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## Super Bowl Spoilsport

by Rich Maloof

## Confessions of a Know-Nothing

What's not to love about Super Bowl Sunday? For men especially it's an official holiday, a day pass to stack cold cuts up to the rafters, fill the recycle bin with empties and watch TV for longer than it takes to play 18 holes of golf. Super Bowl Sunday is National Men's Day.

The only thing I don't get about it is the football part. This will earn me zero respect, but the truth is that team sports are just not my cup of tea. The mere mention of tea probably makes me suspect. I am mystified by my friends' ability to recall college draft picks from 1989 and quite honestly I never understood the touchback. I only get invited to games as a seat-filler, a last call when the client punks out or it's raining too hard.

But what can't be beat, in my book, is hanging out with a pack of buddies, slapping one another on the back and screaming at a 46-inch flat screen. We're wolves, we're gluttons, we're gladiators. We would just as soon watch some poor Roman bastard being eaten by lions, if it were on basic cable. We are warriors before battle, swigging goblets of swill and gnawing the meat off a boar's leg. Do not be fooled by our lite beers and chicken fingers with honey mustard.

For men, team sports are the ultimate social salve. Complete strangers can jaw at length about stats and odds and team records. It's how we make conversation without communicating, a way to connect without having to reveal anything about ourselves. Watching a game, we scold coaches and bark commands at the players with a giant slice of pizza in our mouth. They are athletes at the peak of their abilities; we are spectators, permanently benched, demanding more than we can give. Our victories and defeats are our own. For that we need companionship, not discussion.

And so I, a fan of the gathering but not the game, have had to fake my way into the tailgates and Super Bowl parties. Since I'd like to believe I'm not alone in this, I'm sharing a short list of survival tips culled over the years. Because let me tell you, if you don't know the game they will smell it on you. Smell it on you like hounds on bacon.

**DO**

- Any time an official throws a yellow flag, it's good to roll your eyes or shake your head.
- At any point, say, "They're off their game" (do not specify who "they" are).
- You must know more than the women in the room. I know this is about as politically incorrect as Roseanne Barr's version of the national anthem, but it's true. The women will disrespect you even more than the men.
- Yell when everybody else does (*Unreal!* or *C'mon!*) but don't shout anything committal (*Throw the ball!* or *This is a good time for a sandwich!*)—remember, you don't know what's going on.
- Familiarize yourself with the vernacular: Cornerback, blitz, face mask, safety ... Try these out first on your mom or small children and see how it goes.

**DON'T**

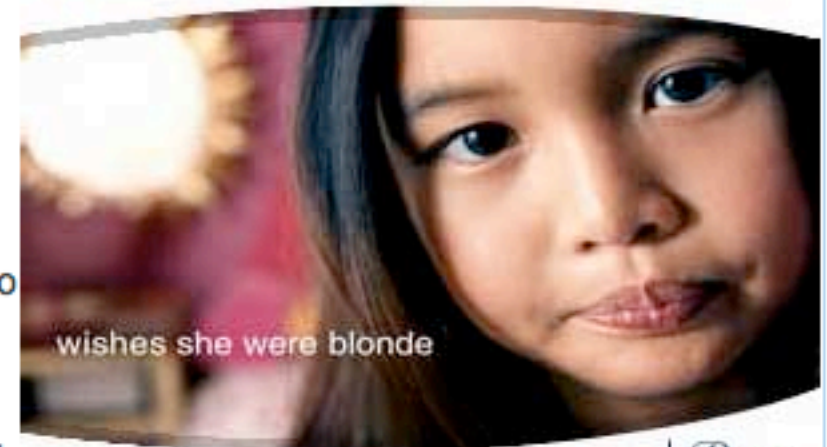
- Don't say, "The cup is theirs" or "Better get fitted for that green jacket!" It turns out those are for other games.
- Don't try to pronounce names you've spotted on a jersey. This year, Roethlisberger, Tatupu, Kacyvenski and von Oelhoffen represent significant pitfalls.
- Don't venture a guess at team nicknames, either. This is a common and fatal error. The Seahawks are the Hawks but the Steelers are not the Steels.
- Don't talk to anyone who has painted their face. They're drunk and they figure you're a fairy.

Warriors, enjoy the game.

*Rich Maloof lives in Brooklyn, NY, where no one asks him to join pick-up games. He has written for MSN Health & Fitness, CNN, "For Dummies," Yahoo! and Billboard, and has published several instructional books*

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