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Not Exactly Super in Several Ways

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In more ways than one could ever have hoped for, this was a Super Bowl to remember and one the NFL might like to forget.

The game itself was mildly interesting until the fourth quarter, which as Super Bowls go is a major plus. Baltimore managed to score on offense, defense and special teams, and as promised their defense dominated. The Giants managed only one touchdown and that on a kickoff return, which was quickly negated as the Ravens made it back-to-back kickoff returns.

Always the commercials are a major focal point of the Super Bowl. These too were fairly good with Bud Light and Pepsi leading the way, although my personal favorites were the car falling from the tree and the running of the squirrels. As would be expected American advertisers did manage to hit high on the bad taste meter by turning the concept of organ donation into a jeans commercial. The ability to take a worthy concept and corrupt and trivialize it is a special talent of the American advertising community.

The really good material for Super Bowl XXXV came from three sources: Art Modell, Trent Dilfer, and Ray Lewis.

Condemned by NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue two years ago for walking out on Cleveland and taking his team to Baltimore, Art Modell as the winning owner took on an extra glow. In Cleveland, where he is roundly denounced as a traitor, the bitterness over this win must have been palpable. Modell rubbed it in when he refused to respond to a question inviting him to thank the Cleveland and Baltimore fans for their support over the years. Instead he thanked his family. Nice touch, Art.

Trent Dilfer's return to Tampa Bay to win a Super Bowl was indeed sweet. Run out of town by the sun-crazed Buc fans, Dilfer became the fourth ex-Buc quarterback to lead his new team to a Super Bowl, the third to win a Super Bowl, and the fifth to have great success after departing Tampa. Both Doug Williams and Steve Young were Super Bowl MVPs.

I once thought the Curse of Doug Williams had been cast off by Tony Dungy as he took the Bucs to the playoffs two years

running, but apparently not. In a year or two you should look for Shawn King to lead a team like the Seahawks to a Super Bowl. This after King is replaced by Doug Flutie. The opposing coach in that game could be new Viking coach Tony Dungy.

Clearly the high point for the NFL Public Relations Mavens is the choice of Ray Lewis as MVP of this year's Super Bowl. Only a year ago Lewis was tabbed by Atlanta police as MVP of the post-game activities at a murder scene. The charges against Lewis were dropped but he did plead guilty to obstructing justice. In addition Lewis has failed to show any remorse over the murders and has compared himself favorably to Jesus Christ who, like Lewis, was harassed by his enemies. The only mystery here is which one is the role model?

Two questions remain. As MVP will we see Lewis giving the familiar, dare we call it traditional, salute while leaving the field and shouting "I'm going to Disney World?" No, the Disney image can not have it. So how about next year at the Super Bowl? Ray Lewis could be featured in one of those United Way spots showing him as a volunteer for a "victim support group." This would be followed by an Art Modell serving as a volunteer at the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce displaying his community values.

You really do have to appreciate a league that can present such a cast of characters as the centerpiece on Super Sunday, and I haven't even mentioned Christian Peter, Rae Carruth and Mark Chamura. It may well be that the National Football League is the new National Pastime as it so nicely reflects so many of our social ills. The only thing missing was a high profile arrest of one of the Athletes-Looking-for-Action during this year's postgame activities.

Finally a word about the telecast. Once again new television technology was on display. E-vision offered some excellent views of the action, although at times it could leave the "weak of stomach" a bit queasy.

As with so much sports programming these days the telecast was overloaded with promotions for other CBS programming and at times this got in the way of game coverage, especially replays. The high point however came with the introductions of the players. Ray Lewis' modest entrance to the field was topped only when CBS technology managed to

send the word "motherfucker" into the living homes of 800 million people across the world. "America the Beautiful" followed.

You gotta love this Game!

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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