



THE GREAT ESCAPE + THE GREAT CATCH = THE GREAT UPSET

BY Kerry Schmidt. 02-10-2008

With 1:15 left on the clock, the Giants faced a 3rd and 5 at their own 44-yardline.

Eli Manning was chased out of the pocket and ran to his right. Three Patriots' defenders got a piece of him, one of them hanging on to his jersey like a rag doll. Just as he was going down, he heaved a 32-yard pass back across his body, and David Tyree made a spectacular (lucky?) catch, getting the ball in one hand and holding it against his helmet, and somehow managed to drag both feet in bounds for the completion.

That gave Manning and his unlikely bunch a first down on the Pats' 24-yard line and four plays later, Manning hit a wide open Plaxico Burris with the winning TD, with just 35 seconds left.

A couple of desperation throws by Tom Brady, and the 18-0, "Greatest team of all time" was 18-1, and, a Super Bowl loser.

"The Catch" was part of "The Drive." Manning led his team on an 83-yard drive starting with just 2:42 left on the clock.

Being a Forty-Niner man, that brought back very similar memories.

In Super Bowl XXIII, on January 22, 1989, Joe Montana and his Niners were facing a 92-yard distance to travel, trailing 17-13 to Cincinnati.

Randy Cross, the center on that team, had put S.F. on the 8-yard line due to a holding penalty. He later told me this incredible story.

After the 2-minute warning, Montana came into the huddle, and, as always, all the players were in total silence, looking at Montana as if he was the Messiah, which to them, at that place and time, he was.

After calling the play, he quietly leaned down and said, "After we score, there will be about 30 seconds left, so no one celebrates."

With 34 seconds left, he hit John Taylor for a 14-yard TD to win the game!

"The Drive," and "The Catch." Yes, history does repeat itself.

NOTE: That catch was great in that it won the SB for S.F., but still today, walk into any pub/bar-restaurant in S.F., say "The Catch," and everyone will instantly know what you are talking about. Not the above, but Dwight Clark's TD catch to beat Dallas in the NFC Championship game in January, 1982, and thus led the Niners to their first SB win.

To say that the Giants win over the Pats was an upset is saying that a hobby horse has a hickory wee-wee.

Any number of writers and TV media said that if they won, it would be the biggest upset in SB history. Yes, many said, bigger even than SB III, January 12, 1969, when the 18-point underdog New York Jets' Joe Namath guaranteed the Jets would win, and they did, beating the (then) Baltimore Colts, 16-7.

People will argue many a while over which was bigger, but with today's mass media availability and that the SB has become "THE" biggest single sporting event in the world, most will pick this one.

The real shocker re the Jets win was that they were still in the old American Football League (AFL), before the merger, and everyone considered this "upstart" league definitely inferior to the long-established NFL.

For the Giants, it was heaven, euphoria, dream come true and whatever else you may call it.

For the Patriots, it was a stunning disaster. They were sure they were destined to be the only team to go 19-0, an undefeated season and World Champs again. (Yes, we all know the 17-0 Dolphins).



So for the unbridled celebration in the land of the Giants, it was a shockwave of biblical proportions for New England.

Try telling a single NE player that 18-1 was a fantastic season. They LOST the SB. To them, the year was a failure.

In all the printed and TV media in the days following the SB, I only saw four quotes from New Englanders; Rodney Harrison, Tedy Bruschi, Junior Seau and coach Bill Belichick, sort of.

The three players spoke quietly and briefly, giving credit to the Giants.

Belichick was his usual self. He walked to the mike, said, "We're obviously upset," very tersely, of course, and immediately walked away, showing the no – class guy he is.

Of all the many media hypes that talked of how huge a Giants win would be, I will quote Sports Illustrated's Peter King.

I use him mainly because of his name recognition, but also because I won \$2,000 from him at the last SB I covered, SB XXXVII, where Tampa Bay swamped the Raiders, 48-21. He was so sure the Raiders would win, he kept trying to get me to bet him, taking TB plus the 4 ½ points. I finally said, I'll give you the Raiders and 16 points, but you have to give me 20-1 odds. He jumped all over it and for risking my \$100, I got a check from him for 2 grand. But only after some of his fellow media pushed him hard to cough up.

I was confident the Bucs would win, since Jon Gruden had coached the Raiders the season before and they were still using all his plays. Strong safety John Lynch told me they knew what they were going to call before they ran the plays.

But back to King's prediction, or at least a statement.

The last paragraph of his article on the (then) upcoming game said, "It adds up to a Giant task. If New York finds a way to hold Brady in check and win this game, it'll be one of the great accomplishments in NFL history."

They did, and it was.

Brady was sacked 5 times, hit 11 and hurried 14. Despite "The Drive" and "The Catch," it was "The Defense" of the Giants that won the game.

Brady had set an NFL record of 50 TD passes and the Pats had set a single season NFL record, scoring 589 points, a 36.81 PPG average!! The Pats amassed a total of 14 points last Sunday.

You can try to come up with all kinds of reasons for the Giants great defense, but it was simple, something that many had been saying all year but that no one had been able to do. Get to Brady. Very simple to say, but, prior to Sunday, impossible to do.

So, the 17-14 game was, yes, a shocker to virtually everyone.

I will say that I gave the Giants a decent chance to win, especially, of course, if they could bet to Brady. I did put \$100 on the Giants, plus 12.

I could write a million more words about the game, but it is now a week old, and that, in the sports world, is ancient history.

Couple of last notes. The Las Vegas sports books lost \$2.6 million on this SB. Rather surprising, because if the bets get too one sided on one team, they will either lay some of those off or drop the point spread to get more wagers on N.E. Whatever.

Also, based on numbers of viewers, this SB was the most watched of all time. 97.5 million watched the game. NOTE: It was not the highest rated ever (that was the 49ers-Cincinnati in 1982) with a 49.1 rating. This game got a 43.2, but with the population growth, more people watched this SB than any other.

Boston Boo-boo. Prior to the game, the Boston Globe solicited orders for the book celebrating the Pats 19-0 perfect championship season. Said Giants LB Antonio Pierce, "we sure screwed them up didn't we. "18-1. NY Giants. World Champions. Write that book"

And, remember "Spygate?" IT'S BACK!



The Boston Globe broke a story on how NE apparently videotaped the St. Louis Rams' walkthrough on the day before SB XXXVI in 2002.

The Pats denied the story.

But apparently this is still an open book. The NFL said they were aware of the allegations and "explored" them. No other comments were made.

However, Sen. Arlen Specter, R-PA, says that there were six videotapes of the walkthrough and perhaps other stuff and that the NFL had destroyed all six. He has requested full disclosure on what happened and why were the tapes destroyed.

He has requested to meet with Commissioner Roger Goodell, who said he would meet with Sen. Specter.

Also, the NFL wants to talk to the former NE employee who allegedly did the videotaping.

Matt Walsh, who is now an asst. golf pro in Maui, has been identified as the "taper."

Goodell says the league is willing to grant Walsh legal immunity for his testimony. Any confidentiality clauses would have been between the Pats and Walsh, and the NFL has agreed to grant Walsh immunity should the Pats raise a civil or legal suit.

Now I know from personal experience, that if all they taped was a walk through, there is virtually nothing they could have learned. Period!

But the question(s) is/are, was there more taping – remember, six tapes were destroyed – and were there other times that taping also took place.

It may be much to do about nothing, but given the penalties handed down on Belichick and the Pats this year for filming the N.Y. Jets defensive plays, it sure casts some bad karma on NE and their great teams of the last five years.

It's sort of like the steroid thing. Maybe not much happened, but if the perception is there, well, it's a problem.

Other NFL related nonsense.

Atlanta Falcons (former?) QB Michael Vick won a fight this past week. No, not a dog fight, dummy, but a legal one.

Back in October, an initial court ruling said Vick had to return all of the \$20 million in bonus money he had received.

But last Monday, U.S. District Judge David Doty ruled that the Falcons could only recoup \$3.75 million of the 20. He said recovering (all) of the bonus money would violate the NFL collective bargaining agreement, which does not allow signing bonuses to be forfeited for years a player has already performed.

Hey, if you gotta go to jail, getting paid \$16.25 million while you're there is not a bad gig!

Speaking of steroids, Roger Clemens and his former trainer Brian McNamee both testified – under oath – to Congress this past week. Clemens said he never took the stuff, and McNamee produced photographs of syringes and bottles that once contained steroids, saying this is what Clemens took.

Seems to me, unless they can find some of Clemens' butt DNA on the needles, those are just pictures. Who knows? And, who the F cares?!

If someone lied, will Bud Sucked go after them like he is with Barry Bonds?

Well sports fans, except for today's Pro-Bowl, football season is finally over.

As I said, Darth Vader and his dark times take over. No real need to read the sports pages. Just the comics, and so many of them have become politically oriented that they are not funny and belong on the op-ed pages.

So, figure out something to do until training camps open in July.

Until then, drink heavily. Or, you could actually talk to your wife. There's a novel idea!

Don't have a clue what will appear in this space next week.