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As Redskins fumble, some fans are saying, 'See ya'

Rudy Crutchfield, a salesman at a building materials company in Chevy Chase, still gathers with his buddies around the widescreen for every game. But he recently launched an embargo against the team that he has held dear since his father's weekly game-day banquets of pot roast and mashed potatoes in Silver Spring: "I will not go to a game, and I will not buy any new Redskins paraphernalia," he said. "I don't like [Redskins owner] Dan Snyder, and I don't want to give him any of my money."

Other fans are ready to go further. Samu Qureshi attends every home game and has turned his Bethesda home into a shrine of Redskins artifacts dating back decades. Now he has gone guerrilla, launching a boycott and calling on ticket-holders to skip the last two home games of the season and not re-up for next year.

His demand? That Snyder hire a general manager to run the football side of the business.

"I think we really are at a tipping point," Qureshi said. He said he had just gotten off the phone with the fan activist who runs whodeyrevolution.com, a similar -- and so-far futile -- crusade against the owners of the Cincinnati Bengals. "I've talked to a lot of really hard-core lifelong Skins fans, and they say, 'I'm willing to do it.'"

Is breaking up hard to do?

The question for many fans is this: Would a winning streak make it all feel better?

Michael Richman, a sports historian and author of the Redskins Encyclopedia, said that this season of fan discontent was years in the making and is probably the most severe in franchise history. It would require at least a couple of solid winning seasons to lift fans' spirits back to where they'd been for decades, he said.

"If they were to win three or four straight games, it would pick the town up for sure, but I don't think the optimism would return," Richman said. "There is so much uncertainty about the team, fans would find any success to be ephemeral. They would have to be a consistent power in the NFL to really bring back the fan base."

But Cindy Waddell, a sports psychology professor at George Mason University, said that a densely knitted fan base such as Washington's will be quicker to mend itself. When love of team is passed from generation to generation, nostalgia alone will keep even furious fans from drifting too far.

"Making a choice to do something different on a Sunday when my team is losing to the worst teams in the league is easy," Waddell said. "But really giving up on them? That's hard to do when they're your hometown team."

Hoskins, the 30-year Redskins addict who skipped last week's game, said he hadn't given up and will be at FedEx Field on Monday night for the Philadelphia game. But unlike in previous years, he's not ready to endure whatever comes.

"If they're playing like that again," he said, "I'm leaving at halftime."

Staff researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.

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Chris Veirs shouts as the Kansas City Chiefs sack Redskins quarterback Todd Collins for a safety Oct. 18. Fan frustration has mounted against the 2-4 Redskins. (Toni L. Sandys/the Washington Post)

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