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Thoughts on a disappointing Super Bowl

TAMPA, Fla. — What a crummy game. As a Redskins fan, I was personally disappointed that the Washington Redskins lost a terribly uncharacteristic showing, their worst game in three years. Take away a few plays — the blocked punt in the first quarter, the interception at the end of the first half (for the most questionable call I have seen since Richard M. Nixon’s “truck play”) — and the game would have had a completely different complexion.

Of course, as the ‘Skins well know, a superior team will make big plays like those happen. The Raiders were the superior team Sunday. They jumped to an early lead, preventing the Redskins from following the game plan that brought them to the Super Bowl and made them the league’s best team over the past three seasons. The season series between the two clubs is now tied at 1-1; the ‘Skins record is 16-3, the Raiders are 15-4. Bring on the rematch!

Landed in Tampa. 40s, rain, frozen oranges and grapefruit nesting on the trees. Depressing. Whatever happened to the Sunshine State? The temperature was in the low 50s in Washington and mid-30s up here. Fahrenheit. Then it didn’t seem so bad. Game day dawned warm and mostly sunny, though — temperature at kickoff was a balmy 68 degrees. The next day was even nicer. But I had to...

Never ever, take People Express for a jaunt into the end zone on the Friday night we decided to go out on the town along with all the other crazies. First stop was Comfort Inn’s “fun drinkers” frequented by players from both teams during the week before the game, but the two-hour long line to get in snaked around the back building so we decided to get wasted elsewhere.

We settled on the Airport Holiday Inn, where the Redskins were staying for the week. Loos of beer (at $1.75 per), overpriced souve-
nirs, and groupies hoping to meet (meat?) one or more of the players. I could have gotten two 50-cent-line tickets to the game, but would have had to do certain things I really didn’t want to in order to earn them.

Saturday night I went to “the only official Redskins pep rally.” It cost $10 to get in, but you got all the free beer you could drink. There were only three kegs set up for several thousand beer-drink-
ing Redskins fans. Someone really cleaned up on this one. I somehow managed to get my money’s worth of beer (just barely) — I even got the last glass before the Tampa Police closed the taps.

Afterward, I was accosted by two born-again’s who wouldn’t take no for an answer, and then my grandmother’s ancient Dodge wouldn’t start (it was a need to get an alternator). But it was fun singing “Hail to the Redskins” 963 times with a bunch of other drunks.

Tampa Stadium is crazy. Tiny bleacher seats, fans packed like I of my suitcases. Used to have regular chair-back seating, but changed to bleachers to increase stadium’s capacity to lure Super Bowl. From my seat halfway back in the endzone, depth perception at the other end of the field was poor.

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The halftime show, which was put on by the folks at Disneyworld, was spectacular. The most carefully choreographed and elaborate show I have ever seen at a football game, rivalling the big production numbers in the old Busby Berkely musicals. Nice pyrotechnics (I go for fire and smoke) but they almost got out of hand. A fire lit near one endzone nearly got out of control — the fans in that area had to be evacuated temporarily until the flames were extinguished. A rocket fired from the field failed to burst in the air and plunged, still lit, into the crowd.

No injuries were reported.

The officiating in the Super Bowl was horrendously inconsistent. The pass interference call on Marcus Allen’s fourth touchdown of the game, was a much less blatant foul than one that should have been called in the second quarter on what would have been a touchdown pass from Joe Theismann to Charlie Brown.

On Marcus Allen’s 74-yard jaunt into the end zone on the Friday night we decided to get wasted elsewhere, the referees missed both holding at the point where Allen diverted direction in the backfield and a clip further downfield on the last man. The call was obvious and correct.

Allen. You would think the league would get the best officials to call this game, if the one it were the best the league has to offer, I would have hated to see the worst.

Can you imagine Pete Rozelle having to hand the coveted ster-
ling silver Vince Lombardi Trophy over to teammate Al Davis? They make Biscuit Kuhn and George Steinbrenner look like drinking buddies. The Raider ow-
er’s lawsuit against the National Football League is still pending; the league has appealed a $50 million antitrust judgment levied against it for blocking the Raiders move from Oakland to Las Angeles. Who knows, they may wind up back in Oakland next year. Rumors of a Raider move to Shea Stadium have been described as “ludicrous.”

The Redskins will be the most improved team in the NFL next season. Will this game leave a sour taste in their throats? You bet it will. Three seasons ago, after the Philadelphia Eagles lost Super Bowl XV (to Oakland), the fans fell apart, their coach Dick Vermeil burned out and retired to Hollywood, and the team now inhabits the cellar of the NFC Eastern Division the New York Giants lie in the sub-

cellar.

Coach Joe Gibbs is a fantastic motivator — the team will want badly to avenge this most bitter of defeats. Quarter-

back Joe Theismann, fullback John Riggins, and placekicker Mark Moseby are all, at 34 years old, coming off their finest sea-
sons. All will want to do it again next year. Look for the Redskins to return to the Super Bowl next year — and crush their AFC op-

ponent. Hopefully the Raiders, damn it.