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Super Bowl LIII

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE - SUPER BOWL LIII
FEBRUARY 2, 2019

The Super Bowl LIII (that is 53 for non-Romans) is almost here as we come to the end of Super Bowl Week. The amount of nonsense, madness, consumption, and hot events is now approaching infinity. As a public service to the nation, I have worked my way through the websites of media and the NFL, so you would not have to do so, searching for the most insignificant materials available that illuminate the essence of the Super Bowl.

This has little of nothing to do with football or the game to be played on Sunday. One of the sources for this material is always the host city newspaper. Let me pay tribute to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, which has expended endless amounts of newsprint and produced the best coverage of this sort that I have seen in all the years of writing about Super Bowl Madness.

If you know anything about Atlanta and the southeast region of the United States, you know that one of the most revered institutions is Waffle House. For those unacquainted with this national treasure, it specializes in breakfast, which it serves all day and night. Poetry has been written about it. So, it certainly deserves attention, and it got it. Celebrities were asked what they order when they go to Waffle House. This is certainly a basic piece of information I have long had a need to know.

Answers came from players, rappers, and international and local celebrities. Only one or two did not answer, or did not know about Waffle House. The enthusiasm of those responding was palpable and some went into great detail explaining how they like their eggs, bacon, or waffles cooked. Some said what they ordered depended on what their mood was at the moment. The most popular choice was The All Star Special featuring grits, eggs with cheese, bacon, and waffle. Texas Melt was a close second. I am not making this up.

Certainly, this information is much more important than anything the Commissioner of the NFL had to say at his press conference, which as usual was an exercise in talking without saying.

Two of the constant features of the Super Bowl over the years are sex and gambling, which are not necessarily related. The Atlanta strip clubs promise non-stop entertainment. Strippers have been recruited from all across the country to fill the needs of the clubs and "the patrons" as they are known at the Masters. For the strippers, Super Bowl is a bonanza week in terms of tips. Club owners insist that there is no connection between their clubs and prostitution. No collusion.

Gambling experts estimate that six billion dollars, slightly more than the price of a fence or wall, will be bet on the game and all the action surrounding it. Ten percent of Americans will place a bet on the game. There are the usual bets with or without the point spread and the over/under bet. But, there are a stadium full of other bets in a category called prop bets.

Some examples include betting on which team will score first, fumble first, or win the coin toss. You can bet on which will be the higher number, James Harden's point total for the Houston Rockets on February 2 or the total of points scored in Sunday's game. You can bet over/under on length of the singing of the National Anthem. One large Sports Book in Las Vegas is offering over 400 prop bets and a thousand different ways to bet. The only limit on prop bets is imposed by the human imagination.

The big money is rolling in on the Rams as bets of \$1 million, \$1.5 million, \$2 million, and \$300,000, have been taken in Las Vegas in last few days. Earlier in the week million dollar plus bets had come in on New England. At least one of the big bets on the Rams came from someone known in Vegas as "Bettor X" who has cashed in big on several major events over the past year, including the World Series and Super Bowl LII.

One of the bigger gambles at the Super Bowl can be buying tickets. ESPN's Outside the Lines documented the story of a group of friends who bought tickets to the Super Bowl last year, made the payment, reserved hotel rooms, bought airline tickets, only to arrive at the Super Bowl to be told that the vendor did not have any tickets for them. The four men were out about \$25,000.

A safer bet on tickets is to purchase a package from the NFL, which includes a ticket and a pregame party. Among seats still available yesterday, the lowest price was over \$2,000 for a seat

near the top of the stadium on a corner and over \$9000 for seats near midfield. Of course, these included the pregame party.

The good news on the game is that the Mercedes-Benz Stadium will keep their concession prices low, meaning two-dollar hot dogs and five-dollar beers. This is normal pricing for the "Fan First Menu Pricing" at the Stadium. On hand for the game, there will be 29 kegs of beer, 75,000 bottles of water, and 55,000 hot dogs. To keep lines short, there are 680 points of sale.

Most Americans will not be in the Stadium or even in Atlanta for the big party. Super Bowl parties, as is always the case, will be held all across the land and untold amounts of hot dogs, hamburgers, brats, chips, and dip will be consumed. These will be washed down with beer, soft drinks, straight shots, mixed drinks, and, perhaps, even water.

One other important warning for those in Atlanta. If you are a fan of Pizza Hut and hope to go to a Hut for a meal, you are out of luck. Instead, look for Pizza Hut Hut. Yes, the signs on the buildings have been changed.

As always for football games, Television will offer the best seat available. This year the game will be presented by CBS, and you will hear that familiar voice intoning, "The NFL on CBS." As always, the technical end of the telecast will feature more of everything. CBS will use 115 cameras, up slightly from the 11 that were used at the first Super Bowl. In fact, you could create a graph of the number of cameras used, and it would look nearly identical to one showing ratings numbers or the cost of commercials. CBS will also roll out all sorts of new technical equipment to dazzle the TV audience.

The main feature of the day, of course, is the commercials. Thirty second spots cost \$5 million dollars, and CBS will make \$500 million on game day. All this money is spent because most viewers are intensely interested in the commercials as cinema, not as a vehicle for sales; although, they can be a great sales booster. Many commercials can be seen in advance on your electronic device of choice, and, during and after the game, you can use that electronic device to vote on your favorite or least favorite commercial of the day.

This romp through Super World could go on and on, but, no doubt, it has already tested your patience, not to mention mine. I

trust I have not included anything of importance, while still conveying the sense of distorted proportion.

To paraphrase Uncle Joe Stalin, it is enough to make us all, "dizzy with excess."

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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