

Bill Rea ? Super Bowl is done for another year

I am writing this week about my observations of the Super Bowl, with a couple of my memories being thrown in for reasonably good measure.

I usually try to have my weekly columns written Friday night, but I delayed things in anticipation of Sunday's festivities. In fact, this piece was started early Sunday evening, during the pre-game show. My wife was nagging me to come to dinner. The chicken wings were ready, as I wondered where she ever got that idea.

It was almost 40 years ago that I read a magazine interview with the late, great Howard Cosell. He lamented that there was too much hype applied to the Super Bowl. I spent a large part of Sunday agreeing with that assessment (and I even found a couple hours for a nap).

Cosell had a number of problems with the spectacle, including the fact they wait two weeks after deciding who's going to play in the game before actually playing it. I remember him pointing out the World Series gets under way the day after the they decide on the participants.

I was in university, reading this interview in my room in residence. I read it in the days leading up to Super Bowl XIII (that was in 1979), in which my beloved Pittsburgh Steelers eventually beat the Dallas Cowboys. But there were lots of reflections on the previous Super Bowl, in which the Cowboys creamed Denver. I remember watching that Dallas-Denver affair when I was in first year. There were about 20 of us in the TV lounge, most of us pulling for the Broncos. Good thing I didn't have any money riding on the game.

Cosell said the Broncos had been the most poorly coached team he had ever seen in there Super Bowl. In fact, he acknowledged most of the Super Bowls had, on the balance, been terrible games.

I was inclined to agree with him, at least at that point in history. Considering all the hype, and further considering what it takes for teams to get a berth in the match, one has every right to hope for something that will be entertaining.

Some of the games have lived up to such expectations. Alas, a lot have not.

I fortunately missed most of the pre-game show Sunday, and didn't feel even remotely deprived. Facts are facts. What was I going to get from all the pre-game hype, apart from learning that Atlanta was going to play New England? Many thanks folks, but I already knew who was in the game, and I had known that for a fortnight.

I knew the Patriots were going into the game as favourites, but I also knew there is always plenty of room for upsets. And since New England made sure the Steelers didn't get in the game, I will confess I was hoping for the Falcons. Thus I was smiling a lot as I watched the game. Despite what Cosell might have thought, a blow-out is not so bad when it's the underdog that pulls it off (this paragraph was written late in the third quarter, when a Falcons' blow-out was very probable). That didn't upset me too much.

Remember that a couple of paragraphs ago, I referred to my beloved Steelers. The Patriots kept them out of the big game (granted, New England deserved to win, and Lady Luck was not there when the guys from Pittsburgh needed her).

But as is so often the case, a game that looks like it's in the bag going into the final frame can still result in surprises, and that was certainly the case Sunday.

In the end, the team I was pulling for couldn't get to the trophy presentation ceremony. It was a little upsetting, but one has to give New England credit. There were down by 25 points at one stage, but they were able to get their act together and come back for the win. A team that can do that deserves to win. And by the same token, a team that blows a lead like that deserves to lose.

So things worked out for the best.

There were other parts of the event apart from the football game.

Beth pretended to be interested in the game, but I knew she really wants to see the Half-Time Show. Facts are facts ? Lady Gaga did not disappoint. I'll admit I was looking forward to her performance too.

And then there were the commercials, which I didn't think were that impressive, considering what the advertisers had to pay for their times in the festivities. Maybe I'm just too hard to please.

Like I stated above, there have been a lot of Super Bowls that were most forgettable, no matter which team ended up winning.

Sunday's offering was not in that class. It could have been, had the Patriots dominated things the way many expected them to. The prospect of a major upset kept many of us (my wive and i included) glued to our TVs and interested in the outcome. If only all sport seasons ended like that. And the chicken wings, which we bought about 24 hours before kick off and refrigerated, tasted pretty good too.

There are just some things that work out right in the end.

