



## SUPER BOWL XLIII: THE PUTTSBURGERS VS.. THE BIRDS?

By Kerry Schmidt January 25, 2009

Who in the hell are the Cardinals? I know they fly south for the winter because I see them. Here in the south. Where I live, stupid.

Anyhoo, these birds are in the SB. For those of you, like me, who can't stand the Roman numeral crap, this is #43. (XLIII).

After the regular season ended, you could have given a good chance for anyone of four AFC teams that would make the SB. Pittsburgh the No. 3 pick..

In the NFC, at least four, and maybe five.

But definitely, NOT the Arizona Cardinals. They were 100-1 a shot to make the SB!

They won their division with a 9-7 record, worst among all NFC playoff teams. Note: They started out at 7-3, so they finished the season 2-4.

To show how bad their NFC West division was, they clinched same with five games left in the regular season.

So once again, you have a true Cinderella story. David vs. Goliath. A bone-crushing defensive team against a "duck and throw the damn ball" team.

But they do have two things in common. Not counting that they are both there, you idiot.

Both QB's have been to the SB, both have won one and both were MVP's. And both are 1-1.

Big Ben Roethlisberger led his Steelers over Seattle, 21-10 in SB XL (40, guys).

Warner led the St. Louis Rams', the "Greatest show on turf," in XXXIV – figure it out yourself, where they beat the Titans, 23-16.

But before Warner got to the NFL, he stumbled around for 4 years, trying to make a team. Any level of team. Six NFL teams cut him in training camp.

The highest he got was to the Iowa Barn Stormers in the first AFL.

Then quickly, somehow, he was an NFL star.

But after the SB glory days, the Rams went down hill, and Warner soon found himself out of the league. Again.

He tried out with several NFL teams. Most cut him, one signed him to the practice squad, then cut him.

Arizona took a chance and signed him. Only so he could be the back-up and teacher for their No. 1 draft pick, USC QB Matt Leinhardt. Leinhardt was injured at the beginning of this season, so Warner was, again, thrust into the spot. Talk about history repeating itself!

Thus, both QB's have the same SB history and glory. But in between, totally different lives.

Both teams have a long history of sorts. Both have had the same owners since their inception.

Then, of course, AZ has the history of losing, Pitt, winning.

The Rooney family has owned the Steelers since the very beginning of the NFL (late 30's to early 40's – did not become the 'NFL' until 1947.)"

And the Bidwell family has owned the Cardinals since their inception in 1947.

One minor difference. For the Burgers, this is their 7<sup>th</sup> SB. They have already won five. Only Dallas and the 49'ers have done likewise.

Arizona? This is their very first trip to the big dance. They started in Chicago in 1947, moved to St. Louis and in 1988 to Phoenix.

They have not made the playoffs since they moved to Phoenix.

Pittsburgh has had the No. 1 rated defense all year, giving up an average of only 13.9 points a game in the regular season. The Cards averaged 29.2 a game.



# OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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I said in last week's column that the Pitt-Baltimore game would be an old-fashioned smash-mouth battle. It was. A total of 11 players had to leave the field.

The worst was Baltimore's RB Willis McGahee.

He was really nailed on a brutal (but legal) hit by Safety Ryan Clark (Hey, it's the NFL!). He had to be carted off the field on a stretcher, head in a brace.

To show what character Pittsburgh has, instead of a hushed, worried stadium – which is normal when this type of injury occurs, music blasted from the stadium speakers, playing a rock song with the name, "Down on the Corner."

Over 50 years in the league, and still no class.

Pitt is a 7-point favorite. And on paper, with their D, it looks bleak for AZ.

But, so did the entire playoffs for them.

Their NFC title game against a hot McNabb, was a shocker, so who knows.

*Sports Illustrated's* Jim Trotter even picks AZ, 24-20

Now who really cares about the X's and O's, but a quick look.

Of course, Pitt's D. Scary! On the other side, the Card's D is 19<sup>th</sup>.

But offensively, Pitt is ranked only 22<sup>nd</sup>, while the Cards are 4<sup>th</sup>.

The classic "Big D vs. Big O."

But as the old saying goes, "Defense wins games." We'll see.

And, Pitt's offensive line is scary also. Scary to Roethlisberger. They are 6<sup>th</sup> in the league in sacks allowed.

Only Big Ben's size – 6' 5", 260 plus pounds, keeps it from being worse.

And, AZ does have a good D-line.

Also, with Warner on a hot streak right now, and a great core of WR's, especially Larry Fitzgerald, they could make it interesting.

For sure, Pitt knows who Fitzgerald is. And they will know everywhere he is come game time.

Comparing the two QB's regular season, Big Ben has 17 TD's with 15 INT's, with an 80.1 rating.

Warner has 30 TD's with 14 INT's and a rating of 96.9.

AZ's coach, Ken Weisenhunt, in his 2<sup>nd</sup> season with the Cards, was an asst. coach with Pitt for 6 years and offensive coordinator for three. He was quite upset when he did not get the head job (he he) when Bill Cowher retired. Motivated?

Roethlisberger, we all know about. He makes \$12.75 million and has always been on a winning Pitt team.

But what about "the other guy?" Earning near the minimum, below one million.

I wrote about this several years ago, but worth repeating.

A 26-year old grocery stock boy in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

He was about to clock out when he was paged to the check-out stand. He was instantly struck by how pretty the 22-year old check-out lady was.

The next day, as he saw her walking home, he offered her a ride. He later asked her to go out with him, but she said no.

Turns out she had three kids, one of whom, her son, was born a paraplegic, with Down's syndrome. Said she could not get a baby sitter.

Still, he persisted, saying they could bring the kids with them.

Brenda, was really surprised, as no men wanted to see her with the ill son. Even her husband, the children's father, had left her.

But they did go out. To eat and to a movie.

When the boy needed attention, Kurtis took him, including to the bathroom.

Seeing that, she told herself this was the man she would marry.

A year later, they did.



As you must know, Kurtis quit his job as a stock boy and won a SB.  
(Miracles do happen).

Brenda and Mrs. Warner are still happily married. To a man who was a 2-time league MVP and SB MVP. All this after he was cut by everyone else.

After leading Arizona past McNabb's Eagles, Brenda waded through the confetti on the field, and as Kurt saw her, they hugged and she cried. "I can't believe this is happening again."

The week before the game, i.e. starting today, the media will be in their usual frenzy. Reporters from most every state and, as of now, 36 foreign countries! Estimated over 400 "reporters." Many are not, really. Just, well see below.

Media day is usually on Tuesday.

If you got an aerial shot of the field/stadium, it would look like a zillion ants covered it. I know. I covered a half dozen of them. I hated them, but, see below.

With hundreds of idiots asking the same questions a hundred times, there are always some really important ones.

Here are most of my favorites. Note: These are from years of previous SB's, as medial day for 43 will be Tuesday.

Tom Brady was asked, what's your purpose in life?

To Pats G Heath Irwin: Would you prefer the AFC wins the game?

Dallas G Nate Newton. Did you notice the logo is missing on one side of the Steelers' helmets?

The SB that Warner won was is New Orleans, thus perhaps begs the question: Do you believe in voodoo and may I have a lock of your hair?

Thurman Thomas was asked how he got psyched up for the game. His answer: I read the papers and look at all the stupid-a.. questions you guys ask.

One of my favorites. To Titans DT Joe Salavae: What's your relationship with the football? He actually answered, saying "It's strictly platonic."

Another favorite, this by a Japanese woman "journalist?" Do you have sex before the game and if so, with how many women and or men.

Maybe the best. A Chinese whatever, who needed the help of an interpreter, asked a 350 pound OT "What size jock strap do you wear. And, "Does it get wet during the game." Note. Since there is no literal translation of the word in Chinese, she actually asked, "what size is you (yes, you, not your -jockey strapper." Note 2: She then asked if she could have it after the game.

An Italian woman asked FB Datron Smith, "What size panties would you wear?"

A German was more discrete. He asked Bill's C Kent Hall, Can I have your pants? Is this guy really from San Francisco? Gay rights and all.

To Emmitt Smith, from a Spanish guy, What are you going to wear for the game today?

A sexy French lady asked Rams giant OT, Orlando Pace. After the game, when you are in the shower, what is your favorite bar of soap?

A Brazilian sportswriter who mostly covered soccer, asked Jerry Rice, Why do you not kick the ball more instead of using your hands so much?

To Joe Montana. "Why do they call you Boomer."

To Rams' DE Jay Williams. Is Ram a noun or a verb? Guy must be an English teacher. Or something. Is something a noun or a verb?

Another couple of politically correct favorites.

To Redskins QB Doug Williams. How long have you been a black QB. Gotta love that one. Note. This writer, supposedly, was from Mississippi.

Chipping in, another to Williams. Would it be easier if you were the second black QB?

And not to be outdone, Skins OT Mark May was asked, How does it feel to block for the first black QB?



# OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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One final idiot speaking. To John Elway. Are you going to listen to Stevie Wonder at half-time? Believe me, there have been many, many more, including 7 different women “sportswriters” asking players for either their phone numbers and/or a date.

One allegedly told one of the QB’s that she would sleep with him if he won the game.

Yep, it’s a zoo out there, sports fans.

Now you can see why most of us did not much care for media day.

But I can assure you, that many a scribe imbibed in the press “bar and grill” (Especially the bar) before media day began. And since it started at 11 AM, well, you could tell who the REAL sportswriters were, i.e. the ones bellying up to the bar. Note: They always have a great bar. Single malt scotch! Along with many brand names of all types of liquor and beer. Almost makes Media Day worthwhile.

Well, enough of the serious stuff.

Beginning today, you will be verbally inundated with more worthless garbage about the upcoming game than you can imagine.

And of course, we will read about every word President Obama has to say about the game. We also may well be told how many times he had to go to the bathroom during the game.

Oh yea, the game.

I hope, for one of the few times (a repeat of last year’s thriller would be great) the game will be a good one. As I said. A high power offense vs. a relentless, bone crushing D. Look for Pitt to do a lot of disguised blitzing, from all over. And for the Pitt DB’s to first hammer Fitzgerald within the 5-yards allowed, then have a safety shift to his side.

As for the Cards, look for some “trick plays,” like the one in the NFC Championship, where the ball was snapped to Warner, who handed it off to an RB coming around of an end run, only to see said RB throw the ball backwards (had to be) to Warner, who then threw a 69-yard TD too, who else, Fitzgerald.

I think they have to be wide open, because Pitt’s D stuffed virtually every more conventual offense all season long.

But, if the 36-year old retread, Warner, can re-capture the magic one more time, well, that would be great.

A repeat of last year’s game would be perfect. But if Pitt’s D dominates, it will be another sleeper.

And don’t forget the commercials. Sometimes they are better than the game.

I wonder how many of same Peyton Manning will be in. He is a natural!

Hey, no female press person ever asked ME if they would go to bed with them! Damn!

Since I won’t be there again, I don’t get the free single malt, but rest assured, I will have several wee drams available.

Go Cards. Flip Pitt the bird.