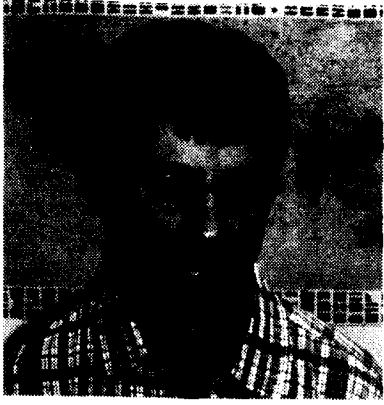


Steve Mayer spouts off



By Steven Mayer
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"And unlike most of the others in the press box, we didn't give a hoot in hell what was happening on the track. We had come there to watch the real beasts perform," wrote great American legend Hunter S. Thompson in 1970, accurately describing the depravity and degeneracy that surrounds the Kentucky Derby, the Super Bowl of the "Sport of Kings."

In many ways, this is my view of contemporary sports in America. My interest peaks, the innate, primitive bloodlust takes over, and I become enthralled when I witness neckless professional baseball players hopped-up on horse steroids attempt to deny investigative inquiries on national television, or when 7-foot mutants choke drunks at court-side. The only time when sports are really of any amusement is when human failure and barbarianism are on display for the world to see.

However, in recent years, entertainers performing at sporting events have become just as important as the athletes on the playing field.

Perhaps this is why I look forward to the all-star lineup of mediocrity that will be performing at the biggest single-day sporting event — the Super Bowl.

Unfortunately, the upcoming Super Bowl on February 6 will be a kinder, gentler sporting event, differing greatly from last year's national crisis in which the general public was held captive and forced to witness the horrors of the female body and improper use of the American flag.

This year's theme is "Building Bridges," according to the organizers of the event.

The collective dumbness will begin at the NFL Tailgate Party, which will feature American Idol winner Kelly Clarkson, the personification of everything inherently flawed in democracy.

Also performing is country "star" Gretchen Wilson, who will combine forces and talent with the Charlie Daniels Band, which will probably result in a white-trash hybrid run amok that has an affinity for the lost Confederate cause and rampant jingoism. You should not be surprised, --this is America-- David Duke once had some clout in the backwaters of Louisiana.

The night's main event, though, will be the Ameriquest Mortgage Super Bowl XXXIX Halftime Show, because whenever I think

of good, sincere rock music, I think of mortgage rates and the banking industry.

This tepid extravaganza stars thee Sir Paul McCartney. The only way this show could be interesting is if Sir Paul were to drop acid and scream, "I am the Walrus" continually until David Bowie, appearing as Ziggy Stardust, drags him off the field, bludgeons him, and returns to perform his album Diamond Dogs in its entirety. "This ain't Rock 'n' Roll — this is Genocide," has always been one of my favorite Bowie lyrics, and it also complements the times quite nicely.

If nothing else, this would at least be memorable and probably warrant taping a copy for future generations.

Since this article will appear after the big night, we will just have to wait and see if my dreams and wishes came true. Maybe I will find a happy medium. Some other famous limeys once sang, "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes you just might find, you get what you need." I can only hope.



Photo courtesy of Google Images

David Bowie would be a welcome addition to Steve Mayor's dream Super Bowl XXXIX Halftime Show.

Patriots can put dynastic touch on franchise

Patriots have a winning formula and expected to keep on winning after Superbowl.

By BARRY WILNER
AP Football Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. Copyright 2005 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed. - New England Patriots vs. Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl 2005. And 2006. And 2007.

Don't laugh. Both franchises are built to last, as much as any team can last in the topsy-turvy NFL of the salary-cap, free agency era.

Whether the Eagles win their first NFL championship since 1960 on Sunday, or the Patriots become the second team to win three Super Bowls in four years, both will be favorites to win conference titles next season. There is nothing fluky about either franchise.

"We try to use the same formula we use in business," Patriots owner Robert Kraft said. "And the primary thing is to get good people. And when you get good people who have a long-term commitment and share your vision on how you want to do things, then good things can happen."

Such as dominating the NFL in a period when parity is rampant and 8-8 teams make the playoffs. Not only has Kraft hired the right people - coach Bill Belichick, vice president of player personnel Scott Pioli - but Belichick and Pioli have brought in players who perfectly fit in Foxboro.

That's hardly luck. Sure, they

found Tom Brady in the sixth round of the 2000 draft, but they also held onto Brady by keeping four quarterbacks that season, the only team to do so, Pioli said. And when Drew Bledsoe got hurt in the second game of 2001, in stepped Brady, who has yet to lose a playoff game.

New England drafts well, particularly after the first round. Under the current regime, the Pats have also gotten receiver David Givens, center Dan Koppen, cornerback Asante Samuel and defensive lineman Jarvis Green in the fourth round or lower. In the second round have come starters Matt Light, Deion Branch and Eugene Wilson.

The Patriots search for a specific kind of player in the draft and, especially, in free agency. They always seem to find them: versatile, unselfish and eager to prove themselves.

"The system is a system that a player has to be selfless, have to be extremely competitive because of the very competitive environment, and it takes a lot of discipline," Pioli said. "When you talk about discipline, it's not about how long their hair is, or how much jewelry they wear. We have certain expectations of guys being in the right place at the right time and doing their job a certain way."

That's also where the versatility comes into play. So star receiver Troy Brown can become a nickel back. Linebackers Willie McGinest, Tedy Bruschi and Mike Vrabel can pop up anywhere on the field. Five receivers fit into the passing game, and Brady seems comfortable throwing to any of them.

When Belichick sought a run-

ning back to balance the offense, the Patriots traded for Corey Dillon, who was labeled a malcontent in Cincinnati. It turned out Dillon's problem was dealing with all the losing the Bengals do. As a Patriot, he set a team rushing record and could be a key against the Eagles.

New England is facing the possibility of losing clutch kicker Adam Vinatieri, receiver David Patten and starting guard Joe Andruzzi as free agents. And star cornerback Ty Law, whose 2005 salary cap hit is a prohibitive \$12.5 million.

More likely, as Brady noted, those teammates will stay.

"Anyone who plays on the Pats understands that our goal is a team goal," he said. "You make sacrifices to fit into a general structure of what the team is trying to accomplish."

What the Patriots are trying to accomplish is to equal the Cowboys' three titles in four seasons (1992, '93 and '95) under far more difficult circumstances. Just ask Jimmy Johnson, who coached the first two of those championship teams in Dallas.

"Yeah, I think they are a dynasty since the salary cap era," Johnson said. "I think the job Bill Belichick and that organization and his coaches have done might be the best coaching job ever in the history of the NFL. Because when you get free agency and player movement and you've got to get them ready to play not only every year but every week, a different group, you've got to be a pretty good football coach."

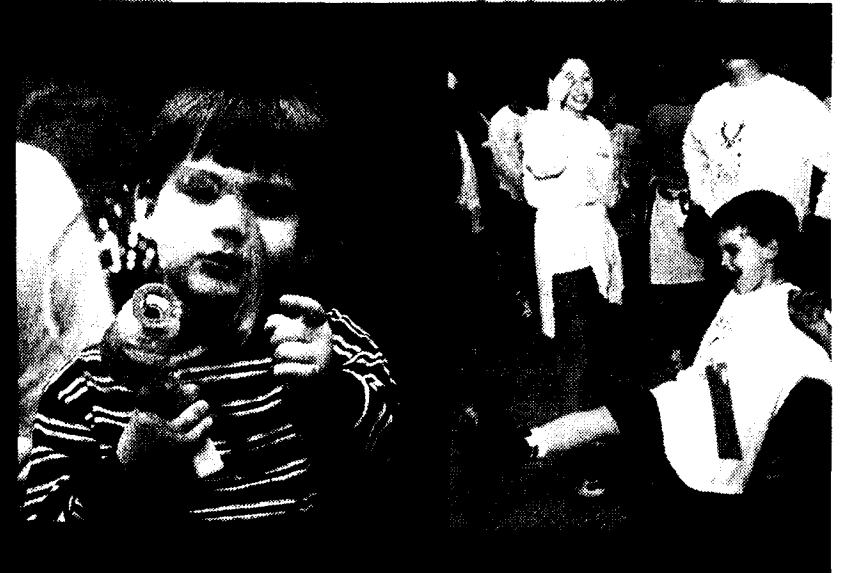
and Jon Ritchie - only losing Trotter would be particularly damaging.

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