

= The One After the Superbowl =

" The One After the Superbowl " [sic] is a double @-@ length episode of the American television sitcom Friends ' second season . It originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in the United States on January 28 , 1996 , immediately after NBC 's telecast of Super Bowl XXX . The network 's decision to air the episode directly after the Super Bowl was made in hopes of making it the " highest @-@ grossing ad @-@ revenue day in television history . " Guest stars in the episode are Brooke Shields , Chris Isaak , Julia Roberts , Jean @-@ Claude Van Damme , Fred Willard , and Dan Castellaneta . They were cast to draw more viewers and further increase the advertising revenue .

The main plot of the episode sees Ross searching for his former pet monkey , Marcel , and discovering that he is working on a film set in New York . The first part of the episode was written by Mike Sokowitz and Jeffrey Astrof and the second by Michael Borkow . Both parts were directed by Michael Lembeck . The episode drew 52 @.@ 9 million viewers , making it the most @-@ watched episode in the show 's history . Since airing , " The One After the Superbowl " has received mixed reviews from television critics .

= = Plot = =

After seeing a monkey in a beer commercial that reminds him of his former pet monkey Marcel , Ross decides to pay a visit to his old pet at the San Diego Zoo during his business trip to California . When Ross cannot find the monkey , the zoo administrator (Fred Willard) tells him that Marcel has died . However , a janitor (Dan Castellaneta) later informs Ross that Marcel was kidnapped and forced into show business and is currently filming a movie in New York . Meanwhile , Joey has to contend with a stalker (Brooke Shields) who thinks that Joey is actually Dr. Drake Ramoray , the character he plays on Days of Our Lives . Despite this , Joey goes on a date with her . She dumps him when she suspects " Drake " is cheating on her with another woman (actually another character in the soap opera) . Phoebe dates a man (Chris Isaak) who hired her to perform at a children 's concert .

Ross , hoping for a reunion with Marcel , looks for him on the movie set . Joey meanwhile , sucks up to the production assistant to land a part in the movie . While on set , Chandler meets his old childhood friend Susie " Underpants " Moss (Julia Roberts) working on the production , with whom he has a colored history ; when they were in elementary school , Chandler pulled up Susie 's skirt when she was on stage , revealing her underwear to the entire school . They arrange a date , Chandler unsuspecting that it is a plot to get revenge . After convincing him to wear her panties , Susie leaves him wearing nothing but the panties in a bathroom stall in the restaurant where they were having dinner . Meanwhile , Monica (Courteney Cox) and Rachel meet the movie 's star Jean @-@ Claude Van Damme , and compete for his attention . This creates tension between them , as they both argue over who should get to date him . They both dump him when he tries to convince them to have a threesome with Drew Barrymore . Ross finally reunites with Marcel and Joey lands a small role in the movie , but loses his solitary line after overacting .

= = Production = =

The first part of " The One After the Superbowl " was written by Mike Sikowitz and Jeffrey Astrof , and the second part by Michael Borkow . Both parts were directed by Michael Lembeck . On January 28 , 1996 , the day the episode aired , executive producer Kevin S. Bright commented : " It 'll be bigger in size and scope than a regular Friends episode . Tonight we go one step beyond . " At the beginning of January 1996 , it was confirmed that Julia Roberts , Brooke Shields , Chris Isaak and Jean @-@ Claude Van Damme would all guest star in " The One After the Superbowl " . Actors and comedians Fred Willard and Dan Castellaneta also made minor guest appearances in the episode , as the zookeeper and the zoo janitor respectively .

Bright commented that Shields ' performance was " a little into silly land " at first , but it " eventually

turned in a very funny performance . " Shields commented that when she was asked to appear on the show , she " said yes basically sight unseen . I don 't know where I was on the list . Maybe everybody else said no . " The writers had difficulty devising jokes that would be funny when Van Damme said them . In order to create " Van Damme @-@ proof " jokes , one writer " would say them in a really horrible French accent , putting the emphasis on the wrong word " . If people laughed , Van Damme was given the joke to perform . One line created in this way was Van Damme 's " I can crack a walnut with my butt . "

Roberts recorded her scenes from January 6 ? 8 , 1996 . She had a relationship with cast member Matthew Perry at the time and an audience member said about their on @-@ screen kiss , " Julia looked at Matt and said ' I 'm glad we rehearsed this over the weekend ' . " A sound recordist commented : " I 've seen screen kisses before but this was the best . They really went at it . " Roberts thought her appearance on the show was " the most nerve @-@ wracking thing " she had done since auditioning for Pretty Woman . " I wanted to be the best I could be . [Perry] is incredibly funny , and you want to inspire that same kind of joy that he does . Then at a certain point at lunch , you go , ' Well , it ain 't gonna happen . I 'll just try to be cute . ' "

The decision to air the episode directly after Super Bowl XXX was made by NBC in hopes of making that Sunday the " highest @-@ grossing ad @-@ revenue day in television history . " The guest stars were cast to draw more viewers and further increase the advertising revenue . In past years , networks had " exploited " the post @-@ Super Bowl time slot to launch new series . NBC made an exception with Friends because they believed it would attract more advertising revenue than a new show . Curt King , press manager for Friends , commented : " Try to think of the new shows that were premiered after recent Super Bowls and name one that 's still around . What we decided to do this year was not to unveil a new show but give people an extra @-@ special version of a show they already like a lot . "

= = Reception = =

" The One After the Superbowl " is the most @-@ watched episode in the history of Friends , with a total of 52 @. @ 9 million viewers tuned in after the Super Bowl ended . The episode generated a 29 @. @ 5 Nielsen rating and a 47 percent audience share , making it the highest @-@ rated episode of any show ever (scripted or otherwise) to debut after the Super Bowl . The advertising rates for " The One After the Superbowl " averaged \$ 600 @, @ 000 for 30 seconds of commercial time . This was one of the largest advertising rates ever for a sitcom at the time . The episode 's director , Michael Lembeck , won the 1996 Emmy Award in the " Outstanding Individual Achievement in Directing for a Comedy Series " category for this episode , the only Emmy won by Friends that year .

" The One After the Superbowl " received mixed reviews from television critics . Lisa Davis of the Fort Worth Star @-@ Telegram called the guest appearances " a blatant ploy to boost ratings . " The Charlotte Observer 's Tim Goodman said the episode 's " pathetic infusion of ' star appeal ' " made him " nauseous " and commented that the producers " should just make Bernie Kopell a regular and turn it into the Love Boat all over again . " Diane Holloway of the Austin American @-@ Statesman also noted the similarities with the television series Love Boat , known for its many guest stars : " [The episode] had a couple of chuckles , but came off like a young Love Boat . " Entertainment Weekly called the episode " fragmented , poorly paced , and only sporadically funny . Cramming the already crowded ensemble with celebs may have been a ratings grabber ... but the results are forced sitcom and stilted acting , " specifically citing Van Damme . Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide wrote that the episode " feels like nothing more than a big stunt to follow the big game . " He went on to say that the cameos of Willard and Castelloneta " offers easily the best parts of the program . "

Shields was praised for her performance . Alan Pergament of The Buffalo News said she " showed a different side and was the best guest star " in the episode . Peter Marks of The New York Times commented that Shields ' performance was " so edgy and unbridled " that she " stole the episode " from Roberts and Isaak . Jae @-@ Ha Kim of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times wrote that the chemistry

between Perry and Roberts was " authentic " and that Shields " may have found her niche as a sitcom queen . " Her performance in the episode impressed NBC so much that she was offered her own sitcom , Suddenly Susan , for the network 's 1996 fall lineup . In discussion of Shields performance , Joanne Ostrow of The Denver Post noted that she " did a nice turn to help her stalled career . " She went on to say that Roberts ' appearance was " to little effect " .

Ostrow commented that the Monica and Rachel storyline " was evidence of unfunny , lazy writing . " Kim , however , thought the storyline offered some " funny moments . " Ostrow was complimentary of cast members Lisa Kudrow and David Schwimmer 's performances . " Lisa Kudrow , as Phoebe , singer of truthful folk songs , continues to be a Friends highlight and David Schwimmer can carry off amusing , emotionally tinged moments even opposite a monkey . " DVD Talk 's Earl Cressey named the episode one of the highlights of the second season of Friends . Hal Boedeker of The Orlando Sentinel praised " The One After the Superbowl " for being better than most episodes of Friends and " pleasantly off @-@ the @-@ wall and in keeping with the Friends spirit . " The authors of Friends Like Us : The Unofficial Guide to Friends wrote that there are " some lovely moments of slapstick " in the episode . They called Roberts " a fine guest @-@ star " , while Van Damme was " embarrassing " . Pergament said " The One After the Superbowl " " had its moments " , but he thought it felt more like an episode of Seinfeld than an episode of Friends . The Houston Chronicle 's Ann Hodges gave the episode a more negative review , commenting that the Friends writers " dropped the ball " with it : " Women 's underwear , three @-@ way @-@ sex jokes , and a monkey ? that was it . The insipid , stupid script was an insult to guest stars like Julia Roberts and Jean @-@ Claude Van Damme . "