

## Packer Fans as the next Super Pac?

Written by roger groves

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We are inundated daily with anecdotal evidence that “it’s all about the money.” There seems to be a collective throwing up of hands in surrender, giving up on the notion that people do things for the right reasons, or should I say, people will not do the right thing unless they make money for doing it. In politics, we know the US Supreme Court opened the door to super-sized contributions for political purposes. We throw up our hands and ask whether political action committees have more influence on elections than democratic ideals or the interests of most Americans. In sports, the not-for-profit NCAA and its member institutions is Exhibit A for hypocrisy in the minds of many. In pro sports, team or player loyalty gives way to the common disclaimer: “it’s a business”. So for those of us who are sports idealists, forced by intellectual integrity to be realists, it is important to seize upon evidence to the contrary – that people sometimes choose to actually have non-monetary returns when they spend their own money.

Barely reported in newspapers, radio, television, or social media is the fact that fans of the [Green Bay Packers](#) just finished paying \$67 million for a stadium renovation. More specifically, they each bought a tiny piece of the team when buying shares of corporation, and the money raised will be used for the renovation. Saliently, each of those who were part of 268,000 shares purchased decided to pay cash without any expectation of receiving more money than they paid as a return on their investment. They were advised that when they buy shares of stock in the Packers they would not receive dividends. There is no expectation of increased appreciation in the shares they purchased. But these new shareholders could transfer stock to family members. That tells us that the value of ownership wasn't in the anticipation of receiving more money than invested. It was not about the money. It was the nonmonetary value that comprised the return – the intangible sense of loyalty, supporting “my” team, and someday giving a piece of what I sentimentally care about to people I love.

These fans are on the fringe of becoming [social entrepreneurs](#) . When buying shares, and without officially declaring it, these Packer fans became a Fan-Pac. They had a combined purpose of profitability and [philanthropy](#) . They help enhance profits because paying for stadium improvements means the corporate owners have to borrow less, pay less interest, and thereby reinvest those savings in interest payments into player salaries or hiring and retaining top executive talent. But they also were motivated by something more than money. This translates into a [double bottom line](#) .

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Perhaps these Packer fans are on the cusp of a new age of fandom. A future Fan-Pac project may expand beyond a stadium renovation. The corporate owners may so appreciate the new capital from Fan-Pac that the Board of Directors (elected in part by the Fan-Pac) may authorize a small percentage of the new capital for charitable projects designed to help the communities that support the team. The project may be "Packers for the Homeless" or even a fund for players. Pittsburgh Steeler [Ryan Clark](#) lost several organs after playing in Denver due to a blood disease called [sickle cell anemia](#). Other players have that same disease, some of whom may be current or former Packers. Some funds could be allocated to fund research to refine procedures for emergency treatment of players with that disease or for that matter, heart abnormalities. A Saint-Pac may develop among [New Orleans Saints](#) fans that the owners agree can help subsidize housing for a city still feeling the effects of Hurricane Katrina. It would be less government dependence, more private equity, to help those in need.

I may never understand or accept the media conclusion that we prefer to view perversity, or gossip or tragedy over philanthropy. I think the society will be judged more by how we took care of the most needy, not on how rich a few of us got. But I can at least do my part to show evidence, wherever we find it, of the best within us to find a balance, a double bottom line.

This is not the first Fan-Pac. Children in several communities have formed their own, albeit unprofessional, teams. But their teams are not playing a sport. They shave their heads to support classmates with childhood cancer. The charitable funds are raised in joint venture with adult nonprofits and hospitals funds research for a cure. If children without much money, but plenty of hair use that precious commodity as currency for charity, we can have fans with discretionary income among 32 pro football teams, and 30 pro basketball teams, and every other pro team sport do the same? If hospitals and non-sport foundations can joint venture, so can professional sports teams.

Yes, [NFL](#) and [NBA](#) owners have foundations with charitable activities. And adults place billions into nonprofit organizations each year for the right reasons. We just don't hear much about it. I suspect that is why this Fan-Pac robustness is just beyond the horizon. The more exposure we give to the projects, the better chance for more of the same. We need more reminders that even in sports, money doesn't make the world go round, people do. People like Packer fans who say, I'd rather pay to pass on Packer loyalty than buy another share of Exxon Mobil.

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