

# 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup>.

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.