

Obama's Spiking the Football Over 7.8% Unemployment?

☒ Though I haven't been a football fan for a couple of decades now, I certainly was one when I was younger. Growing up in a suburb of Denver, Colorado, Bronco-Mania was always a colorful, animated spectacle each Fall. My father was (and still is) a big fan of our home team. I never was, however. Back in the old days, I liked Joe Montana and the San Francisco 49ers.

So, when the Broncos and the 49ers faced off at Super Bowl XXIV back in 1990, it was a big event at our house. The media had really been hyping the *John Elway vs Joe Montana* angle. A lot of people were expecting a competitive game.

Well, that didn't exactly happen. The 49ers absolutely demolished the Broncos. By the third quarter of the game, the score was 41-3. Needless to say, my father was not happy. On the other hand, I sure was... and I was admittedly rubbing the mismatch in a little too much. When John Elway eventually dove into the end-zone and gave the Broncos their first and final touchdown of the game, I erupted into sarcastic clapping. That pretty much set my father over the edge. With the veins in his forehead protruding, he delivered a rabid tongue-lashing that I'll never forget, and he nearly kicked me out of the room.

My father's reaction was understandable. He had an emotional investment in the game, and his team was setting a new NFL record by taking the worst beating of any team in Super Bowl history. On the field, none of the Broncos were celebrating Elway's touchdown. Nobody spiked the football. There were no end-zone dances. The extra seven points meant nothing, other than perhaps a slightly less embarrassing entry in the sports almanacs. They were still getting creamed... badly, and didn't have a prayer of winning. In fact, the 49ers even managed to

tack on another 14 points by the final whistle.

Flash-forward to Friday of this week when it was reported that the national unemployment rate has dropped to 7.8%. President Obama proudly stood before cheering supporters and announced the news in a way that suggested he had just scored a major achievement, perhaps even comparable to Joe Montana's MVP trophy which was won at the Super Bowl that year. With his chin held high, Obama declared that our nation is heading forward, and that we can't turn back now.

I suppose it's good to see at least one person feeling good about the economic news, because it's hard to fathom how the rest of the country could look at that number as anything more meaningful and hopeful than Elway's third quarter touchdown.

In a reality-based world, the only political advantage that number should give President Obama is the extra money the Romney campaign will now have to put into re-dubbing campaign commercials that pointed out how long the unemployment rate has been over 8%. But in the world of Obama, it's celebration time for a job well done! A testament to the *success* of his economic policies!

Ridiculous.

Even if the number is legit (and some well-respected people in the business world, including Jack Welch, are skeptical), this *achievement* needs to be placed in the proper context...

On paper, we're merely back to the same number that Barack Obama started his presidency at, during the height of the *Great Recession*. After being told by the president in early 2009 that the unemployment rate would never exceed 8% thanks to his \$800 billion stimulus program, we ended up staying ABOVE that rate for essentially his entire presidency. According to the president's 2009 estimates, his leadership was supposed to have had Americans enjoying a 5.6% unemployment rate right now.

But it's much, much worse than how things appear on paper. Over the past year, the drops we've been seeing to the unemployment rate haven't been due to a hiring surge. On the contrary... They've been primarily due to a large number of Americans leaving the workforce. In other words, these people have either given up looking for work all together, or have only been able to find part-time work. In both cases, they are no longer figured into the unemployment calculation. The result has been the lowest workforce participation rate in fifty years, and an unemployment rate that doesn't reflect how truly horrific the jobs situation in this country still is.

Yet predictably, many Democrats are already beginning to salivate over the idea that 7.8% unemployment is a good sign for Obama's re-election bid, regardless of what the rest of the story is. After all, the assumption is that most Americans are too lazy to scrutinize the number for its true meaning. Unfortunately, that's probably a pretty decent assumption.

Paul Ryan described the situation well on Friday when he said, "Today is a sad indictment of the diminished expectations under President Obama."

That's a recurring theme when it comes to measuring Barack Obama's record as our president. As I've written in previous columns, the bar for success has never been set as low for a president as it has been for President Obama.

Even more charitable is the notion that things will somehow get better in this country if we just give him more time to continue with his failed policies. It's a nice thought, but the Broncos didn't lose the Super Bowl because they weren't given sufficient playing time. They lost because they were out of their league.