his tailgating time asking groups of strangers to sing it with him because he couldn't get the melody quite right. Eventually, the whole parking lot was singing in unison.

And you thought there's only gridlock in Washington, D.C.

Getting tickets isn't always easy. Steiniger often had to scour eBay or turn to scalpers, paying "close to a couple hundred bucks" for his most expensive ticket. It also helped to know the right people, especially when it came time to cross Lambeau Field off the list.

"I have a fraternity brother whose cousin is Tory Humphrey, the third-string tight end for the Packers at the time we went," Steiniger said. "So he had access to player tickets. We

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got 30-yard-line seats, second row. It was incredible."

Steiniger uses his website to help those who might want to follow in his footsteps. There are, among other things, tips on how to acquire tickets, stadium reviews and lists of places to eat and visit in each city.

"I offer a road map to anyone else who wants to take on something like this," he said. "People should try it. It's a great time."

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