

SPORTS

The Steelers make Pittsburgh "Six-burgh"

By Nick Blake
sports editor
nbl5041@psu.edu

All of the hype and build up has passed, and the NFL has crowned a new champion. The Pittsburgh Steelers are Super Bowl XLIII champions.

Tampa Bay played host to the most watched Super Bowl ever last week, and fans were treated to what's being debated as the best Super Bowl ever played.

The Arizona Cardinals and the Pittsburgh Steelers met at Raymond James Stadium on Feb. 1 for what was sure to be a battle of epic proportions.

The Arizona Cardinals have one of the most prolific offenses in the NFL, led by experienced quarterback Kurt Warner and the two-headed monster receivers of Larry Fitzgerald and Anquan Boldin.

The Pittsburgh Steelers, on the other hand, have one of the best defenses in the NFL. In fact, they did have the best defense in the league this year, ranking number one.

After the numerous pregame festivities, it was finally time for the game to begin. The Cardinals won the coin toss and elected to defer to the second half, giving the Steelers the ball to start the game.

The Steelers didn't waste any time getting their offense going on their first possession. Right off the bat, Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger found an open Hines Ward for a 38-yard gain to the Cardinals' 32-yard line.

A couple running plays to runningback Willie Parker and a pass to tight end Heath Miller to set up first-and-goal for the Black and Gold.

On a third-and-goal, Roethlisberger took it into his own hands to get the ball into the end zone. Roethlisberger appeared to fight his way across the goal line, but the Cardinals challenged the play, which revealed Big Ben's knee hitting the ground prior to reaching the end zone. The Steelers settled for an 18-yard field goal from Jeff Reed to take a 3-0 lead.

The Cardinals weren't exactly on fire on their first offensive drive. They gained no yardage on their first play. On second down, quarterback Kurt Warner hit wide receiver Steve Breaston for a 10-yard gain, but it was wiped away due to a holding penalty. After that, they couldn't get going and were forced to punt.

The Black and Gold kept it coming with their offense machine running. Roethlisberger was still hot, finding wide receiver

Antonio Holmes for a 25-yard gain. On the following play, the Steelers were tagged with a false start penalty backing them up.

The Steelers were unable to get much going, and were forced into a third-and-ten situation. Roethlisberger was under pressure but was able to escape, hitting Miller for an 11-yard gain and a first down.

After another 11-yard pass to Miller and an eight-yard run by Parker, the Steelers were again knocking at the door. The Steelers worked their way to the one-yard line where they faced another third-and-goal situation. They would find pay dirt this time when runningback Gary Russell pounded his way across the goal line giving the Steelers a 10-0 lead.

With the offense that the Cardinals were equipped with, there was no way that they were going to lay down for the Steelers.

Warner came through with a huge play to Boldin which netted 45-yards to the Steelers one-yard line. Warner threw a pass to Ben Patrick who made an amazing catch in the end zone, cutting the lead to 10-7.

On the next two drives, the teams were deadlocked, with neither team able to get anything

done.

On the Steelers next possession, Roethlisberger had a pass tipped by Cardinals' defensive lineman Bryan Robinson, which ended up being picked off by linebacker Karlos Dansby at the Steelers 33-yard line.

The Steelers forced two incomplete passes from Warner on the first two plays of the drive, but the Cardinals would strike.

On third down, Warner hit runningback Tim Hightower for a first down. With back-to-back passes to Fitzgerald and Boldin, the Cardinals were on the one-yard line and were poised to go into halftime with the lead.

Warner dropped back for a pass to the end zone and was intercepted by the NFL's Defensive Player of the Year, linebacker James Harrison. With some athletic moves and key blocks from teammates, Harrison returned the interception 100 yards for a pick six. It was the longest play in Super Bowl history.

"It was very tiring, but it was all worth it. I was just thinking that I had to do whatever I could to get to the other end zone and get seven. I just wanted to help my team win. That was it. That was all I was thinking about," Harrison said.

This was the final play of the

first half, giving the Steelers a 17-7 lead at halftime.

The Cardinals got the ball to start the second half and they got it moving. Warner got the ball to Boldin and then runningback Edgerrin James wheeled off three straight runs that totaled 19 yards.

The Steeler defense slammed the door shut, though, allowing just two short gains and forcing an incomplete pass on the third-down play. This forced the Cardinals into a punt.

To start the drive, Holmes broke out for a six-yard reception, and a facemask penalty against the Cardinals added 15 yards to the play. Roethlisberger kept going to the air, hitting tight end Matt Spaeth and wide receiver Hines Ward. On another passing play, Roethlisberger was hit late and the Steelers were given 15 yards from a roughing the passer penalty.

Parker then trotted for 15 yards, giving the Steelers another new set of downs. They were kept out of the end zone, though, and settled for a 27-yard field goal from Reed giving them a 20-7 lead with 2:16 left in the third quarter.

This was the Super Bowl and the Cardinals still weren't finished. Warner led his offense down the field on an outstanding drive. He completed all eight of his passes on the 87-yard drive which was capped off by a one-yard, acrobatic catch by Fitzgerald, cutting the lead to 20-14.

The Cardinals got the ball back after holding the Steelers, but were unable to get going. But they pinned the Steelers on their own one-yard line on a magnificent punt.

On third down, Steelers' center Justin Hartwig was flagged for holding in the end zone. The penalty resulted in a safety cutting an already slim lead to 20-16.

After the free kick from the Black and Gold, the Cardinals' offense wasted no time driving down the field. Warner found Fitzgerald down the middle and he was off to the races and a touchdown giving the Cardinals their first lead of the game 23-20, with 2:35 left to play.

The Steelers still had some fight in them. Roethlisberger was able to drive his offense down field, scramble after scramble and pump fake after pump fake.

The Steelers were able to work their way inside the Cardinals' 10-yard line with time running out.

With :35 left in the game, Roethlisberger was able to thread a perfect pass through three defenders to Holmes in the back of the end zone who made a tip-toe catch to give the Black and Gold a 27-23 lead.

The Cardinals had one more chance, but while Warner was preparing to unleash a last ditch, Hail Mary pass, he was stripped by line backer Lamar Woodley and the Steelers recovered the fumble.

The final score was 27-23 giving the Steelers their NFL franchise record sixth Super Bowl title.

Holmes was named MVP of the game racking up nine catches for 131 yards and the game-winning touchdown.

"It was a play we drew up that we were hoping to get open in the corner. The defensive back bit up on the short route and Ben (Roethlisberger) held onto the ball long enough to get it to me," Holmes said.

Troy Polamalu found the final five minutes of the game to be very gut wrenching.

"Oh my God, I don't know. You can't explain it. You are seconds away from me crying in the locker room, and them being out here. That's how amazing this game is," Polamalu said.

Ward had faith in his team and was proud of how they were able to comeback.

"It speaks volumes about our team. We never gave up. To come back and win like that, is just unbelievable," Ward said.

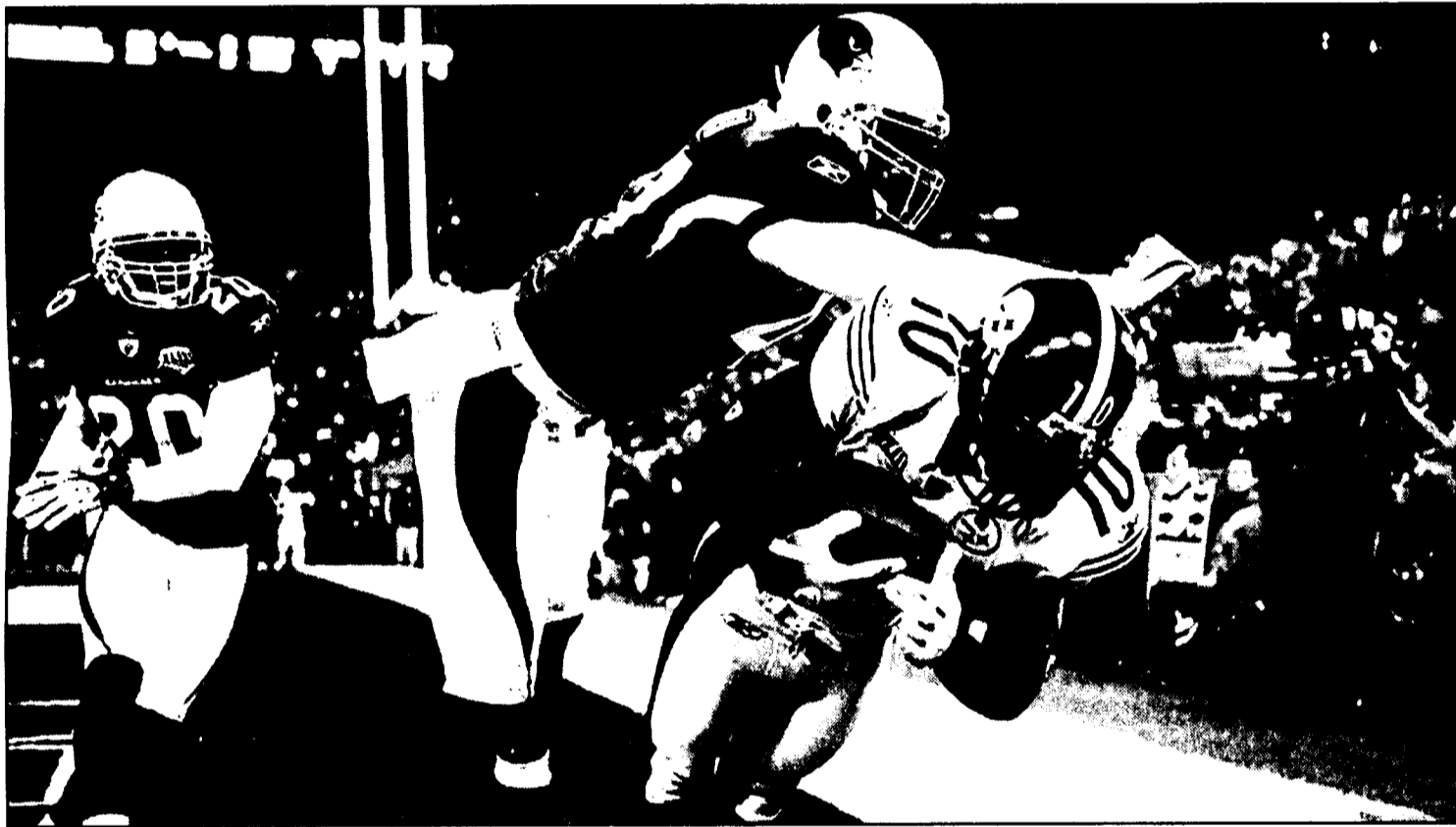
Head coach Mike Tomlin won his first Super Bowl in his second year in the league, but knew he could win it, and could see himself winning it.

"That's what we all work for. That's the planning that we put in for it, like 31 other guys. Somebody's going to be the one, and I'm just thankful that it's us this year," said Tomlin.

This Super Bowl was the most watched television program in U.S. history with a total audience of 151.6 million viewers. The two teams didn't disappoint.

Super Bowl XLIII is being debated as being the best Super Bowl ever. It very well may be, and it is sure that there will be more great ones to follow.

Don't forget to catch all of your favorite NFL all-stars in this year's Pro Bowl. The game will be in Honolulu, Hawaii on Feb. 8 at 4:30 p.m. on NBC.



Super Bowl XLIII MVP Antonio Holmes hauls in the game winning touchdown at the end of the fourth quarter. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

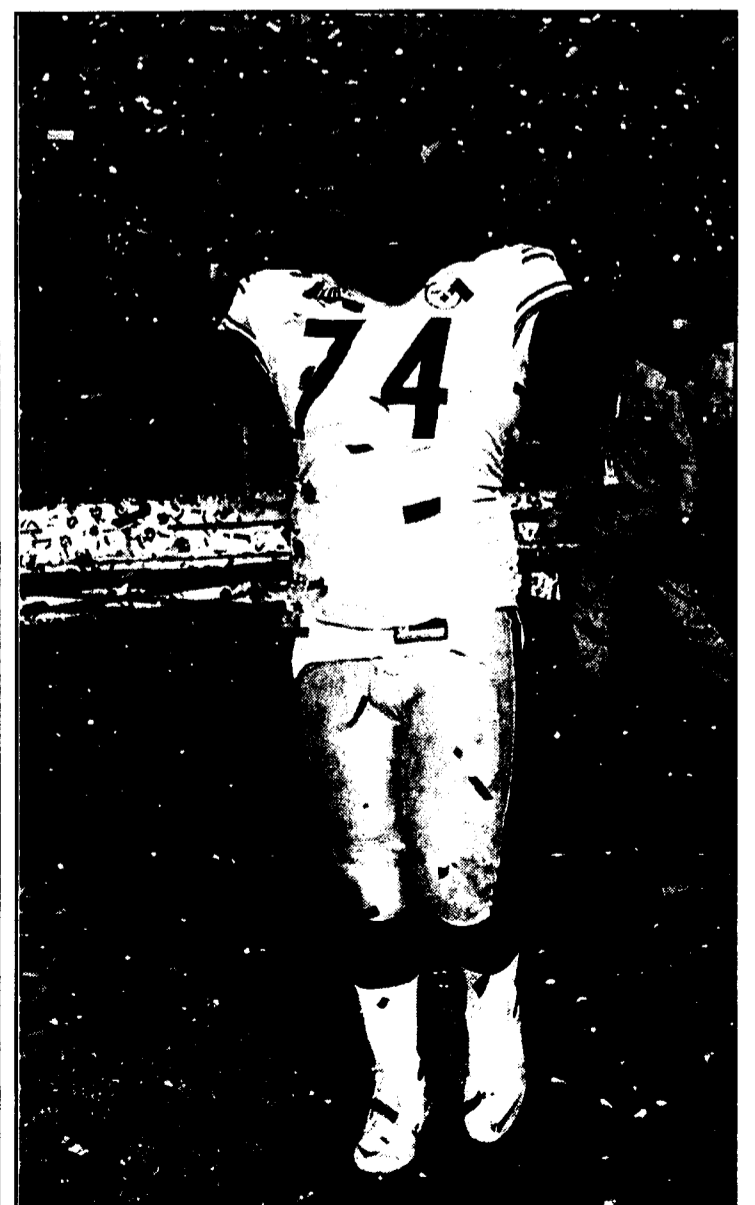
The standing are close with Rachel and Nick one win ahead of Connor. Christine follows closely behind while Matt is still in last place.

Want to play?

Email cen5056@psu.edu for a list of next week's games to see if you can "beat the experts".

Beat The Experts

	Connor	Matt	Rachel	Christine	Nick
NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL					
Wisconsin @ Penn State	Wisc.	Penn. St.	Penn. St.	Penn. St.	Wisc.
#6 Pitt @ DePaul	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.
Providence @ West Virginia	W.V.U.	W.V.U.	W.V.U.	Provid.	W.V.U
#16 Villanova @ #20 Syracuse	Syracuse	Villa.	Villa.	Villa.	Villa.
Seton Hall @ Rutgers	Rutgers	Rutgers	Rutgers	Rutgers	Rutgers
Setson @ USC Upstate	Setson	USC U.	USC U.	Setson	Setson
Jacksonville @ Mercer	Mercer	Jackson.	Jackson.	Jackson.	Mercer
North Florida @ Kennesaw St.	N. Fla.	N. Fla.	Kenn.	Kenn.	N. Fla.
Miami (FL) @ #3 Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke
NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL					
Penn State @ Michigan	Penn. ST.	Mich.	Penn. St.	Penn St.	Penn. St.
#23 Pitt @ Rutgers	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.
#25 DePaul @ #19 Notre Dame	Notre. D.	Notre D.	Notre. D.	Notre. D.	Notre D.
#8 N. Carolina @ #4 Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke	Duke
#12 Tennessee @ #13 Florida	Tenn.	Fla.	Tenn.	Tenn.	Tenn.
Marquette @ #1 Connecticut	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.
Long Beach St. @ Pacific	Pacific	L.B. St.	L.B. St.	L.B. St.	Pacific
UC Riverside @ UC Davis	UC Riv.	UC Dav.	UC Riv.	UC Dav.	UC Riv.
N. Dakota @ Seattle U	Seattle	Seattle	N. Dak.	N. Dak.	N. Dak.
Season Totals:	32-21	28-25	33-20	30-23	33-20



Wille Colon takes in the win amongst the confetti. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO