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Super Bowl XXIX

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
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At UCF Super Bowl XXIX will become a trivia question as the first UCF player ever to appear in the big game, Sean Jefferson, will play for the San Diego Chargers.

In case you haven't heard, this is Super Bowl weekend, the mid-winter festival of America's Imperial Age, the sporting event that identifies itself with Roman Numerals. And once again this year the game itself promises to be an anti-climax. If all goes as expected the game should be of no interest by the end of the first half as the Forty-Niners run over the San Diego Chargers in the mismatch of the century.

This is the biggest point spread in the history of the game, reaching as high as 21 during the past week. San Francisco ran all over San Diego just a little over a month ago in a game which started like the SF-Dallas game of two weeks ago. The Niners scored a quick 21 points and never looked back as they beat the Chargers with ease. As we all know an AFC team hasn't won a Super Bowl in a decade. And of even more significance Kathy Lee Gifford is singing the National Anthem. Cover the dog's ears and protect all the glass. Risk nothing. Hit the mute button now.

Presumably the only thing that gives this Super Bowl any distinction at all is the fact that Super Bowl XXIX will be remembered as the first Super Bowl that took place during the O.J. trial. If ABC is really enterprising, the trial will be carried live during the pregame show and the entire half-time will come from the LA court room. Certainly Judge Ito would agree to a rare Sunday court session so that he and the Juice can be a part of Super Bowl XXIX.

It is also the first Super Bowl in recent memory at which the Denver Broncos or Buffalo Bills will not be able to embarrass themselves, although Dieon Sanders will.

And so we anxiously await one of the most significant rituals in American society, Super Bowl Sunday. This orgy of conspicuous consumption is now nearly three decades or almost XXX years old, and each year it seems to be more obscene in its excessive display of pecuniary emulation.

The great moments have been many on Super Sunday with its long running association with the sacred and profane in American culture. The Super Bowl has been adopted by American middle

class males, and assorted other folks, as a mid-winter ritual of pleasure. The bonding of middle level executive types has never had a more perfect setting. Nearly all the tickets go to NFL executives, Sponsor executives, high government officials, and their clients and sycophants. Few ordinary fans attend. The game in fact is no longer of any real significance, except as a means to sell commercial television time at obscene rates. This year a thirty second spot will cost \$1M.

The Commissioner's party started by Pete Rozelle, the Caesar Augustus of the American Empire, has become one of the biggest and most opulent of events. It quickly outgrew the capacity of any mere hotel ballroom, and this has led to some magnificent venues for the event. Before Super Bowl VII in L.A. the party was held aboard the Queen Mary. Before Super Bowl VIII in Houston, the party was held on the floor of the Astrodome, where a giant barbecue, with pigs roasting on spits, dotted the floor of the facility. Miami in years past hosted the Commissioner's parties at Hialeah Racetrack and Miami Airport's International Terminal where 600 musicians from 14 Caribbean nations entertained.

Corporate parties provide another level of conspicuous waste. The Ford Motor Company has consistently used the Super Bowl as an incentive for its salespeople, spending \$1M to bring in dealers to Super Bowl XIX, where Gladys Knight and Neal Sedaka entertained. Nissan spent \$2M at Super Bowl XVIII in Tampa on a five-day Caribbean cruise. In San Diego for Super Bowl XXII 2000 limmos were in use, many headed for the party that featured Frank and Lisa in concert.

Unfortunately the television coverage of this sort of thing has been in decline in recent years. We really do have a right to see this, as it represents our tax dollars at work, with corporations and business executives using these spending binges as a tax write-off while they denounce welfare cheats and praise Newt's Contract With America over subsidized cocktails.

And if there is any further doubt that this event is of the upmost significance, contemplate this. The Super Bowl is shown in over 100 countries across the world and nine out of ten of the most watched television shows of all time were Super Bowls. It is estimated that in excess of \$250B will be waged on the Super Bowl both legally and illegally, worldwide.

It truly is our National Exaggeration.

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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