

SUPER BOWL LIV: WHO WILL PARTY WITH THE LOMBARDI

Super Bowl Sunday this year is a special day? How so you ask?

How's this for a calendrical trifecta: Sunday is Super Bowl Sunday. And it's Groundhog Day. And it's a rare eight-digit palindrome when written as 02/02/2020 – the only one of its kind this century.

A palindrome, as you might know, is a sequence that reads the same forward as it does backward.

Apparently the only palindrome in recent memory. But also Groundhog Day too (when will that inanity give way)? If you want to add some other calendar stuff on, 2020 is also a leap year.

We will get to the last NFL game of the season in a minute, but first a couple of quick things.

First, in the middle of the night last night, there was a stunning Women's Final in the Australian Open. Barely 21 year old American Sophia Kenin, who slayed media darling Coco Gauff in the fourth round, and then world number one Ash Barty in the semi-finals, in straight sets, was also victorious over two time Grand Slam champion Garbine Muguruza. And she did it with quite a bit of aplomb. Lost the first set, and then took over. Kenin may be around a while, get used to the name. And, if you can catch a replay of the match, do it. The announcers universally thought a star was being born, and they might well be right. It was something.

While Kenin was a breath of fresh air early this morning (the Aussies are in a far different time zone), last night was the first Lakers game after the tragic death of Kobe Bryant, his daughter Gigi, John Altobelli, Keri Altobelli

and Alyssa Altobelli, Christina Mauser, Sarah Chester and Payton Chester and pilot Ara Zobayan. The Staples Center was purple and blue, and, given the obvious emotional difficulty, it was all beautiful. LA and the Lakers got it right. The videos are out there, take a look. The tributes, music, and sometimes combination (the cello guy during the video tribute was spectacular).

Okay, on to the Super Bowl we go. There are, as always, a lot of weird "proposition bets". I don't really get into that, but here are a bunch of, um, interesting ones. The current overall Vegas line is vacillating between 1 – 1.5 points, with that historically slim line in favor of Kansas City.

So, what's the deal? Lol, I dunno. But, in the long run, balance and defense wins. KC has the more explosive offense, but that is partially because they have had to rely on it, and Mahomes, so often to climb out of holes. On the other hand, they have been able to do so, and especially impressively so in the playoffs. The 49ers are different though. The SF defense starts with that they basically only rush the front four to create the havoc they do. Nick Bosa, Dee Ford, DeForest Buckner and Arik Armstead are relentless and really good. and with Richard Sherman and Mosely patrolling the secondary, the Niners are extremely solid.

The Chiefs, however, while having a winning defense are nowhere near as consistently solid as SF. Frank Clark is not a beloved character in the NFL, but he is extremely good as a pressure point. Chris Jones and Tyrann Mathieu are first team all pro worthy types in the secondary. Honeybadger was here in Arizona his first few years and, when healthy, which he is now, he is a big play game changer of special talent. And as good of a player as he really is, he has grown up to be an even better person. This is a great piece in the WaPo on Tyrann:

For all the new plans and pieces, Kansas City's defensive transformation began

with the player teammates still love to call the Honey Badger. Mathieu is a storm of calculated mayhem, a worker bee who wakes up at 5:45 each morning and a heat-seeking missile who can line up or strike from anywhere on the field. He has changed the Chiefs in elemental ways with his all-pro performance and his mere presence.

“He’s a special person,” Chiefs General Manager Brett Veach said. “It’s really hard to explain the power someone like that has unless you’re actually in the building. . . . You have to get talent. You have to build a deep roster. You need corners, and you need rushers. Until you get a catalyst, it’s hard. You need that one guy that will make everything go. He’s certainly that guy. To have him on our team has meant everything to us.”

Again, what do I think? First off, what I think is beyond irrelevant anywhere but here. Secondly, I am a dope. So, given those caveats, here we go. Honeybadger can sit and snipe on Jimmy G enough, or the Niners O-Line gives Jimmy G the time that San Francisco’s D-Line does not afford Mahomes. I have no real idea, but with betting no real money, I think...think...The balance on the Niners is better and wins. No, I do not feel good about that pick.

As a parting note, today’s music is Heart playing Stairway To Heaven at the Kennedy Center for the remaining members of Zep, assorted dignitaries and President and First Lady Barack and Michelle Obama. To say it is stunning is a gigantic understatement. I had never seen it before last night, when I stumbled on it by accident. WOW. Shared it with numerous friends and the universal reaction was still WOW. It is that good, especially when the choir/chorale kicks in. It is soooo good. Check it out. I was almost lifetime tired of Stairway to Heaven before I saw this, and was immediately

mesmerized. Yeah, it is that incredible. And if you want full screen, just click to embiggen it.

Rock and roll, and enjoy the Super Bowl!