LANDOVER, Md. – On the afternoon exactly 10 years after the dreadful day, Melissa Regan dressed her 12-year-old son Spencer in the burgundy t-shirt she had specially-made –  the one that read: "Let's Roll" on the front and "Remember 9-11" on the back – and drove him as she often does on autumn Sundays, to the Washington Redskins game.

Only this time it didn't seem to her so much like a game.

The Redskins were playing the New York Giants and while she had never cared for the Giants, a bitter rival to her beloved Redskins, there was symmetry to the fact that on the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, New York and Washington were playing each other. And it seemed to her that maybe this was a game the Redskins didn't have to win.   
  
"You know, I hope New York wins today, too," she said, realizing, of course, such a thing couldn't happen.   
  
But even though this was the first game of the NFL season and even though the Redskins and Giants have been bitter rivals for decades, there was a certain peacefulness in the hours before the game began. The Redskins handed tiny American flags to each of the fans who poured through the FedEx Field gates, not that they always needed to as some fans came in carrying folded flags or wearing flag t-shirts or flags turned into bandanas. They chanted "USA, USA, USA" as they moved through the concourses and they yelled it as one before the teams took the field.   
  
Rather than the usual sea of Redskins colors, the stands were suddenly filled with the red-white-and-blue of the little flags. It was a stirring sight.   
  
In many ways, the NFL has been intertwined with the military more than other sports. War metaphors have long been a part of football language and the so-called gladiator mentality of the players translates well to the soldiers on the field. Many of the war's top commanders played football at West Point and Giants Coach Tom Coughlin has a son [who was in the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001](http://news.yahoo.com/giants--coughlin-coaches-son-through-horrific-episode.html), and made it out alive. So yes, much more than football filled the stadium from which you can see the U.S. Capitol building in some of the higher rows.

Never was that more evident than in Army veteran Luis Rosa-Valentin who sat in a wheel chair outside the tunnel to the field. He was missing both legs and his left arm – all of which were blown off by an IED in Baghdad in April of 2008. "I just live day to day and I think I'm doing pretty well," he said. His first day of boot camp was ironically Sept. 11, 2001, and he remembers two hours into their day being hustled into a room for briefings. Two years later he was in Iraq.

He looked out toward the field.   
  
"It's what I want to see," he said of the crowd gathered in the stands outside despite the threats of terrorist attacks in Washington. "I want to see everybody living day-to-day lives. [The terrorists’] weapon is fear."

On the sidewalks outside, fans gathered around a life-size model of the three firemen hoisting an American flag on the top of World Trade Center rubble from the now-famous photo. It was made from beeswax and is usually on permanent display at Madame Tousad's Wax Museum in New York City. The New York Museum has loaned the display to its Washington museum, and early on Sunday morning museum workers took the display to FedEx where a steady stream of fans walked up in the blazing afternoon sun to snap pictures of themselves next to the replica of worn and bloodied firemen.   
  
This is where Regan stood with her son. He was only two at the time of the attacks and really knew nothing of the day commemorated on his shirt. So as they drove to the game, Regan told him about that day. She told him of the planes that were hijacked and flown into the World Trade Center. She told him about the plane that hit the Pentagon. She told him how those two towers in New York burned and people jumped out of the windows and eventually with the world watching, how the two humongous towers tumbled to the ground and how some 3,000 people died.   
  
Then she told him about Flight 93, the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania. She told him, too, about the passengers who rushed the cockpit, took control of the plane and sent it thundering to the ground in an explosion of broken metal. Most of all, she told him about what one of those passengers said as they stormed the cockpit door.   
  
"Let's Roll."  
  
And when she wanted a shirt made for him to wear this day, this was what she asked her friend Mona Baker to press on the front in gold letters. Somehow it summed up exactly what she wanted him to know about this day.   
  
Perhaps on an afternoon when a giant American flag was pulled across the field and former Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell was the honorary Redskins captain, and an Army veteran named Jorge Torres bought tickets on Stub Hub so he and another veteran Miguel Lopez could see their first football game on the one day when football didn't matter, Spencer Regan's T-shirt might have been the most profound statement of all.   
  
"Let's Roll."  
  
There would be time for football.   
  
For a few moments on Sunday afternoon, it would be about a day he doesn't even remember.

*--* [*Yahoo! News reporter Chris Moody*](http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/author/chris-moody/) *contributed to this story.*