

Super Bowl Sunday

☒ Today is Super Bowl XLIX and I will watch the game in the comfort of my living room as will billions around the world.

I will have seen 48 on TV and have had the privilege of attending one Super Bowl in person. I am a life long NFL fan and NFL Season Ticket holder.

The game has grown from humble beginnings to a full fledged unofficial holiday in this country.

It brings people together like no other day on the calendar. Not Christmas, Thanksgiving or the 4th of July.

None of these days can compete with this day in uniting people of every age, race, religion, and economic background but sports in general has a way of doing this and it is wonderful.

I wish everyday could be like this.

People who don't know one another will talk about a topic other than the weather.

To some, it may be day long parties being with friends and family while actually caring little about the game itself, but rather the celebratory things surrounding it.

To football fans it is the culmination of a 6 month long journey that starts with 32 teams that comprise the National Football League from July Training Camps, August Pre-Season games to the Fall 16 game regular season schedule and gliding into the 3 weeks of playoffs in January that ultimately determine today's game participants:

The New England Patriots and Seattle Seahawks.

Needless to say fans worldwide (and especially both cities)

are ravenous in anticipation of the kickoff in just over 4 hours.

As popular as the game has gotten for fans, advertisers, the media and players themselves it didn't start with the very first Super Bowl in 1967 between Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers from the NFL and Hank Stram's Kansas City Chiefs representing the AFL.

It began 9 years before in the 1958 NFL Championship game between the Baltimore Colts and New York Giants played at Yankee Stadium on December 28th.

The Greatest Game Ever Played (as it is affectionately known as) brought football and the NFL into our living rooms on a nationwide scale unseen before. More than 40 + million viewers watched the Giants and Colts battle to a 17-17 tie at the end of regulation.

The result is what makes the game so exciting to this day.

The game would mark the very first NFL playoff game ever to go to Sudden Death Overtime.

NBC could not have imagined a more dramatic stage to have broadcast from.

Johnny Unitas and the Colts would go on to win the game 23-17 on a one yard run by Alan Ameche in overtime but more importantly the NFL would gain a tremendous surge in popularity to become the most popular sport in America.

With new found television popularity, eight men in 1959 spurned at various times previously by the NFL to own existing or begin new franchises changed the game as we know it today by deciding to challenge the NFL by forming their own league, the American Football League consisting of the New York Titans (now Jets), Buffalo Bills, Boston (now New England) Patriots, Houston Oilers, Dallas Texans (now Kansas City Chiefs),

Oakland Raiders, Los Angeles (now San Diego) Chargers and Denver Broncos.

With newly found TV broadcast funding from (ironically) NBC, the AFL was able to draft and sign equal talent out of college as its counterpart and set the stage for a tumultuous period from 1960 to 1966 that saw a bitter competition between the two leagues.

Finally, then NFL Commissioner Pete Roselle and AFL Commissioner Joe Foss would spearhead a merger agreement between the two leagues thus giving birth to the NFL as we largely know it today. Foss would resign shortly before the merger was announced in 1966 but the ground work had been laid to take effect in 1970.

The first AFL-NFL World Championship Game (now referred to as Super Bowl I) was played on January 15, 1967 in Los Angeles with the NFL Champion Packers decisively defeating the AFL Chiefs 35-10. It remains ironically the only Super Bowl not to sell out and also the only one to have been televised simultaneously on two different networks (NBC and CBS) both unthinkable today. The simplistic half time show consisted of marching bands from the University of Arizona and Grambling State University along with trumpeter Al Hirt.

The second AFL-NFL World Championship Game (now referred to as Super Bowl II) was played on January 14, 1968 in Miami, FL with the again NFL Champion Packers similarly defeating the then AFL Champion Raiders by a score of 33-14.

These 2 wins by Vince Lombardi and his Packers were viewed by many fans as showing the NFL's talent superiority over the perceived inferiority of the AFL, but that would soon change.

What December 28, 1958 did for the NFL by bringing into our homes and on our televisions: January 12, 1969 would change the game forever in a way we not only viewed it but brought it into our conscience and fiber.

Super Bowl III featured the NFL Champion Baltimore Colts against the Joe Namath led AFL Champion New York Jets. As all fans know, the Colts were tremendous favorites to win the game but the Jets persevered and with a 16-7 victory in the twilight of Miami's Orange Bowl Stadium instantly changed the game of pro football and more importantly the public's perception of it. The AFL finally was able to establish parity on the field with the NFL.

The AFL Champion Kansas City Chiefs would go on to defeat the NFL Champion Minnesota Vikings 23-7 in Super Bowl IV at New Orleans on January 11, 1970. Not only did it mark the AFL's second consecutive victory over the NFL, it would be the last game played between the two leagues as rivals. The pending merger would take effect in the fall of 1970 bringing the NFL into a single league.

As we have grown as a country over the last 49 years so has television, and as television has grown, so has the demand for entertainment.

That's what the Super Bowl has grown into: Entertainment

With outlandish commercials that advertisers will pay millions to air: to half time shows that rival a movie production, the league has cornered the market for a one day extravaganza!!

Of the 4 major sports in North America, The NBA, NHL and MLB all have a best of seven game series to crown their respective champions while the NFL settles its championship in a one game, winner take all finale. There in lies the excitement.

Heck, you can have a few bad games in a best of seven series and come back to win four but the Super Bowl is unique in that here is no room for mistakes or a bad game.

So today as we watch Super Bowl XLIX and later see the winners hoist the Vince Lombardi Trophy, it brings a smile to my face as I recount seeing it in person at Super Bowl XLI in Miami

with Peyton Manning, Tony Dungy and the rest of the Indianapolis Colts.

I smile at the fact that the term "Super Bowl" was coined by AFL founder and Kansas City Chiefs late owner Lamar Hunt. A visionary man who helped establish a new league and made numerous sacrifices to that end.

I smile at the Vince Lombardi Trophy being named for perhaps the greatest coach the NFL will ever see. Not just in wins and losses but the unmistakable leadership and will to win taking a then rag tag team in Green Bay, WI and turning them into not only champions but men.

Today is a celebration of those two former leagues as one, for fans of football, commercials, music, parties and just about everything in between.

For 4 hours we cast aside our cares and differences and become one.

Here is to a great game. I think it will be a nail biter.

When the final gun sounds, I will be looking forward to the upcoming season already.

Counting the days until opening weekend in September and looking forward to February 7, 2016 and Super Bowl 50 in Santa Clara, CA

What a party it will be!!

Thank you Vince and Lamar.

The Wizard that's Oz

☒ Well the 2012 baseball season has sprung upon us like a field full of daffodils.

With it, we have our first major controversy already just 1 week into the campaign.

The Florida Marlins after years of political wrangling and lawsuits finally completed their new \$360 Million ballpark on the site of the old Orange Bowl football stadium in the Little Havana neighborhood of downtown Miami.

Having played in north Broward County and sharing Dolphins Stadium since 1993 with the Miami Dolphins, this was a dream true. After nearly 20 years, they finally now have a place to call their own home.

With the move came a new name (they are now the Miami Marlins), new uniforms and a new manager; Ozzie Guillen.

Ozzie is a former major leaguer having played from 1985-2000 with most of those years spent in a Chicago White Sox uniform.

After retiring, he went on to become the manager of those same White Sox from 2004-2011, even winning a World Series title in 2005 (their first since 1917).

When the White Sox would not renew Guillen's contract last year, the Marlins decided to hire him thinking that this would be a perfect fit.

After all, Guillen has lived in Miami for 12 years, would naturally appeal to the large Latin fan base (having been born in Venezuela) and has proven himself to be a manager capable of winning a World Series.

What could possibly go wrong??

Two words.....Fidel Castro.

One risk Marlins owner Jeff Loria was willing to overlook was Ozzies off the cuff personality and sometimes controversial comments and it only took a week for this house of cards to implode.

While in Chicago, Ozzie used a homophobic slur towards a Sun-Times reporter in 2006. Then in 2010 he gave his opinion on Arizona's new illegal immigration laws as well as saying that Asian born baseball players receive preferential treatment over Hispanic born players by being provided translators to help them assimilate. The latter two coming and going with little notice.

Fast forward to the present and Guillen is interviewed by Time Magazine and during the interview, expounds on his "love" and "admiration" of Fidel Castro. Say what?

Like the Jim Croce song: "You don't tug on Superman's cape, you don't spit into the wind, you don't pull the mask off the ole Lone Ranger" and in South Florida, you certainly don't publically profess your love and admiration of Fidel Castro.

Those two words are still (and will always be) a flash point in the heavily Cuban American community that is both metro Miami and increasingly South Florida.

Castro's brutal regime has caused incredible pain, suffering and misery to countless numbers of individuals and families in the generations that fled Cuba under his iron handed rule to settle in the freedom of America.

Of course Ozzie claims he meant no harm in his words, he has gone as far as saying the meaning was "lost in translation" thinking one thing in Spanish and then saying another in English but that doesn't wash. He knows exactly what he said and said exactly what he meant. After all, that IS Ozzie.

So, the Marlins (and Major League Baseball) quickly began the damage control.

Ozzie has had several press conferences apologizing to all who will listen; he has been suspended for 5 games as manager of the club and still faces a fire storm of protest from the public.

Will Ozzie be able to out run this latest verbal miscue or will he be fired?

Who knows? From articles I have read, fans are pretty split down the middle on whether he should keep his job or not.

Personally, I don't think he should lose his job.

After all, this is America and liking what he says or not, he has the right (like all of us) to free speech. But with that freedom comes responsibility and repercussions.

The Marlins are his employer; it is their decision (which will of course be heavily influenced by their fans, community leaders and overall public perception).

I think Ozzie is sorry for what he said but based on his track record, it is likely to happen again at some point. It is just a matter of time.

Only time will tell though if the dust settles on this one. If it does, it may be awhile.

In the meantime though Ozzie must feel like the Wicked Witch of the West did when the tornado dropped Dorothy's house on her.

If only he was so lucky, he would be in the Land of Oz far, far away from this storm.

A little tired of.....The Little Couple



Back in 2009 my wife happened to stumble upon a new reality series on The Learning Channel (that's TLC in TV lingo).

The Little Couple.

The plot of the show follows and chronicles the lives of Jennifer Arnold and Bill Klein. A newly married couple (of over 3 years now I believe) in their mid 30's who live in Houston, Texas.

Jennifer is a neonatal physician at Children's Hospital at the Texas Medical Center while Bill (along with a business partner) owns a call center in New York State.

Both Bill and Jennifer suffer from a bone growth disease called Skeletal Dysplasia which leads to their dwarfism. Jen is 3 foot 2 inches tall and Bill is 4 feet tall.

The series began and continues to focus on the couples' stature along with the trials and tribulations that they have (and continue) to overcome.

They are intelligent, humorous and interesting. Heck, I would love these 2 as my neighbors.

Here in lies the root of my article. I am not a PC person so I will be blunt.

In my opinion, the show is viewed by us (the audience) as a form of voyeurism if you will.

Are we watching the show because Jen is a doctor or Bill is a businessman (who works from a home office)? Perhaps a small number do but for the vast majority, NO.

Are we watching the show to see how these two live their lives day to day because they are little people? ABSOLUTELY.

Be honest.

If Jen and Bill were of average height and had the same professions, would we really even care? In high probability, NO.

After the first season of the show, the novelty for me quickly wore off. These two live an average life like we all do. There is nothing special to theirs. Yes, they are little; yes they face obstacles (as we all do day to day) with some being greater than others. They even just finished building a custom made 3,000+ square foot house.

In truth, I have seen nothing on the show that the two cannot do except for possibly conceiving a child.

Due to Jennifer's size, doctors determined it would be risky for her to become pregnant so the couple wrestled with adoption or in vitro fertilization options.

They are currently in the second season of air time trying to conceive through a surrogate implanted with their "genetic materials" logging endless frequent flier miles back and forth (seemingly weekly) from Houston to a clinic in L.A.

Jen is a doctor at the largest medical center in the world and they cannot find an in vitro center in Houston? Only one on the beach in Santa Monica, CA?

How convenient and it makes for some great seascape shots at sunset.

Half of the last season seemed to focus on this topic (the other half in completing the aforementioned house).

Why do we care?

I wish them all the success I would any couple wanting to have a child in any way they thought was appropriate (adoption, in vitro or the old fashioned way).

Now, the show has become just a "side show". Is it not enough that we have been voyeurs in the daily lives of this couple for two and half years? But now it has extended to a surrogate couple?

Having children (and deciding how to have them) is a personal choice, not a worldwide event.

I have no idea how much longer the show will air or if they will have a child/children through in vitro or adoption. I really don't care.

It seems to me that this couple who yearned to just be average and accepted for their stature have achieved this all TOO well. They have shown the nation that they can be just as tedious, boring and over the top as the rest of us.

In the end though like any reality show these days, it just continues to prove that we as a country will watch anything.

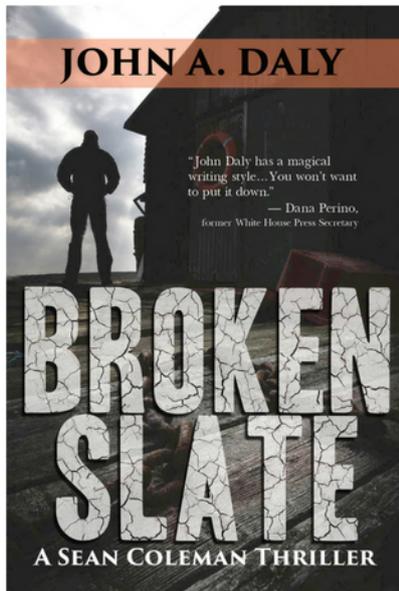
We need that precious "water cooler" conversation piece.

Now if I can only find my remote and change the channel.

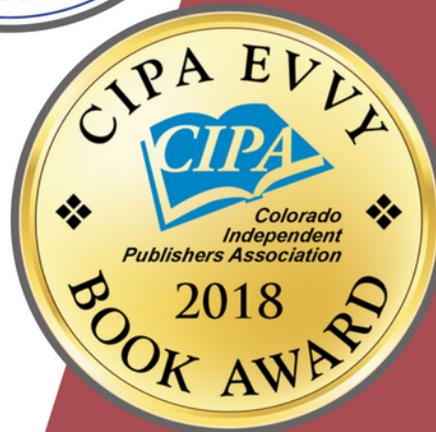
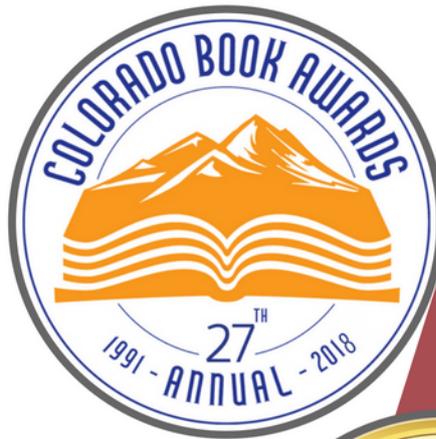
Finding Bigfoot is just starting on Animal Planet.

2018 COLORADO BOOK AWARDS & CIPA EVVY AWARDS

FINALIST



BROKEN SLATE
JOHN A. DALY



NCAA Native American Mascot Controversy

- ✘ The world of intercollegiate athletics is an interesting stew to say the least.

It is a mixture of money, a smattering of egocentricity, a dash of concern for the student athlete, a yet smaller dash of perceived concern for said student athlete's actual academic progress towards a degree and then brought together with a healthy dose of public perception and dare I say EVEN MORE MONEY.

Back in 2005, the NCAA decided that it would institute a new rule:

It self-decided (as a PR move I believe) it would strong-arm schools with nicknames or mascots IT deemed "hostile or abusive"; they would no longer be allowed to keep these nicknames.

This was targeted at colleges and universities that were currently using a Native American derived name and/or symbols.

Most of these schools were small with no strong alumni bases or financial incentive to keep their respective name and made the change without any fanfare.

However, there were plenty of major universities that were presented with a proverbial pickle.

Schools such as Florida State (Seminoles), Utah (Utes), Illinois (Illini), and, to lesser extents, Central Michigan (Chippewa's), Miami of Ohio (Redskins) and North Dakota (Sioux).

The first three schools are traditional football and basketball powerhouses whose revenue annually adds tens of millions to their athletic department coffers as well as hefty sums reaching the NCAA itself.

From the schools above, Miami has changed its name to "Redhawks" with little to no opposition; North Dakota is in the process of dropping "Sioux" after 81 years upon losing its final appeal to the NCAA after many years while Florida State, Utah, Illinois and Central Michigan have kept their names after receiving "waivers" from the NCAA by proving they (currently) have the blessing and written approval of those respective tribes (Seminole, Illini, Ute and Chippewa).

Ironically, these schools (save CMU) produce millions of dollars in athletic revenue through large gate attendance,

huge TV contracts and merchandising. Even more "ironic" is the fact that the NCAA actually profits twofold. It is giving the appearance on one hand of being thoughtful, respectful and politically correct while the other hand is taking fistfuls of dollars looking the other way. If they are going to enact any rule, then it should apply to all schools regardless of their circumstances. If not, then retract it.

The truth (in my opinion and millions of other fan-based polls) is that the NCAA should be involved in other things like policing an ever growing number of student athletes being arrested (some multiple times), making sure progress is made in the classroom and that graduation rates are strong (things it was actually set up to do in the first place).

Schools along with their alumni and communities should be able to decide for themselves what they want to be called. If a school thinks its current nickname is somehow offensive, then let it decide (such as Stanford University did in 1972 all by itself in dropping the nickname "Indians" in favor of "Cardinal").

If a school has a relationship with a certain tribe and they mutually agree that the name is acceptable, again let them decide. But to force schools to do what you want them to do and then go and break this rule yourself (as the NCAA is doing) AND then on top of that, still profit from it, this is ridiculous to say the least.

A final footnote to this article.

One school (the University of Iowa) has even gone a step further in this. They have now decided that they themselves will also police the ranks and will no longer schedule a school to any athletic event that still carries a Native American name and its most recent victim was the University of North Dakota.

Even though again UND is in the process of dropping the

“Sioux” nickname, this is still not enough for the Iowa Hawkeye higher-ups. So, a potential track meet between the schools was recently cancelled.

Yet another “irony” is that Iowa plays in the same conference (the wealthy Big 10) as Illinois(Illini) and they meet in every NCAA sanctioned sport, every year.

FYI Iowa “enlightened” brass: the term “Hawkeye” originally appeared in the novel, “The Last of the Mohicans” written by James Fenimore Cooper. In the book, the character named Natty Bumppo is given the word “Hawkeye” as a nickname from the Delaware Indians.

Maybe the university should consider beefing up its own literature and history departments. Talk about hypocrites!!!

Fortunately, I graduated from a university where this was not an issue.

Our mascot was a feisty chicken bred for cock-fighting to entertain soldiers during the American Revolutionary War.

OOPPS, maybe I spoke to soon. Let’s hope the NCAA and PETA don’t read this.....shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh