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Deep in Eagles Country, a group of Giants fans join forces to form quite a Crew

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(Published: February 3, 2008)

Tony DeStasio, from Hammonton, used to suffer from the loneliness of being a New York Giants fan among so many Philadelphia Eagles supporters.

"It's tough to bleed blue in green country," said DeStasio, 56, a northern New Jersey transplant who moved to southern New Jersey in 1984.

But then he found help. About two years ago, he discovered a southern New Jersey-based New York Giants fan club, the South Jersey Wrecking Crew, on the web. ("From the Meadowlands to the Pinelands!")

So now he has company every weekend. The group meets at the Pic-A-Lilli Inn on Route 206 in Shamong Township, Burlington County, for Giants games.

The owners give the club its own room with a large-screen TV for the games. DeStasio, originally from Jersey City, said there were about 100 Giants fans gathered at the Pic-A-Lilli for the NFC championship game against the Green Bay Packers last month.

He expects at least that many today for Super Bowl XLII between the Giants and New England Patriots.

Some Eagles fans are sure to be there, too. They usually are. But DeStasio said things are cool between the two groups.

"Eagles fans are very passionate," DeStasio said. "There is some give-and-take sometimes (at the Pic-A-Lilli), but it's all in fun. We're friendly. We get along quite well. Opposing fans take some heat. Don't get me wrong. But it's all good-natured. No drunken fisticuffs. None of that stuff. All good fun. We're all football fans."

DeStasio said he doesn't flaunt his allegiance to the Giants. No flags on the front lawn. No lighting in Giants colors adorning the home.

But sometimes people notice, such as when he was buying some Giants shirts at the Hamilton Mall.

"Some guy walks by and says, 'That stuff should be outlawed down here,' " DeStasio said. "I said, 'An Eagle fan, huh?' He said, 'Yeah. You guys are lucky.' I said, 'And you guys are unlucky, all right? What can I tell you?' He laughed and moved on."

Colin Cumming, 48, a Shamong resident, is the founder of the South Jersey Wrecking Crew. Cumming moved to southern New Jersey from Elizabeth so many years ago he can't remember. But he would never become an Eagles fan. Once a Giants fan, always a Giants fan.

He founded the club about two years ago with his Web site

www.southjerseywreckingcrew.com.

"Me and my friends were sitting around a kitchen table, and I probably had one beer too many when I shot my mouth off and said I would do this," Cumming said. "It started out as a one-page Web site. Now, sometimes, on a Monday or Tuesday morning, I'm up at 5:30 in the morning, collecting pictures people send me, putting them on the Web site. It's not a part-time job, but it's getting close."

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