

Greatest Super Bowl Ever?

Monday, 02 February 2009

Few expected much from this Super Bowl, but it ended up being one of the best ever with a thrilling end to the first half and a spectacular end to the game with the Steelers winning 27-23 in the final seconds. For his money, Santonio Holmes, who caught the game-winning touchdown pass and finished with 9 catches for 131 yards and a score, says it was the best Super Bowl ever.

"This will go down as one of the greatest games ever played," said Holmes on the field after the game as confetti came down on him. "The greatest Super Bowl ever." It's certainly open for debate but Super Bowl XLIII is certainly in the running now.

Warner Fumble, Steelers Recover, Game Over 10:12 PM Kurt Warner was hit by LaMarr Woodley and fumbled the ball as he tried to throw a hail mary in the end zone. While the Cardinals argued Warner was throwing the ball it was clear Woodley caught him before his arm went forward. The Steelers took the "Victory Formation" for the last play of the game as the Steelers became the first team in the NFL to win six Super Bowls.

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10:05 PM Roethlisberger hit Santonio Holmes in the corner of the end zone for a six-yard touchdown that will go down as one of the best in Super Bowl history if it stands. He somehow was able to keep both feet in bounds while Aaron Francisco tried to push him out of bounds. As it stands now the Steelers are up 26-23 with 35 second remaining. The play stands and the Steelers are up 27-23 with only 30 seconds left.

Roethlisberger to Holmes 09:59 PM Ben Roethlisberger hit Santonio Holmes for 40 yards in a play reminiscent of Larry Fitzgerald's touchdown before he was stopped at the seven-yard line. The Steelers now have the ball first and goal at the seven with 49 seconds left.

Steelers At Midfield 09:57 PM Ben Roethlisberger hit Santonio Holmes and Nate Washington for a couple first downs around midfield before taking their second time out of the second half. The Steelers now have a second and seven for the Cardinals' 47-yard line with 1:02 left.

Fitzgerald Sr. Still Cool As Ever 09:54 PM The calmest person in the "Aux Box" of media members after Larry Fitzgerald's touchdown was his father, who again simply jotted a few notes down and didn't crack a smile despite the wide grins on the faces of everyone looking at the proud father who has perfected the art of maintaining his composure despite covering the biggest game of his son's career.

Fitzgerald Touchdown, Cardinals Lead 23-20 09:50 PM Kurt Warner hit Larry Fitzgerald in stride for a 64-yard touchdown after Fitzgerald broke away from Ike Taylor and outran the rest of the Steelers defense to the endzone as he looked up at the Jumbotron. The Cardinals now have a 23-20 lead with 2:30 left in what has suddenly turned into a great Super Bowl.

Steelers Safety 09:48 PM A holding penalty by Steelers center Justin Hartwig in the endzone gave the Cardinals a saefty and cut the Steelers lead to 20-16 with 2:53 left in the game. On the previous play Willie Parker was stopped behind the goal line but somehow got the nose of the football outside of the endzone. It was only the sixth safety in Super Bowl history and the first since Bruce Smith sacked Jeff Hostetler in the end zone in Super Bowl XXV in Tampa in 1991.

Cardinals Forced to Punt 09:42 PM A holding penalty pushed the Cardinals out of field goal range and forced them to punt the ball back to Pittsburgh. The Cardinals must now rely on their defense to get the ball back for their offense as Pittsburgh gets the ball first and ten at their one-yard line with 3:25 left in the game.

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Warner to Breaston 09:38 PM Kurt Warner found Steve Breaston for 23 yards down to the 26-yard line as he has now completed ten straight passes.

Taylor Gets Penalized 09:37 PM Ike Taylor was flagged for a ridiculous 15-yard personal foul after Larry Fitzgerald caught a pass near the Cardinals' sideline. Maybe being near the Cardinals bench caused Taylor to loose his mind momentarily.

Cardinals Have Momentum 09:34 PM For the first time since the end of the the first half the Cardinals have the momentum and get the ball back, down by only six points with only 5:28 remaining in the game. This is the moment every kid dreams about growing up.

No Reaction From Fitzgerald Sr. 09:33 PM I know Larry Fitzgerald Sr. has covered many of his son's games but it was amazing watching him watch his son catch his first Super Bowl touchdown pass and calmly jot down a few notes and look at the Jumbotron without so much as a smile crossing his face. Anyone who doubts whether a father can cover his son objectively should sit next to Fitzgerald Sr. one day as he covers his son.

Fitzgerald Touchdown 09:28 PM Kurt Warner lobbed a touchdown pass to Larry Fitzgerald to bring the Cardinals to within 20-13 with 7:33 remaining in the game. Warner was 8-of-8 on the drive, with four of his passes going to Fitzgerald, who caught the touchdown over

Steelers cornerback Ike Taylor. Amazingly as bad as the Cardinals have played, they are one stop and one touchdown drive away from possibly winning the Super Bowl. Cardinals
 Moving 09:24 PM The Cardinals are finally moving the ball after sleepwalking through the third quarter. Warner hit J.J. Arrington for 22 yards and then found Larry Fitzgerald for 18 yards. They now have the ball second and goal from the five-yard line. A touchdown here would finally give us a game to get excited about in the final eight minutes. Warner is now seven of seven on this drive.

Penalties, Penalties 09:18 PM The Cardinals have been penalized almost an entire football field (10 times for 96 yards) compared to the Steelers, who have only been flagged twice for 15 yards. It shouldn't be a surprise as the Cardinals were the fifth most penalized team in the NFL last year, but any coach will tell you any team that gets penalized that many times has little to no chance of winning any game, let alone the Super Bowl. Cardinals Punt 09:15 PM

The Cardinals haven't recovered following James Harrison's 100-yard interception return for a touchdown. The offense has been shut down by the Steelers and the defense is taking a bend but don't break approach that it won't be able to maintain. The Steelers now have the ball first and ten at their 43-yard line. A field goal would likely put this one away. I don't see the Cardinals scoring two touchdowns, let alone a couple two-point conversations. Steelers In Control 09:10 PM

This game has so far played out like many had predicted. The Steelers are the more composed and relaxed team on the field and have dominated at the line of scrimmage. While the Cardinals have the weapons to come back, they are being done in by stupid penalties and a lack of a running game, meaning they have to hope for some big plays through the air on offense and a couple big plays on defense. Pittsburgh doesn't usually let either one, let alone both, happen often. History In The Making?

09:04 PM The Cardinals have had an improbable season up until this point and will need to make history to win the Super Bowl. No team has ever come back from more than 10 points down to win a Super Bowl. The Cardinals are down 20-7 heading into the fourth quarter.

Steelers Hit Field Goal, Take 20-7 Lead 09:00 PM Well, Wilson's penalty didn't mean much as the Steelers couldn't take advantage of his gift. The Cardinals aren't out of it with their explosive offense, but with only 2:11 left in the third quarter and the Steelers chewing up clock whenever they have the ball, the Cardinals need to score on this drive. The Steelers' last drive was 16 plays, one short of a record, for 79 yards, eating up 8:39. Another one of those and this one will be over.

Clueless Cardinals 08:56 PM Cardinals safety Adrian Wilson made perhaps the dumbest personal foul of the game running into the holder Mitch Berger after a routine field goal, giving the Steelers a first down inside the five-yard line. Miller Drop,

Roethlisberger Pressured 08:54 PM Heath Miller just dropped an easy catch that would have given the Steelers third and goal from around the two yard line. On the next play Roethlisberger was forced to throw it away. Penalties 08:49 PM

If you're looking for a key stat in the game look no further than the penalties. The Steelers have been flagged only twice for 15 yards, while the Cardinals have been hit with seven penalties for 76 yards, including two big personal fouls on this drive. Props To Bieber

08:44 PM I need to take a quick break from the game to give some props to SI photographer John Bieber for the amazing picture that's currently on the front of SI.com right now. Simply amazing. Cardinals Get Ball, Punt It Back 08:42 PM

Warner's fumble was not surprisingly overturned, giving the ball back to the Cardinals. Arizona, however, punted it away on the next play to the Steelers, who has a first and ten at their 18-yard line with 10:50 left in the third quarter. Farrior Makes Another Play

08:39 PM James Farrior just made a crushing hit on Kurt Warner as he was attempting to pass the ball, causing the quarterback to fumble the ball around midfield. The play, however, is being reviewed and should be overturned as it looks like Warner arm was moving forward on a pass.

Run With The Pass 08:35 PM Unable to run the ball with their tailbacks, the Cardinals are trying to run via the pass with short passes in the flat that they hope will develop into longer runs. That might work with most teams but I don't see the Steelers quick defense allowing them to get much with that strategy. Big Drive For Cardinals 08:31 PM

After the way they ended the first half its vital the Cardinals get points on this drive (even a field goal) and hold the Steelers on the first drive of the second half. They need to get this down to a one possession game again and regain the momentum that they lost before Bruce Springsteen took over the field.

First Half Review 08:24 PM Has any Super Bowl changed on a play more dramatic and improbable than the one that finished the first half of Super Bowl XLIII here in Tampa? The Cardinals go from possibly taking a 14-10 lead to being down 17-7 on an interception that turns into the longest play in Super Bowl history. That play is one you'll be seeing and hearing about forever and it might have just have ended the Cardinals hopes of winning the game. I'm not saying its over but it's going to be hard for Arizona to overcome a play like that. Hello Bruce, Hello Technical

Difficulties 08:18 PM Before Bruce Springsteen took the field for what is shaping up to be one of the best halftime shows the Super Bowl has seen in a while many in the "Aux Box" got knocked off line but we're back now. It was at least a momentary excuse for many of the writers to stop working and take in Springsteen as many in the area are on their feet and taking pictures of "The Boss" in action. Now that he's done, we can thankfully get back to work. Amazing Turn of Events

08:00 PM It will go down as one of the most amazing plays in Super Bowl history. With the Cardinals first and goal at the two-yard line with no time outs and 18 seconds left in the half, Kurt Warner dropped back to throw to Anquan Boldin in the end zone. The pass, however, was intercepted by James Harrison, who took the ball back 100 yards for a touchdown with no time remaining. The play, was reviewed but upheld, giving the Steelers a 17-7 halftime lead in Super Bowl XLII. Harrison's touchdown is the longest play in Super Bowl history.

Warner Finally Finds Fitzgerald 07:49 PM

Kurt Warner finally hit Larry Fitzgerald for his first catch in the Super Bowl, an 11-yard catch over the middle. It gives Arizona a first down at the Pittsburgh 13-yard line with 43 seconds left in the first half.

Bad Pass To Fitzgerald 07:47 PM

Kurt Warner just tried to force a bad pass to Larry Fitzgerald that was nearly picked off. While he wants to get the ball into his playmaker's hands, he can't force the issue. It is amazing though that Fitzgerald has been held without a catch in the first half after catching 23 passes for 419 yards and five touchdowns during the playoffs.

Roethlisberger Pick 07:44 PM

Ben Roethlisberger's pass just before the two minute warning was tipped at the line of scrimmage by Bryan Robinson and picked off by Karlos Dansby, giving the Cardinals the ball at the 34-yard line. Suddenly instead of trying to build on their lead, the Steelers are forced to defend the Cardinals from possibly taking the lead into halftime.

Drop By James, Steelers Ball 07:40 PM

Edgerrin James dropped an easy pass from Warner on third and long although he wouldn't have gotten anywhere near the first down as the Cardinals are now forced to punt. After gaining the momentum and looking as if they would at least tie the game before the half, the Cardinals have regressed and looked as lost as they did in the first half. (I think someone said earlier you can't beat the Steelers with a one dimensional offense.) It will be interesting to see how the Steelers handle their next drive.

Where Is Fitzgerald? 07:35 PM

Kurt Warner has completed 8-of-10 passes for 102 yards and one touchdown but amazingly only one pass has been to Larry Fitzgerald and Anquan Boldin as Fitzgerald has been held without a catch so far in the first half with less than three minutes left before halftime. Facing a third and 22 near midfield, now would be a nice time to lob one up to Fitzgerald.

Third and Long 07:31 PM

The Cardinals finally had the Steelers in a third and long situation, third and 17 at the Steelers' 29, and were able to get to the Steelers off the field. Roethlisberger has sliced up the Cardinals secondary for 130 yards on 11-of-13 passes in large part because Roethlisberger has kept the Cardinals on their heels. The key for the defense coming in was to create third and long passing situations and rush Roethlisberger. The last drive was the first time they've done that all game.

Cardinals Touchdown

07:25 PM

Kurt Warner finally found Anquan Boldin for 45-yard catch down to the one-yard line after both Boldin and Larry Fitzgerald were held without a pass through the first quarter. Boldin nearly scored on the play but Steelers safety Ryan Clark stopped him just short. One play later Warner found Ben Patrick in the end zone for the touchdown to bring the Cardinals to make it a 10-7 game. Warner has now completed seven straight passes as Cardinals offensive coordinator Todd Haley seems content in letting Warner air it out the rest of the way with a nonexistent running game.

One Dimensional Offense

07:17 PM

The Cardinals are going to need to find some balance if they are going to win this game. They have never been a great rushing team, even during their current playoff run, but they can't continue to air it out and beat the Steelers. So far in the game they have passed twice as many times as they have run. While they are moving the ball well on this drive, picking up two first downs near midfield, their one dimensional offense will come back to bite them once they get into the red zone.

Game

Cardinals defensive players are getting frustrated by, surprise, surprise, Hines Ward, who is playing up until and sometimes after the whistle blows. Whisenhunt has talked the officials about it but he knows better than anyone else that's Ward's game and he's not about to change. He should forget about the officials and tell his players to forget about Ward and play their game.

Steelers Touchdown 07:10 PM

No need for a fourth down play or another quarterback sneak (and instant replay review) as Gary Russell got into the end zone from one-yard out to give the Steelers a 10-0 lead with 14:01 left in the second quarter.

Steelers At Goal line, Again 07:07 PM

The Steelers once again have the ball third and goal at the one-yard line and I would expect the Steelers to run on third down and even on fourth if they don't get it.

Steelers Dominate First Quarter

07:04 PM

Pittsburgh is keeping the Cardinals defense off balance with a variety of plays that would make former Steelers offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt proud if he wasn't standing on the other side of the field coaching the Cardinals. They have run 8 pass plays and 8 run plays and have confused the Cardinals at every turn. Roethlisberger has completed 7-of-8 passes for 118 yards while Willie Parker has run for an efficient 26 yards on 7 carries.

Ben Makes Big Play 06:59 PM

Ben Roethlisberger isn't known as a scrambling quarterback but he just eluded a couple of Cardinals defensive linemen and found Heath Miller for a big first down at the 34-yard line. He is now 5 of 6 for 100 yards in the first quarter.

Warner Fumbles, Cardinals Recover

06:50 PM

Kurt Warner and Edgerrin James fumbled a simple exchange after some miscommunication at the line of scrimmage but were able to recover the ball. Pittsburgh right now is dominating Arizona at the line of scrimmage as the Cardinals are being forced to punt just six plays into their first drive.

Steelers Settle For Three, Up 3-0 06:46 PM

You hate to second guess a coach that got his team to the Super Bowl but Mike Tomlin didn't get this far by being

pensive. After Roethlisberger was ruled less than a yard short of a touchdown following an instant replay review, Tomlin elected to go for the field goal instead of a touchdown. After the strength Roethlisberger showed to get into the end zone one play earlier, I can't imagine he wouldn't have been able to get in for a touchdown less than a yard out behind Justin Hartwig.

Big Ben Comes Up Big...Maybe

06:42 PM On third and goal at the one yard Ben Roethlisberger scrambled to his right and was met by Darnell Dockett and Antonio Smith, a couple of 6-foot-4, 280-pound defensive linemen and pushed himself into the endzone thanks to a little help from center Justin Hartwig. The play was slightly reminiscent of Roethlisberger's touchdown run in Super Bowl XL, but despite the challenge he clearly got in this time. Of course, the officials ruled he was short after reviewing it.

Big Play To Ward

06:36 PM So much for that knee injury that limited him in practice. Hines Ward just caught a 38-yard pass from Ben Roethlisberger that has them in scoring position just two plays into the game.

Game On

06:33 PM

Super Bowl XLII

has kicked off and is underway with the Steelers getting the kickoff and handing off to Willie Parker for a two-yard run.

Warner Wins

06:30 PM

Before the Super Bowl has even started Kurt Warner was presented with a trophy on the field by the commissioner as he was named the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year. It's a great honor but one that should have been presented to him Friday or Saturday. The last thing a player focused on winning the Super Bowl needs is to be given a trophy before the game. He's trying to win one after the game.

Welcome

Back Jennifer Hudson 06:25 PM Jennifer Hudson just sang the National Anthem, making her first public appearance since her mother, Darnell Donerson, brother Jason Hudson, and nephew Julian King were murdered in their Chicago home Oct. 28. It was arguably the best and most emotional anthem performance since Whitney Houston sang the Anthem in 1991 during the first Gulf War.

Faith Hill Makes History

06:18 PM

Faith Hill is now

singing America The Beautiful at centerfield becoming the first entertainer to sing both the National Anthem (Super Bowl XXXIV) and America The Beautiful at the Super Bowl. The last time she sang at the Super Bowl, by the way, Kurt Warner won the Super Bowl.

Cassell Arrives

06:10

PM Matt Cassell just arrived with his wife, Lauren Killian. Both just sat below the "Aux Box" in one of the few Cardinal sections to cheer on their friend Matt Leinart. While Cassell was Leinart's back-up, Killian was a constant presence at games as a member of the USC women's volleyball team.

75-25, Advantage Steelers

05:57 PM

I just took a quick

straw poll here in the "Aux Box" of what the percentage of Steelers fans is to Cardinals fans and it seems to be around 75-25 in favor of Pittsburgh. It's not surprising considering the Steelers travel better than any team in the NFL and the Cardinals couldn't even sell out their first playoff game against the Falcons.

Roethlisberger Redemption

05:48 PM

Ben Roethlisberger has

been running around the field during warm ups, going up to many of the veterans and giving them a hug and a pat on the back. He said multiple times this week how he felt as if he almost cost the Steelers the Super Bowl three years ago against the Seahawks in Detroit. He almost sounded like the losing quarterback in that game at times. It may be the first time a Super Bowl winning quarterback has ever felt the need to redeem himself.

Technical Difficulties

05:38 PM

A couple times during Matt

Lauer's interview with President Barack Obama, the sound went out and the video froze, which is fine when you're asking Kurt Warner what he was dreaming about last night but terrible when you're asking the president about the economy in one of his first live television interviews since being sworn in. Obama handled himself well when talking about sports and the game, rattling off player names such as Warner and Larry Fitzgerald like a any old sports fan, although he once again let it be known that he will be pulling for the Steelers, who he's predicting to win a close game.

Terrible Towels

05:26 PM

In case you needed to be reminded that the Super Bowl will have a pro-Steelers crowd, as a couple of Pittsburgh players ran onto the field for warm ups every Steelers fan in attendance started waving their yellow Terrible Towels. It seemed as if Raymond James Stadium had been transformed into Heinz Field. Every section is filled with black and gold clad Steelers fans waving these infamous towels. I even had to tell my colleague, Andrew Perloff to put his towel away. He swears he was just going to use it as a handkerchief.

Fitzgerald In Aux Box

05:07 PM

Larry Fitzgerald Sr., who is sitting two rows in

front of me, is easily the most popular reporter here in the "aux box" just above the Arizona Cardinals end zone in Section 206. Many Cardinals fans that are walking past him to go to their seats are stopping to greet Fitzgerald, who has an aisle seat, and taking pictures with him and wishing his on son well in the game. Fitzgerald has taken it all in stride although it will be interesting to see if he's still going to be hounded when the game begins.

Springsteen Halftime Set List Revealed

04:53 PM

If you don't want to know the halftime set list for Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band (get over it, it's just a 12-minute halftime show not a movie, but I digress) then don't read any further.

Brooks Melchior at SportsbyBrooks.com is reporting that the halftime set list will be:

10th Avenue Freeze Out
Born To Run
Working on a Dream (new song)
Glory Days

Melchior was the first to report the performers of the last three halftime acts so his sources on these matters seem pretty reliable. We'll see.

In The Club

04:26 PM

I'm sitting in between SI.com's Andrew Perloff and Joe Posnanski here in perhaps the best auxiliary press box in sports history. For those that don't know, since the Super Bowl credentials far more media than they can handle in the press box they take over a few sections and convert them into "aux boxes" complete with tables, electrical outlets and internet.

Well, the "aux box" we are in is located in the club seats just outside the west club level of the stadium where all the suite owners are enjoying glasses of Moet & Chandon champagne, shrimp cocktails, decadent deserts and various carving tables and bars. Most of the media have decided to splurge, abandoning their box turkey sandwich lunches in favor of the pork loin and bratwurst being prepared in the Pirates Grille. Hey, it's the Super Bowl, live a little.

Welcome to Super Bowl XLIII

04:24 PM

Welcome to Raymond James Stadium and SI.com's Super Bowl pre-game blog. Hey, if NBC and the NFL Network can roll out 12-hour preview shows, I don't see why we can't do one for a couple hours.