Finally, finally, finally.

After hearing every 0-19 joke the sports world could conceive, the Detroit Lions and their fans were able to celebrate an actual, regular-season victory over another professional NFL team.

Every Detroiter understood the significance of this win that if nothing else caused a collective sigh of relief over two peninsulas' worth of people.

I am attending school 700 miles away from Ford Field, but when ESPN.com informed me that “You Can’t Lose ‘Em All,” I threw my hands in the air and screamed like my pocket contained a ticket stub and parking sticker.

It may be premature to say just yet, but this win probably gave the fair-only-if-you-look-for-it city some kind of hope.

See, we Detroiter know our city is messed up. Our parents have lost the jobs, our younger siblings and relatives attend the embattled Detroit public schools. But our city has been messed up for awhile—and we’re not afraid to admit it.

What we don’t like to admit is that we also search for tiny pockets of hope where we can. After the Detroit Tigers’ World Series victory in 1968 healed a city broken by race riots, we began to allow our sports teams to give us a glimpse into the greatness shadowed too often by high crime rates, staggering
debt, and annoyingly fragmented freeways (the local saying goes, “There are only two seasons in Michigan: winter and construction,”).

As Detroit sunk into the national recession deeper than any other city, we saw the perennially rebuilding Lions fall with it.

The NFL and pundits alike told Lions fans to give up, laugh, and “Fire Millen.” Ford Field even looked sad whenever blue and silver uniforms inhabited it. On the last game of last season, restaurants offered free meals to their patrons if the Lions could somehow eke out a win (they couldn’t).

And still, Detroiters said, “maybe next year.”

I haven’t looked at the city’s financial statements, but I’m sure they’re the same as they were before the Lions beat the Redskins. Tonight, no one cares.

Tonight, we get to be what we haven’t been in a long time: a city that’s happily distracted from its ills by celebrating the football team’s Sunday afternoon victory.

Finally, finally, finally