

PickSix

The Pop Culture Guide to Professional Football

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The 12 days of the Super Bowl

by Vince Darcangelo

And so it has come: the greatest of all American holidays. Throw away that Christmas Advent Calendar, and put away that garish Halloween costume. Nothing says America and holiday like Super Bowl Sunday.

It's that magical time of year, filled with cheer and goodwill. Alright, goodwill is a stretch, especially if your team is in the Big Game.

Anyway, the P-6 and our sentimental little soul are reminded of Super Bowl Sundays past this time of year (with a little help from the beloved NFL Films and those wonderful Super Bowl marathons that we could watch forever).

Therefore, with a trembling tear in our eye, we'd like to reflect on our 12 favorite memories from Super Bowls past.

12. As much as we hate the Ravens, watching Rod Woodson finally get that ring in SB XXXV.

11. Gutty Steve McNair almost forcing overtime in SB XXXIV, one of the best ever.

10. As much as we hate the Broncos, watching John Elway take a knee in SB XXXII.

9. As much as we hate the Patriots, watching them upset the St. Louis Rams in SB XXXVI, one of the best ever.

8. Watching Buffalo's Don Beebe steal a touchdown from all-world douchebag Leon Lett.

7. SBs IX and X (although our only memories of those are from NFL Films and our favorite book as a child, a collection of articles recapping the first 13 Super Bowls that featured Terry Bradshaw on the cover).

6. Watching the Giants spoil the Patriots' perfect season. Oh wait, that should be in future tense.

5. Bill Cowher's gutsy, though ultimately futile, surprise onside kick in SB XXX, which turned the game from a grudge match into an instant classic and had the P-6 jumping and screaming like a damn fool.

4. SB XIV (the first time we experienced fear during a Super Bowl as the Steelers trailed in the fourth quarter).

3. SB XIII (the first Super Bowl we remember).

2. SB XXX (even if we didn't win it all, we still cherish the ride, and the P-6 still gets goosebumps watching the NFL Films recap).

1. SB XL. Come on. What did you think would be at the top of the list?

Anyway, enjoy the Big Game, and may you make even more memories that will last a lifetime this Super Bowl Sunday.

Cover 2 Cover

For Christmas this year, my girlfriend's parents gave me a treasure trove a century in the making, ***The Best American Sports Writing of the Century***. Avid readers should be familiar with the Best American series, an annual anthology (holy alliteration!) of the year's finest writing. These come out in numerous editions, such as Best American Short Stories, Best American Magazine Writing and Best American Non-required Reading. And of course there's the year's best sports writing.

(Each December the P-6's crew congregates at our local bookstore and, between us, snags nearly one of each so that we not only enjoy our own edition but our friends' selections as well.)

The Best American Sports Writing of the Century of course qualifies as a meta-anthology, mingling sports features from as late as 1997 with those as early as 1921. This wonderful tome (a massive 760 pages in length, and hell no we haven't worked all the way through it yet!) was edited by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Halberstam, who made his name covering the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War and who died last year in a car accident.

The book features the biggest names in sports writing (Dick Schaap, Frank Deford, Mike Lupica), the more extreme contributors to the genre (Hunter S. Thompson, Jon Krakauer, Gay Talese, George Plimpton) and mainstream literati crossing over into sports journalism (Tom Wolfe, John Updike, Norman Mailer).

It also features some of the most compelling stories, such as J.R. Moehringer's "Resurrecting the Champ," which last year was made into an excellent feature film starring Samuel L. Jackson.

Thus far our only complaint with the anthology is a glaring omission, Elizabeth Gilbert's "Lucky Jim," which appeared in Best American's 2003 edition and documents the tragic and triumphant life of Jim Maclaren, a world-class athlete *prior* to becoming a world-class disabled athlete following a bizarre series of events. (We highly recommend looking up "Lucky Jim" online, purchasing an old copy of the 2003 *Best American Sports Writing* book, or borrowing it from the P-6. This is an amazing piece of writing.)

But aside from this misstep, *The Best American Sports Writing of the Century* is a must-have for any fan of epic anthologies filled with great writing. Start reading this at the beginning of the Dark Time and before you've flipped that final page it will be time for

training camp!

Bonus Cover 2 Cover

Hey, it's the Super Bowl, so we've tossed in another Cover 2 Cover because, here at the P-6, we dig ya. With that, we refer you to our review of Eric Weiner's <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/jan/25/booking-your-bliss/>>**The Geography of Bliss**, which ran in the Jan. 25 edition of the Rocky Mountain News.

What does this have to do with sports? Nothing. But this is an amazing, amazing book, one that we consider to be required reading.

Cover 3

What the heck, we're on a roll. Speaking of required reading, we just finished devouring Marisha Pessl's highly ambitious debut novel **Special Topics in Calamity Physics**. One of the greatest book's we've ever read. We can't recommend this one highly enough.

Again, not sports-related, but a great read. Check it out.

Hot Reads

Poor T.O.: Or should we say T.Owes the Eagles a shitload of money!

East Coast bias: Steelers fans lament. Next year's schedule includes New England, Indianapolis, San Diego, Jacksonville, Dallas, the Giants, Washington and the Tennessee Titans – half of our schedule consists of 2007 playoff participants (including both Super Bowl teams). Steelers fans rejoice . . . a little. All of the Steelers games next season are in the eastern time zone, meaning no cross-country flights.

P-6 trivia: This Sunday, Bill Belichick becomes the eighth coach to serve as head coach in four Super Bowls. Name the others.

P-6 answers: Alright, here you go. Chuck Noll (Pittsburgh), Tom Landry (Dallas), Don Shula (Baltimore, Miami), Joe Gibbs (Washington), Bud Grant (Minnesota), Dan Reeves (Denver, Atlanta) and Marv Levy (Buffalo)

Of note: Three of those coaches – Grant, Reeves and Levy – never won a Super Bowl. All three are 0-4, for a combined 0-12 mark. Only Noll is undefeated at 4-0.

Non-story of the week: Brady's ankle. Get over it. It's nothing.

Winter of discontent: Every year, the world gets a little darker after the Super Bowl, as the realization that there will be no more meaningful football until September. This is a period that Gary Zeidner, in his Pigskin Zen column, has referred to as the Dark Time.

The P-6 would like to say that the Dark Time will be a little bit darker this year, for not only will there be no football. There will be no Pigskin Zen to make us laugh our asses

off every week.

Douchebag of the Week: Ah, this one hurts, but it's true: Ben Roethlisberger. Big Ben has earned two reputations in his four-year career. One as a primetime quarterback. Another as a big-time whiner. His latest ridiculous rant targeted Super Bowl MVP Hines Ward when Ben said the team needed some taller wide receivers.

Granted, a tall receiver wouldn't hurt, especially in the Red Zone (Pittsburgh receivers aren't known for their dunking abilities), but to publicly call out the P-6's favorite player? Not cool. Don't forget, Big Ben, it was Hines that bailed you out of a *miserable* performance in Super Bowl XL.

We've long known that we would love to have a beer with Hines Ward. We're pretty sure we'd pass on having one with Ben. Don't worry, though, Big B. We'll still be cheering you on next fall.

Six Pack

N.Y. Giants vs. New England

As we said before, we really hope we're wrong on this one.

P-6 picks: New England

Contact Vince Darcangelo [here](#)

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