Reason #37 To Love New York: Because Nearly Every College Sports Team Has a Home Bar in Manhattan

Thanks to college football's structural lunacy, Florida-Alabama was 2009's most important regular season game. Still, you have to be impressed that, 1,006 miles from The Swamp, Florida fans can pack out a bar. The Gin Mill flies a small Gator flag outside its door, but, inside, the school spirit overflows—from the "GO GATORS!!!" salutation to the blue-polo-with-orange-stripes uniform to the traditional arm-in-arm singing of "We Are The Boys." Even an hour before kickoff, the waitresses can't deliver drinks without bumping into Florida residents on vacation or 2003's Homecoming Queen.

The Gotham Gators, an official arm of Florida's Alumni Association, organize this and three other Manhattan meet-ups, plus ones in Long Island and Hoboken. Board members assure me that this kind of crowd shows up for Charleston Southern and showed up for Ron Zook. The Gin Mill's bouncer, who happens to be the brother of Peggy Noonan, gently disputes their claim, but does say the Gators are both rabid and polite. Also: "There are some very sexy women here." (Yep.)

For its part, The Gin Mill, which has hosted the Gators for the past eleven seasons, provides orange and blue Jello shots and plays the school's fight song after each touchdown. Unfortunately, it's Alabama who scores on its first two drives, and Florida goes down 32-13—a defeat made only more bitter by the impending graduation of Tim Tebow, Florida's star quarterback. While he plays terribly, Tebow never gets booed or even c'moned. When CBS's cameras find him on the sideline, crying, the bar musters one final cheer and a few standing O's.

Tebow is famously Christian and famously virginal, so perhaps the best analogy here is to parents on a wedding day—The Gin Mill gang knows that, come next year, Tebow will still be in their lives and that they'll still hang on to their memories, but things are going to be fundamentally different. At least they'll have each other.