

# Super Bowl XLIX

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Richard C. Crepeau

*University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu*

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE  
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It is a 153 page document made public by the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* that begins with these awkward sentences:

"The day of the Super Bowl game (the "Game" or the "Super Bowl") is America's unofficial holiday, a day when the attention of an entire nation is focused on the Game in one region between the championship teams of the American and the National Football Conferences. The most highly anticipated annual sports event in North American sports is also a time for festive celebration and civic pride."

This is taken from an NFL document titled "Super Bowl LIII-Host City Bid Specifications & Requirements." This interesting piece of extend overblown prose and arrogance lays out for any aspiring city what will be required of it and its taxpayers if they expect to win the bid to host "America's unofficial holiday." It is stunning in its attention to the most trivial of details, not to mention what it seeks to extort from willing public officials who have a simplistic worldview worthy of George Babbitt. The big difference is that Sinclair Lewis was a much better writer than the copywriting team at the National Football League.

For the past twenty years in this column I have attempted to record the most insipid and banal displays of consumption that populate the American landscape during the Super Bowl celebration. This year I will not record the many excesses available for review, but rather I want to examine this instruction manual for aspiring Super Bowl hosts. The document tells us much about the NFL and about those who think it is important enough to drive their communities into debt in order to host this mid-winter blowout.

"The NFL Events Department is the lead entity responsible for the planning, management and execution of the Super Bowl, working closely with many other NFL departments, including Communications, Broadcasting, Football Operations, Finance, Security, Legal, Marketing & Sales, and Consumer Products." The NFL will be in control of this event in all its multitudinous dimensions. All commercial operations will be owned or controlled by the NFL including rights and licensing.

All aspects of Stadium operations are handled by the NFL including parking, concessions, ATM machines, merchandise, credit cards, programs, ticketing, staffing and many more. The ATM's must take only the debit and credit cards that are approved by the NFL. The NFL takes 100% of ticket revenue and handles all ticket distribution and allocation. Tales of NFL Commissioners and team owners scalping tickets are not mentioned. This year the mayor of Glendale, who was a critic of the bid and the concessions required of the city, will not be allocated a complementary ticket to the game.

The NFL requires a tax exemption from state, county, city, and any other local taxes. Any NFL transactions that are not tax exempt must be paid by the Host Committee. The host city must create a Clean Zone, essentially a Super Bowl DMZ around the stadium, the NFL Experience, and the headquarters hotels used by the NFL. The police for this operation will be supplied by the city at city cost. And of course the police will be at the command of the NFL. Also among their duties will be to work on the anti-counterfeiting unit whose major concern is suppressing counterfeit official NFL merchandise.

Three golf courses are to be supplied for the NFL Foundation Golf Classic, and two bowling alleys are to be provided for the NFL Celebrity Bowling Classic. If the game is held in a winter climate the NFL reserves the right to use the golf courses at any other times of the year. If there is cost involved in any of this the Host will pay the bill.

All the rooms in at least one hotel will be taken over by the NFL, and all meeting and conference space provided without cost. All hotels are required to offer room rebates to the league.

In the "Transportation" section of the document, as well as in many other sections, there is one recurring phrase, "at no cost to the NFL" or some variation therefore. This seems to be the "Super Bowl Mantra" of the NFL. Similarly the phrase "exclusive use" and variations on it are found across the length of the document. The needs for limos, shuttle buses, and school buses as well as secure and exclusive parking facilities are listed for these and other NFL vehicles.

The Host City "will be responsible for providing" practice facilities for the participating teams equivalent to what is normal for the NFL team located at the host site. There are detailed specifications for these facilities down to water, ice, laundry, and catering. This section rambles on for several pages covering all imaginable items, and some that exceed the limits of the imagination.

This is the tip of the iceberg. The requirements and lists of needs spread over the 153 pages reveal an insatiable appetite for freebies for the National Football League, a nine billion dollar business masquerading as a sport.

It does seem a bit excessive even by NFL and Super Bowl standards, but then isn't this the way the free market of supply and demand works? If you have limited supply and unlimited demand, one Super Bowl and multiple potential host cities, then you grab all that the traffic will bear. Free markets seem to work best for monopolies and cartels.

This is the position the NFL finds itself in, and one that it is more than willing to exploit at a cost to taxpayers everywhere, even those taxpayers who couldn't care less about professional football.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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