

Going to the Super Bowl

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,042

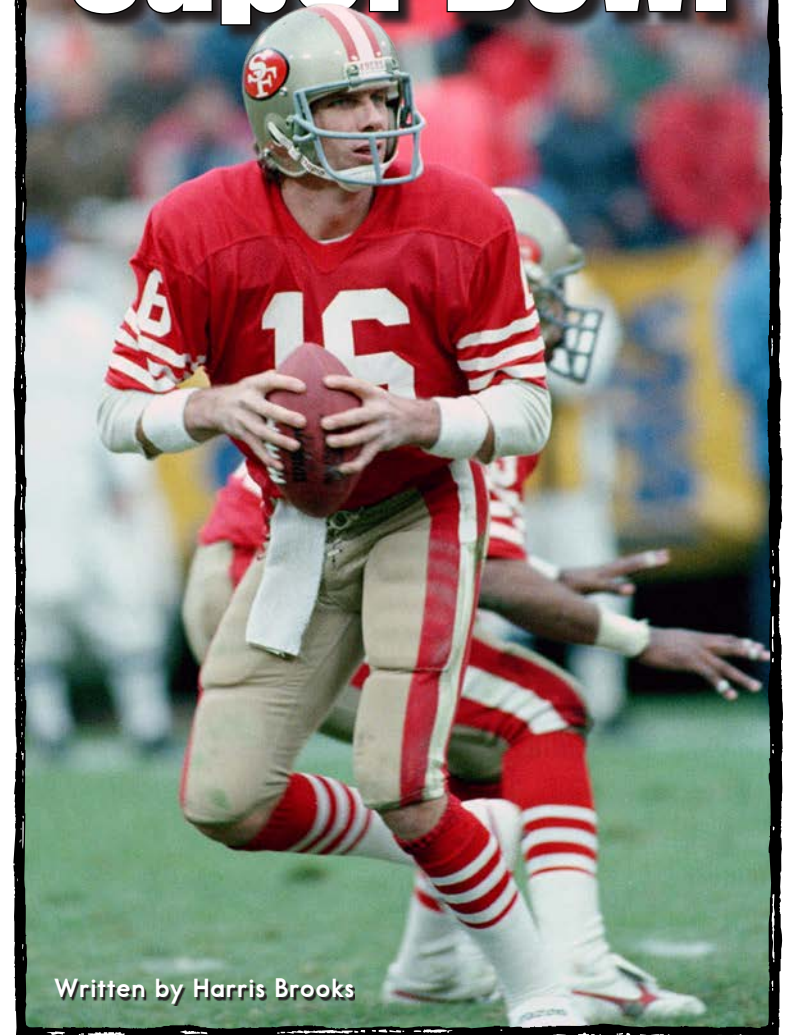


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Going to the Super Bowl



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Pittsburgh Steeler James Harrison intercepts a pass in the end zone to begin his record-setting 100-yard touchdown run.

An Amazing Touchdown

The Arizona Cardinals are down 10-7, with only eighteen seconds left in the first half. But they have the ball on the Pittsburgh Steelers' one-yard line. All-star quarterback Kurt Warner takes the snap. He fades back and throws to his receiver in the end zone. It appears to be an easy touchdown. Wait! Pittsburgh linebacker James Harrison snatches the ball out of the air. He sprints down the sideline. He sidesteps some tacklers and breaks away from others. He crosses the 50-yard line. He's at the 40, 30, 20, 10 . . . touchdown!



James Harrison ran the entire length of the field to score.

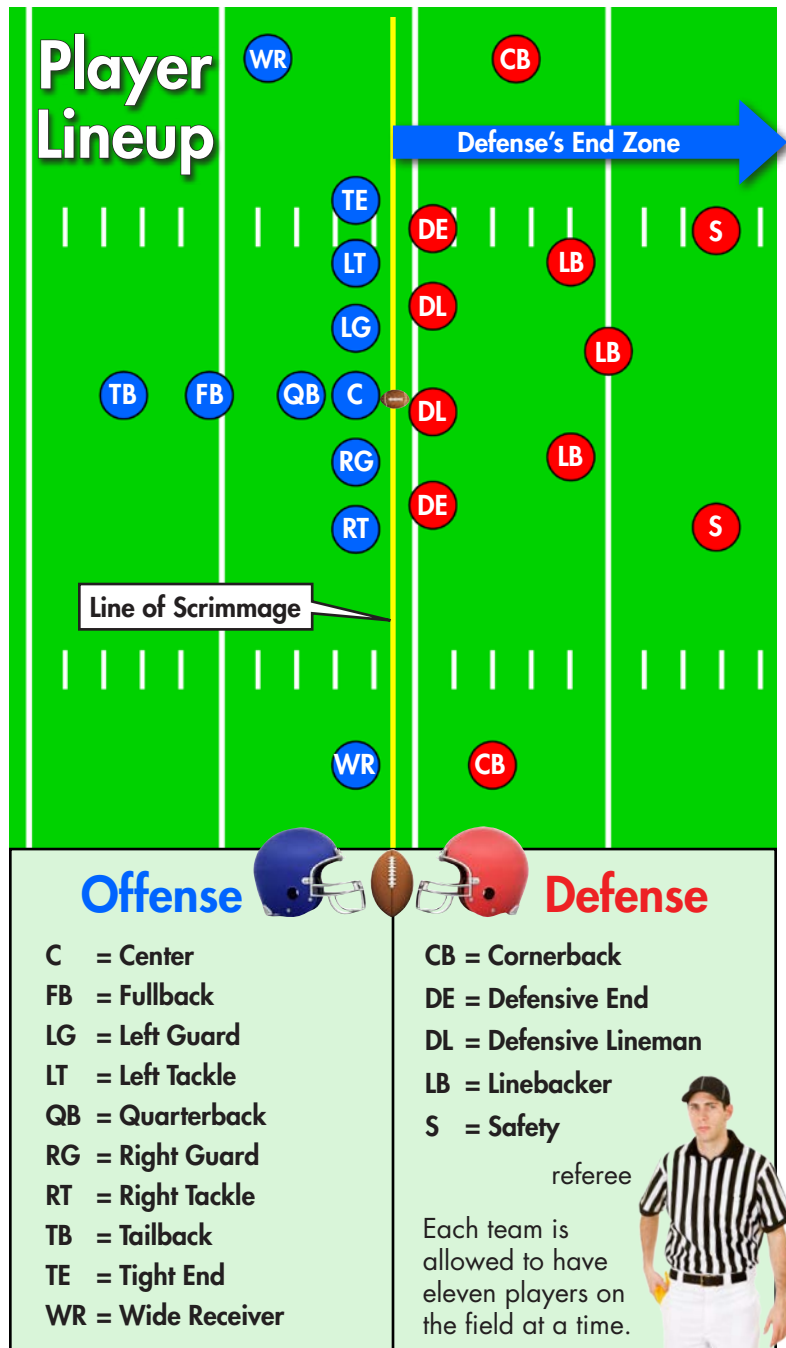
What an unbelievable play! A 100-yard **interception** return for a touchdown. The 75,000 fans in the stadium in Tampa, Florida, go crazy. What's more, 100 million Americans—one-third of the country—have just witnessed football history.

Maybe you were one of those viewers on Sunday, February 1, 2009, watching Super Bowl 43. If so, you saw the longest-ever touchdown in a Super Bowl. You also saw one of the best-ever Super Bowls. The **underdog** Arizona team was down 17-7. They came back and went ahead 23-20 late in the fourth quarter. Then bam! Pittsburgh scored with only 35 seconds left on the clock. The Steelers won 27-23, setting the Super Bowl record for most wins by a team: six.

Superstars, super plays, super teams, all in front of a supersized audience—these are what the Super Bowl is all about.



The Tampa stadium was packed with fans for the Super Bowl.



Fans celebrate Super Bowl Sunday with parties and barbecues.

Super Fun

The Super Bowl is the biggest football game of the year. But it is more than a sporting event. “Super Bowl Sunday” is an unofficial national holiday. Friends and families get together to watch the game, **root** for their team, and have a good time. People throw all-day parties. In the host city where the game is played, the **festivities** may go on for a week. Fans often dress up in their team’s jerseys. Some even paint their faces with the team’s colors. And many people drive to the stadium on Super Sunday to attend tailgate parties—large outdoor barbecues held in parking lots.

The Super Bowl gives people across the country a good reason to celebrate. Football, after all, is an American game. It's also a way for the people who live in each team's home city and state to show their **civic** pride.



A Green Bay Packers fan wears a "cheesehead" to the game.



Bruce Springsteen performed at the halftime show in 2009.

Super Show

The Super Bowl is also an international **spectacle**. In addition to 100 million American viewers, the Super Bowl is seen by millions more in almost every country around the world. Not all the viewers are football fans. Many people tune in for the live halftime show. The celebrity performer at Super Bowl 43 was rock 'n' roll legend Bruce Springsteen. Other famous halftime performers have included U2, The Rolling Stones, and Prince.

People also love to watch the Super Bowl for the television commercials. Many are created to be shown for the first time ever during the Super Bowl. It can cost advertisers over \$3 million to air just one 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl.



Britney Spears appeared in a Super Bowl ad for Pepsi.

The Super Bowl wasn't always a money machine. Showing a commercial on the first Super Bowl, in 1967, cost just \$40,000, and only 24 million viewers tuned in to watch. In fact, the game wasn't even called the Super Bowl—it was called the AFL-NFL World Championship. Marching bands provided the halftime entertainment.



The first Super Bowl game featured lots of action and a marching band at halftime.



Many seats were empty at the first Super Bowl game.

A Not-So-Super Start

The first Super Bowl was held at the Los Angeles Coliseum on January 15, 1967. The Green Bay Packers beat the Kansas City Chiefs 35-10. More than 60,000 people attended. But 40,000 seats were empty. That's unthinkable today, when the least expensive seats at the Super Bowl can cost thousands of dollars.

Although college football had been popular since the 1880s, the National Football League (NFL) only formed in 1920. Pete Rozelle, the head of the NFL from 1960 to 1989, is widely credited with creating the Super Bowl.

By the late 1950s, the NFL had grown to twelve teams. People seemed to want more football, so two businessmen from Texas started the American Football League (AFL) in 1960. The new league had eight teams. At first, the NFL looked down on the AFL. But within a few years, they were competing for players—and fans. By 1966, the two leagues planned to **merge**. To build interest in the soon-to-be-combined league, the best NFL team would play the best AFL team. The game would be an end-of-season matchup to give football fans something to think about until the following season.

Do You Know? A Trophy for the Victors

The winning Super Bowl team gets the Vince Lombardi Trophy, named after the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers. The trophy is made out of sterling silver and weighs seven pounds.

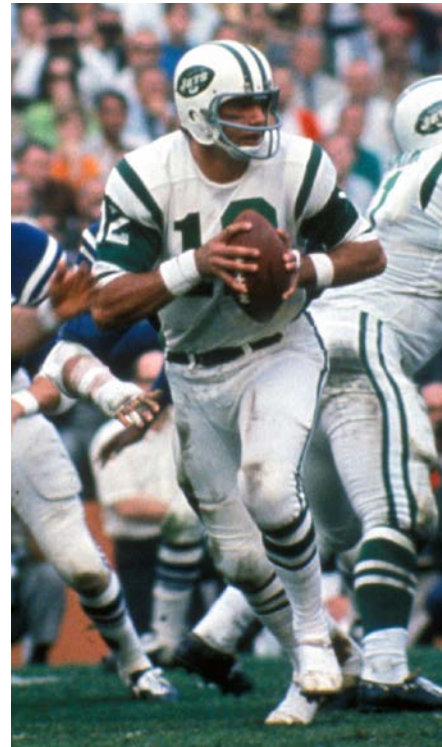




How the Super Bowl Got Its Name

Pete Rozelle (left) wanted to call the AFL–NFL showdown The Big One. Lamar Hunt (right), co-founder of the AFL and owner of the Kansas City Chiefs, wanted a name with more excitement, more . . . bounce. He came up with the name Super Bowl after he saw his kids playing with a Wham-O SuperBall. The “Bowl” part came from the rounded shape of many college football stadiums—especially the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California.

Super Growth



Joe Namath led his team to a famous Super Bowl victory.

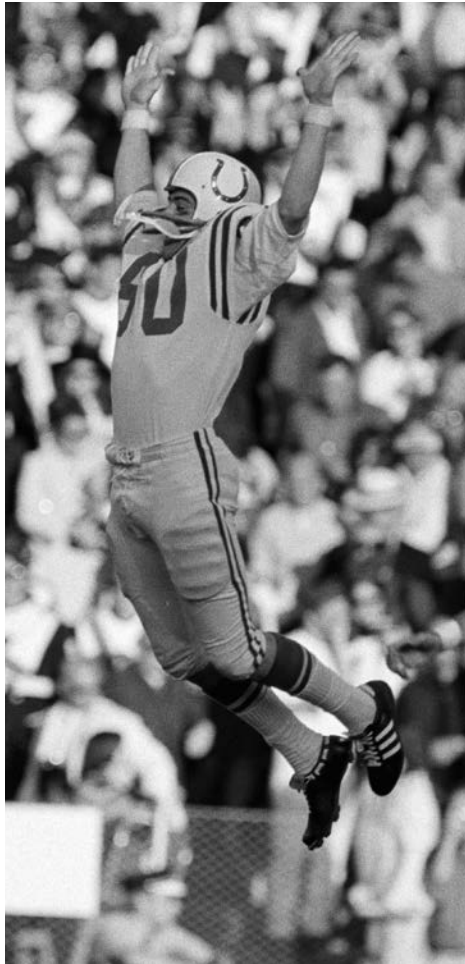
The Green Bay Packers, an NFL team, easily won the first two Super Bowls. Maybe the AFL wasn’t up to the challenge after all? Not so, said “Broadway” Joe Namath, the young quarterback for the New York Jets. He bragged that his team would win the third Super Bowl, against the Baltimore Colts, who were the big

favorites. Joe “put his money where his mouth was,” and the Jets upset the Colts 16-7. The Super Bowl was now established as a battleground for football bragging rights.

Word Wise

A football field is nicknamed a *gridiron* because the lines on the field make it look like a grate used for broiling food.

Interest in the Super Bowl grew quickly. Super Bowl 5, a real nail-biter, came down to the final five seconds. With the score tied 13-13, Baltimore Colts placekicker Jim O'Brien kicked a field goal to win the game. The 1970s also saw the rise of the Pittsburgh Steelers **dynasty**. The team captured the fans'



imaginations—as well as four Super Bowl championships in six years.

Today there are thirty-two NFL teams. Media coverage of the many playoff games leading to the final showdown builds lots of excitement for the Super Bowl.

Jim O'Brien jumps for joy following his game-winning kick.

Super Moments in Super Bowl History

"Steeltown" Dynasty

The Pittsburgh Steelers won four Super Bowls in six years from 1975–1980.

He Runs and Runs

Timmy Smith of the Washington Redskins set a Super Bowl record with 204 rushing yards (running with the ball) in 1988.



He Catches and Catches

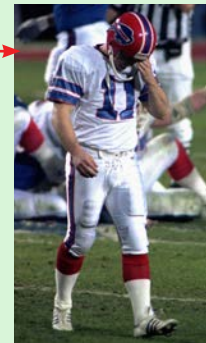
Jerry Rice of the San Francisco 49ers set a Super Bowl record with 215 receiving yards (yards gained by catching passes) in 1989.

Down to the Wire

The New York Giants beat the Buffalo Bills 20-19 in 1991.

The Bills Lose Again

The Buffalo Bills were a great team in the early 1990s, winning four AFC championships in a row. However, they lost all four Super Bowls they played in during those years.



Conclusion

The biggest football game of the year brings high expectations. Yet what makes the Super Bowl fun is that you never know what will happen. For instance, Super Bowl 24 was a blowout. The San Francisco 49ers **trounced** the Denver Broncos 55-10. The next year's Super Bowl was one of the closest games ever. The New York Giants squeaked by the Buffalo Bills 20-19.

Maybe this year the lead will seesaw during the course of the game and be decided in the final seconds. Or maybe this will be the year for the first-ever Super Bowl shutout or another surprise that no one can predict. When this year's Super Bowl rolls around, just be in front of the TV with your family and friends and favorite foods. Get ready to celebrate Super Sunday in style.



A New England Patriots fan gets his game face on.

Glossary

civic (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to a city, citizenship, or community affairs (p. 9)
dynasty (<i>n.</i>)	a series of rulers in a country from the same family (used metaphorically) (p. 17)
festivities (<i>n.</i>)	parties or festivals (p. 8)
interception (<i>n.</i>)	a sports play in which a pass is caught or stolen by a player from the opposing team (p. 5)
merge (<i>v.</i>)	to combine into one (p. 14)
root (<i>v.</i>)	to cheer on or express support for (p. 8)
spectacle (<i>n.</i>)	an unusual or impressive object or event seen in public (p. 10)
trounced (<i>v.</i>)	defeated decisively (p. 19)
underdog (<i>n.</i>)	the expected loser in a struggle or contest (p. 6)