

Recent losses by Eagles an insult to the fans

By William C. Kashatus

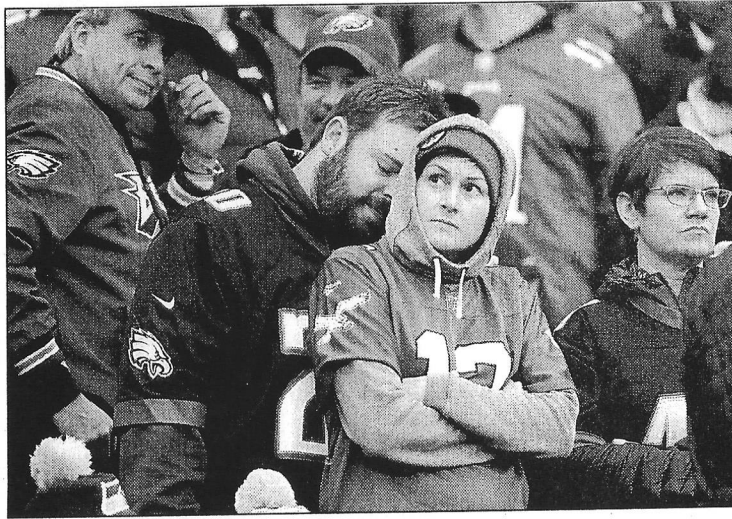
I drain all the life out of myself out there," said Randall Cunningham, former Eagles' quarterback, when asked in 1990 about his effort on the playing field. "I get paid to play, to win, to give the city pride, so maybe everybody can forget for a little while how hard life is."

Cunningham got it. Apparently, the current Eagles don't. If they did, the Birds wouldn't have lost their last three games by 11 points or more, including Sunday's 32-14 debacle against a mediocre Cincinnati Bengals team.

This exasperating season has become more of the same old broken promises, unrealized potential, and lame excuses that the organization has fed the fans for the last decade.

Although Philadelphia may be a city of respected universities, nationally acclaimed museums, and an ever-diminishing coterie of blue-bloods, its genuine spirit can be found in the clock-punchers and blue-collar workers who define our character, especially when it comes to football.

That is why Eagles' fans pay insane amounts of their hard-earned money on game tickets



Eagles fans react to a Seahawks touchdown during a game Seattle won, 26-15, on Nov. 20. DAVID MAIALETTI / Staff Photographer

and NFL-wear bearing the team's logo. Why they show up at Lincoln Financial Field eight times every season and cheer on the Birds with a passion that borders on the violent. And why they deserve more than what the Eagles have given them over the last several years.

After the 2012 season when the team finished last in the National Football Conference's Eastern division, owner Jeffrey Lurie finally admitted that after 14 seasons

head coach Andy Reid's time was up and fired him. Even before that Eagles' fans had grown tired of getting to the postseason only to lose in the first round; something Reid's teams did with regularity.

Birds' fans were promised a fairly quick rebuild under new head coach Chip Kelly, who turned out to be a disaster. Not only was Kelly a poor communicator, but he stripped the roster of its most talented players

(DeSean Jackson, LeSean McCoy, and Jeremy Maclin), made expensive — and poor — signings (DeMarco Murray, Kiko Alonso, and Sam Bradford), and a terrible first-round pick (Nelson Agholor).

Through it all, the fans have been patient. But patience has its limits.

To be sure, no one expected the Eagles to contend for the postseason this year. A first-year head coach, a rookie quarterback, a young, inexperienced corps of wide receivers, and a questionable secondary defense assured that there would be growing pains. But after the Birds won their first three games, including a 34-3 whitewashing of the perennially contending Pittsburgh Steelers, expectations changed. And they should have.

Even after the bye week when the losses started to mount, the Eagles still played with passion and determination. They remained competitive, beating the then-undefeated Minnesota Vikings, and the NFC South's division-leading Atlanta Falcons. What's more, the Birds could have easily won any of the other four games they played during that period, losing by no more

than a touchdown to any of their opponents.

But their performance in the last three losses — Seattle Seahawks (26-15), Green Bay Packers (27-13), and especially Sunday's loss against the Bengals — is unacceptable. Most of the points the Eagles scored in those games were "garbage points," tallied after they no longer had a chance to win.

What's so disturbing is not the fact that they lost those games, but how they lost them. Not only did the coaches and the players fail to meet the standard that they set for themselves earlier in the season, but they did so with very little passion, focus, or pride. And that is an insult to the fans because it reflects on us and our city.

The next time Doug Pederson, his coaching staff, and his players don the green, white, and black, they better remember that they all get paid to compete with heart, to win, and to represent this city with some pride.

If not, they just might be out of a job in pro football, and then they'll find out just how hard life really is.

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