

**Local: Maryland**

Baltimore's Super Bowl run brings out D.C.'s Ravens fans

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The invasion started slowly -- a Ravens cap here, a Ray Rice jersey there -- but as the Super Bowl rolls around, more and more of the Washington region seems awash in purple.

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The District has been draped in burgundy and gold for decades, but the Redskins playoff exit means fans of the upstart team from 40 miles north are making their presence known.

While Hyattsville resident Lisa Holt took down her Christmas tree long ago, the Ravens tree is still standing. If the purple lights don't make it clear, the six-inch Ray Lewis statue on top should be a dead giveaway.

"It's got Ravens candy canes and old Ravens tickets that have been made into ornaments," Holt said. "The tree can't come down, of course, for superstitious reasons."

Holt grew up a Redskins fan but switched allegiances when her 9-year-old son, Ryan, fell in love with the Ravens two years ago. He's currently in the midst of an 800-day streak of wearing Ravens gear.

"He had one shirt, and he wanted more -- two shirts turned into three, turned into a thousand," Holt said, promising the jerseys get washed in between wears. "It makes his wardrobe easy."

Not all of the region's purple-clad are reformed Redskins fans, however. Many are transplants, lured to Washington by jobs or spouses but still harboring affections for their hometown team.

Taz George, who grew up in Towson but moved to the District after graduating from college, said rooting for the Baltimore Orioles at a time when Nationals excitement reached fever pitch helped prepare him for the NFL season.

"You definitely find out who's from Baltimore really quickly," George said. "We have some fans in my office. When you see them, then you can get really excited about it."

It's part of Ravens coach John Harbaugh's plan, announced to reporters two years ago, to "take over Washington, D.C." Potomac resident and Redskins historian Mike Richman said Baltimore's continued success since its Super Bowl win in 2000 means fans keep coming out of the woodwork.

"It can be frustrating to see a team that came into existence only in 1996 garner what appears to be a larger audience in the Washington-area suburbs," Richman said. "It's part jealousy, but I think you gotta work for it a little bit."

The frustration seems to be mutual. Upper Marlboro Ravens fan Brandee Johnson said her area was all Redskins and Cowboys supporters when she moved there in 2010. Now it's full of Baltimore bandwagoners.

"A tremendous amount of friends that I have say, 'You know, they're my other team!' " Johnson said. "I'm sorry, I just laugh at those people."

If the Ravens win Sunday, of course, the trend might not stop anytime soon. University Park Elementary School, where Holt's son goes, encouraged students to wear purple on Friday in support of Baltimore.

"Really, Mom?" he said when she reminded him of the event that morning. "Every day is Purple Friday for me."

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