

# Super Bowl XLIII

1-29-2009

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## Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "Super Bowl XLIII" (2009). *On Sport and Society*. 806.  
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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
Super Bowl XLIII  
JANUARY 29, 2009

It is time once again to enter the days of the Roman Numerals when excess becomes the norm, hyperbole is accepted as standard English, and the rich demonstrate in no uncertain terms that they are, and you are not. It is also the time when the middle class, those 85% of Americans who identify themselves as such, do their best to wallow in excess.

The Super Bowl is Sunday and there is speculation that this one may not measure up to the standards of decadence and waste that have been cultivated over the years by the National Football League and those who worship at their shrines. The reason for concern is the reeling economy. Americans are spending less, because they have less, and some think this will slow the madness in Tampa for Super Bowl XLIII.

It is difficult to anticipate how the current economy might mute the holiday celebrations, but a cursory survey of the landscape ten days into the two week run up to Super Bowl XLIII offers only minor signs of a slowdown. Two of the more notable parties have been cancelled with the most prominent being The Playboy Party. With the Playboy Empire already under some duress, the economic downturn no doubt put severe stress on their bottom line (no pun intended). The other cancellation of note, although certainly not in the same league as the Bunny Hutch, is the Sports Illustrated party, but then we know that print media is another sector where the economic problems are not new.

It seems that the number of private jets and corporate jets coming to the Bay area for the festivities is down. Last year Jets.com booked 55 jet packages for Phoenix, while as of early this week they had only 13 bookings. Over 500 corporate jets landed at Super Bowl XLII. It is predicted that this number will not be reached, although it is not clear if this is a function of corporate belt-tightening or a question of image maintenance prompted by recent criticism of corporate executive excesses and the GM executive fly-in to D.C. With or without corporate jets, it still holds, as Norman Vincent Peale once said, "If Jesus were alive today, he would be at the Super Bowl."

It may be that excess is on the wane in Tampa Bay for this edition of our National Excess Holiday, although a quick survey of web sites, press reports, and ads all indicate plenty of

opportunity will be made available for the practitioners of "conspicuous consumption" and "conspicuous waste." In fact there is every reason to believe that Super Bowl XLIII will add to the call to rename Super Sunday as "Thorstein Veblen Day."

Starting with television, the envelope is being pushed quite hard as the \$3M commercial arrives on you TV screen. For the first time a 30-second spot will cost \$3M. Those who are paying at this rate, and there is no shortage of advertisers, insist that this is a bargain given the numbers of people in the prime demographic they will reach and the boost in product sales that will result. Not only have rates increased, but the production cost of the commercials themselves continues to rise, as does the sophistication of the technology and resulting product.

"Dreamworks" is running a 60-second spot at \$6M in 3-D promoting its new film "Monsters v. Aliens." The 3-D glasses are being distributed by Pepsi, another mega-player, at their store displays. Cost of production for the 3-D ad is not known, but the average cost of standard 30-second commercials is estimated at \$5M.

Among the big ticket events are the Gridiron Greats Dinner of Champions for \$1,000 each, the Inside the Huddle Party at Shula's Steak House for \$7000 with one Super Bowl Ticket included, and the Giving Back Fund's Big Game VIP Event hosted at a private residence by Ashton Kutcher at \$1,000 a pop. All of these will have an overload of sports figures and celebrities in attendance.

The invitation only events include the Maxim Party which should more than fill the gap left by the Playboy Party, the ESPN the Magazine's NEXT VIP Gala, and of course the granddaddy of them all, The Commissioner's Party. Appropriately, an agent will also offer a party. The Leigh Steinberg Party last year featured a massage cabana and an oxygen bar. Did one go to the massage cabana first? Or the oxygen bar? What exactly is the etiquette?

This year Mr. Steinberg will place an emphasis on the more serious side with video uplinks between the troops in Iraq and entertainment and sports figures in what is billed as the first annual (note the American optimism) Stars For Stripes Global Connection. There will be an announcement of the formation of The Sporting Green Alliance (SGA), the sporting world's first and only environmental activism organization, focused on "greening-up sports," endorsed by Florida Governor Charlie

Christ, eager advocate of off-shore drilling including along the Florida coast.

At the more mundane, although not necessarily less expensive, level, the Tampa Bay area will have an ample supply of hookers because as a former prostitute once said, "Pimps see the Super Bowl as a moneymaking opportunity sent by God." Supply and demand will also conveniently meet through Craigslist Erotic Services. My how the internet has changed human relationships!

Tampa, or at least some in Tampa, claims that the city is the capital of the lap dance. The Mons Venus Strip Club expects to repeat the land office business it enjoyed in 2001 when Tampa hosted Super Bowl XXXV. Mons veteran Bernie Notte, who will come out of retirement during the Super Bowl festivities, earned \$6,000 in four days and danced so much her feet bled. Men were paying \$100 for a \$20 lap dance as it seemed to be raining money.

The Italian Club will offer four nights of themed parties at a cost of \$50 to \$200 each. The opener on Thursday "The Art of Sexy VIP Party" is a Red Carpet affair with suggested attire, "Simple Sexy." The Sunday night affair is "I Am Legend Retired Players VIP Party, The Official After Game Old School Jam." Suggested attire is "Just Bring it." This party will be spread over three floors, have six DJs, five bars, NFL Players, and Live Entertainment. And this is but one of many such parties across the Bay Area.

Indications are that the number of parties being offered and the levels of expenditure involved are not any different than what is normal for the Super Bowl. It is also likely that the number of Super Bowl parties across the country will match those of the past, be they formal or informal gatherings.

How big a factor the economic downturn is will only be known when all the numbers are crunched over the next few weeks. . . When it is all over the figures of Super Bowl XXXV in Tampa when Americans consumed 8M pounds of guacamole, 14,500 tons of chips, and registered a 20% increase in antacid sales, will likely be surpassed. After all, records are meant to be broken.

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