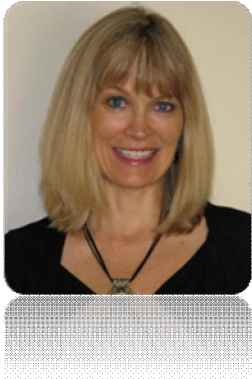


# The Spirit of Sport

By Deborah Sharp Molchan



Ah, sweet victory and the sixth Super Bowl win merge to welcome passion into the life of every Steelers fan! The Black and Gold win the Super Bowl and our mood, sex drive and sense of accomplishment soar.

Everyone in Steelers Nation knows that a fan is not a passive couch watching spectator. A fan must be passionate and own a terrible towel to swirl with the conviction that their very action helps the Steelers win. Research of sports fans indicates that most fans believe that their presence has an impact on winning the game. In fact the purpose of watching the Super Bowl is to help the Black and Gold win.

Superstations in sports are widespread. We will try anything to help our team win. If that means wearing the same lucky sweat shirt we wore the last Super Bowl victory, chanting “Here we go Steelers. Here we go,” praying, yelling our encouragement to players, or sitting in the same chair we sat when they last won, we will do our part. It is

a passionate love that takes us outside of our ordinary experience. We identify with athletes who talk about the love for their sport, including the hardships they suffer, and the pain they experience in their search for superior athletic performances. Who didn’t identify with James Harrison when he pushed away the pain of a 100-yard interception return to ensure the Cardinals would not take the lead at halftime. We know he’s not a distance runner, yet he was superior in his record breaking interception in a Super Bowl game.

The Steelers have spirit; they are courageous, unwavering and genuine with the spirit it requires to stay in the fight to the end. Our team infuses us with spirit and we join with them while they play with heart on the field. With thirty-five seconds remaining in the game I was surrounded by twenty or so fans passionately determined to ensure a Super Bowl win. Rising above defeat a friend of mine yelled with conviction, “Everyone link hands. Do it!” All those present failed to question her authority in this matter. Her spirit was enough authority,

and the contagious passion fueled everyone present to grab the hand of the person closest. Not one lack of connection was tolerated. Even disbelievers were instructed to hold hands and collectively chant the Steelers to victory. Nothing short of transcendence prevailed after Holmes scored the winning touchdown. While the play was under review she shouted again, "Link hands." Children and adults alike held hands and for a moment we were all in Tampa. When the Steelers won, we all won.

The following day at work numerous stories of fans who aided the Steelers to victory were shared with me. Each fan convinced that their ritual helped win the Super Bowl. A banner from previous Steelers Super Bowl victories, a cross lightly held and massaged in a jeans pocket, jerseys worn, music played, and energetic messages sent to the team. Our stories are created in the collective we of those who connect in our shared experience of love for our team.

For awhile we are all bathed in the magnificent elation of triumph. We feel closer to every other fan, hope prevails, and we choose to carry the courageous spirit into our own lives. A mundane existence will not be tolerated in our personal lives. Our heroes persevere and so will we. The opportunity

for metaphor in our lives is enormous. Just as Harrison made the 100 yard touchdown, and Roethlisberger and Santonio Holmes teamed to win the game in closing seconds we will focus and persevere in our own lives. We can go without sleep when the baby interrupts our night, or the lay off requires courage to search for employment, or the losses of life remind us that disappointment is inevitable. The same mental techniques the Steelers use to play a winning Super Bowl game, skills of focus, mental toughness, imagery, team cohesiveness, and above all spirit, we can choose to use in our daily lives. Harrison acknowledged that once he had the ball, "it was all about my teammates helping to get me to the other end." For a short while perhaps we all help a little more to get each other to the other end.

Steelers Nation please forward me your stories of rituals that helped the Black and Gold win! Forward to [info@sportpsychologyservicesofpa.com](mailto:info@sportpsychologyservicesofpa.com).