

I HATE BRETT FAVRE

Contributed by Mike Fisher
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I Hate Brett Favre. My two sons hate Brett Favre. My five siblings, their dozen offspring, and my two parents hate Brett Favre. A thoughtful remembrance:

I Hate Brett Favre.

I know we're not supposed to voice that truth right now. I know that since the Green Bay Packers' QB announced his retirement on Tuesday — destined for a life, no doubt, of guiding aged southern belles across the dusty streets of Kiln, playing whiffleball with No. 4-clad neightorkids and single-handedly discovering a cure for acid reflux -- we're supposed to curtsy, genuflect and kiss his rings.

Oh, he only owns one kissable ring? Gosh, to slog through all the treacly reviews, you'd think the NFL was about to transfer the name of the Super Bowl trophy from one Wisconsin legend to an heir.

Yes, the NFL should now reward its annual champion with "The Brett Favre Trophy";

They wouldn't even have to change it much. You know how "The Vince Lombardi Trophy" features that familiar silver football atop a pyramid-shaped stand? New trophy, same ball, only Favre will be included, throwing the familiar silver football foolishly behind his back or somesuch.

Admirers everywhere are distraught. I hear ESPN's Chris Berman is driving madly across the Canadian border to secure some 222s. ("He could go all the way!") Sources say John Madden is behind the wheel as well, his Maddencruiser careening along the highway, with Terry Bradshaw alongside, the TV duo holding hands, determinedly searching for their own "Thelma and Louise"-like cliff.

I suppose this would be an opportune time to point out that I and my family hail from Minnesota. (Which I long ago re-named "Land of 10,000 Reasons To Hate Brett Favre.") So I Hate Brett Favre not only because of his over-styled George Michael stubble, designed to make him appear "accidentally rugged"; but rather an idea almost certainly cooked up by some marketing foof from Wrangler. And I Hate Brett Favre not only because of the way he skirted the NFL's substance-abuse policy, Paul Tagliabue tsk-tsk'ing booze and pills with one hand while using the other hand to all-but-help Brett cannonball his Bud Light and Vicodin at a league-sponsored gala with the other. ("Cannonball back!") And I Hate Brett Favre not because, with virtually no exception, he had been elevated to God-like status by fawning media members who, I guess, are flattered by Brett's willingness to be interviewed by them.

I Hate Brett Favre because I am from Minnesota. And if I have to explain further. … well, it's a Vikings thing. You wouldn't understand.

Was Brett Favre a special performer? Of course. In fact, in this era — and I'll try to practice some objectivity here -- he was obviously inferior to John Elway, Joe Montana, Tom Brady, Dan Marino and Peyton Manning. He was in a class with Steve Young, Troy Aikman, Jim Kelly, Donovan McNabb, Randall Cunningham and Phil Simms.

That makes him one of the 12 best quarterbacks of this era. Hey, that's pretty good!

So why is he considered something "different"? You can say small-town Green Bay itself is the "difference"; You can say there is the "gunslinger" crap. (And the haunting consideration of how truly great Favre might've been had he been less a gunslinger and therefore more … great.) There is the ironman thing and the passing-records thing and there was that one Super Bowl victory.

But … if Brett Favre is the grandest thing since sliced cheese. … shouldn't he have won more than one Super Bowl? Could at least some of the accolades be the result of his career being covered less by reporters and analysts and more by enablers and sycophants?

I'll tell you my theory: Long ago, his personality, accessibility, romanticism, scruffy beard, whatever, won over some key and powerful voices in sports media. The Packers games were usually telecast on CBS and then on FOX.

For the bulk of his career, the two most powerful voices on those networks were Bradshaw and Madden.

And by gosh, wouldn't you know it. … Bradshaw and Madden become “Favre Guys.’’

Now, I’m not questioning their sincerity. I know Bradshaw a little bit, and he’s a heck of a guy; his Southern-fried background makes his kinship with Brett a natural. And Madden? He just loves this sport so much that he falls in love with people who love it, too.

Along comes ESPN. And the No. 1 voice at that network, Berman, he becomes a “Favre Guy.’’ And the final piece of the pre-internet puzzle: Sports Illustrated’s Peter King, who upon the big announcement described himself as a “Favrophile.’’

You got Madden, Bradshaw, Berman and King on your side. So through all the Bud Light and the Vicodin and the stutter-step retirements and the only-OK performances and the interceptions and the zany decisions. … Well, you got Madden, Bradshaw, Berman and King on your side.

I love Peter, but check out his retirement-day entry from SI.com:

I'll relate one story from late last season that I think says much about why Favre made the choice he made this week. Two nights before the Packers played Seattle in a playoff game, I was in Favre's home and the doorbell rang. News had broken that day that Favre had decided to come back for the 2008 season, but he denied that to me, and told everyone that all he said was that he was enjoying the game and his team this year. He hadn't determined his fate for 2008 and wouldn't until sometime after the season.

But now, a Green Bay TV station was at the door asking for comment on the story, and Favre's wife, Deanna, politely shooed them away. The look on Favre's face said: “Does it never end?’’

Do I need to guide you to between the lines? Peter King expressed distain regarding the nosy media despite the fact that PETER KING – A NOSY MEDIA MEMBER – WAS SITTING IN BRETT’S LIVING ROOM!! Peter had CHANGED SIDES!!

They all changed sides. They were all on HIS side. This Favre Lovre is part of what drove me to decide that I Hate Brett Favre.

The tributes are everywhere. Like all the Favre passes thrown too hard and too high and into the hands of the wrong team, they are almost infinite. Tony Romo had to issue a statement. (At least he is a kid from Wisconsin.) But Lance Armstrong issued one, too. I’m waiting to hear Randy, Paula and Simon check in.

Ah, the tall tales. … Remember the time crazy Brett goosed Bradshaw? Remember the time silly Brett made fun of Holmgren’s moustache? Remember the time goofy Brett tee-peed a kid’s house, gave another dude a swirlie and ended up puking at the prom!?

From King: “Favre loved being just a guy.’’

Um, if Brett Favre really simply “loved being just a guy,’’ why – rather than treat him like a combo of Hercules, Gulliver and Paul Bunyan. … and hell, throw some Babe The Blue Ox in there, too – didn’t we simply treat him like “just a guy’’? Or at least “just a guy’’ who was inferior to Elway, Montana, Brady, Marino and Manning, and somewhere between Young and Cunningham?

When I read King’s dispatch, and the dateline on it read, “BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan’’? I had no idea Peter was writing while on a USO/NFL Tour visiting troops in Afghanistan. I mean, I didn’t know “BISHKEK’’ was an actually place. I figured Peter was so emotionally destroyed by the far-away announcement that he was randomly pounding on his keyboard. …

BISHSONOFADAMN%#&Y, Kyrgl@Istandamnit!

See, everybody loves Brett Favre. To the point of ridiculousness, to the point of blindness, to the point where no loss was ever his fault, and to the detriment of my Vikings.

Therefore. …

I Hate Brett Favre.

But I am going to miss him. A little tiny bit.