

# Food choices tied to scoreboard

By Jan Hoffman, New York Times

When Vinnie Richichi started watching the Pittsburgh Steelers' home opener against the Tennessee Titans a week ago, he was feeling great. After all, the Steelers had won their first home game six years in a row.

Then things indeed went south.

"The worse they looked, the more I kept going to the fridge," recalled Richichi, a co-host of a sports talk show on KDKA-FM in Pittsburgh. "First a couple of Hot Pockets. By the second quarter I threw in a box of White Castle hamburgers. As the game progressed, I just went through the refrigerator: the more fear, the more emotion, I'm chomping down. But I'm not going near the salad or the yogurt. If it doesn't have 700 calories, I'm going right past it."

The aftereffect of the Steelers' ignominious defeat by a score of 16-9 clung to Richichi on Monday, when he rejected his regular breakfast of yogurt and strawberries in favor of a bagel sandwich with sausage, eggs, cheese, peppers and hot sauce. Then, his mood hardly improved after spending four hours on the air railing and commiserating with Steelers' fans, he had pizza for lunch.

"My weight goes up and down with my teams," said Richichi. "My team does well? I'm 40, 50 pounds lighter."

Richichi's eating habits, joined at the waistline with the NFL, were reflected in a recent study that investigated whether a football team's outcome had an effect on what fans ate the day after a game. Although the study did not look at weight fluctuations, researchers found that football fans'

saturated-fat consumption increased by as much as 28 percent following defeats and decreased by 16 percent following victories. The association was particularly pronounced in the eight cities regarded as having the most devoted fans, with Pittsburgh often ranked No. 1. Narrower, nail-biting defeats led to greater consumption of calorie and fat-saturated foods than lopsided ones.

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