

PITTSBURGH | An unflagging devotion

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flag. We have one.”

Do they ever.

On Tuesday, from Pittsburgh's Strip District to the South Side, vendors sold stacks of the 16-by-25-inch towels. Fans on the street twirled them and cheered. Motorists lined their dashboards with them. And waiters used Steelers gold towels to bus tables instead of their traditional white towels.

Depending on the neighborhood, prices ranged from \$5 to \$10.

“It wards off a lot of bad teams,” said Bill Milligan, 47, a salesman at BA Trading Co., a sports apparel firm in Pittsburgh. “It keeps all the nastiness away from the Steelers.”

By the way, Detroiters should know that when the gold rush hits Motown, proper Terrible Towel etiquette calls for fans to twirl them above their heads and scream as loudly as possible.

Patty Ptaszkiewicz, 61, keeps an original Terrible Towel from the 1970s in a hope chest in her Shadyside, Pa., home. She rarely touches it.

“It’s going to be worth some money some day,” she said. “When people come over, I pull it out for them to see it, but then it goes right back in the hope



REGINA H. BOONE/Detroit Free Press

Restaurateur Manny St. Mary, 56, gets behind the flag of Steel-e Nation. A native of the Philippines, he owns a Terrible Towel. “You don’t have to be full-blooded American to love football,” says St. Mary, who closes his restaurant on game days because “I can’t get any-body to work.”

Proper use of the Terrible Towel

The Terrible Towel tradition was started in 1975 by Pittsburgh Steelers radio broadcaster Myron Cope.



- 1 Tightly grasp the Terrible Towel in your hand.
- 2 Raise it high above your head as the excitement builds.
- 3 Swing it above your head wildly, being careful not to hit anyone.
- 4 Jump around and yell as loudly as you can.

Source: Free Press research

NOVIA KNIGHT/Detroit Free Press

— folded on my bedroom dresser for karma’s sake.”

Brian Sutherland, 34, another Pittsburgh suburbanite, burned his towel 10 years ago.

He was painting his son’s bedroom room in bright red. Sutherland stepped out for a moment and his son, Derek, then 4, spilled a bunch of paint.

To mop it up, he grabbed the Terrible Towel that was tacked up on an unpainted wall.

“You can’t throw something like that away — that would be sacrilege. I had to burn it,” Sutherland said. “I never got another one. But if they win the Super Bowl, I’ll probably get one.”