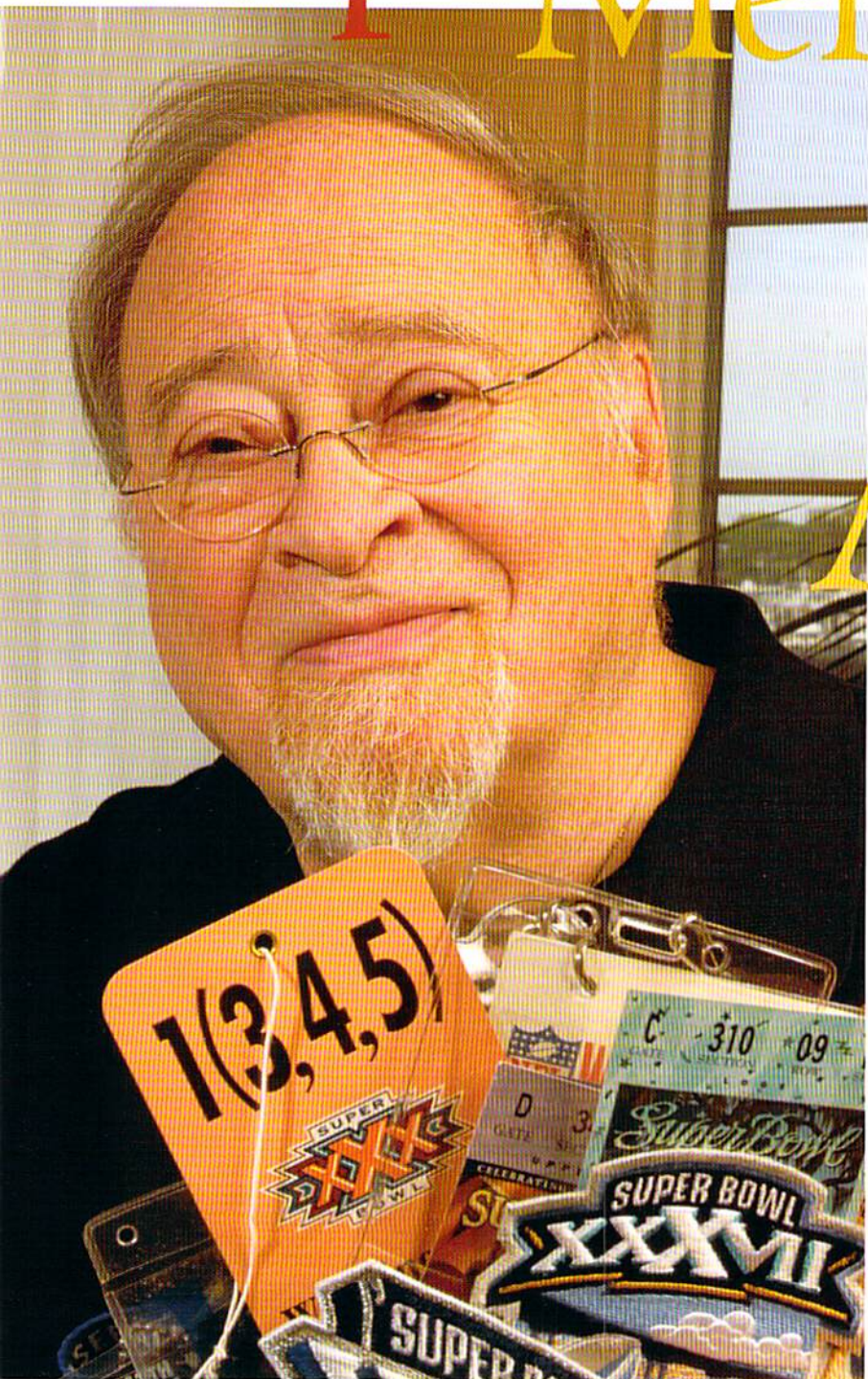


Super Memories



Star-Ledger columnist Jerry Izenberg has covered every Super Bowl—but it's the first three that he remembers most fondly *By Bill Glovin*

At Super Bowl XVII in 1983, *Star-Ledger* columnist Jerry Izenberg NCAS'52 was interviewing Washington Redskins lineman Dexter Manley on the Rose Bowl field in Pasadena, California, when he was rudely interrupted. "This woman wearing a tuxedo and derby came up to Dexter Manley, leaped into his arms, and said for all to hear, 'Your muscles are so big; you must be big *all over*.' I learned three things that day," says Izenberg. "One, that the woman was Downtown Julie Brown from MTV. Two, that Dexter preferred her to me. Three, that the Super Bowl had become a media circus and that writing about it had changed for good."

This February, Izenberg, 75, will travel to Detroit to cover Super Bowl XL, making him one of only five writers on the planet to have attended all 40 games since 1967. "I'm like a homing pigeon flying to Capistrano," he says, alluding to the fact if it's Super Bowl season, he's on a plane. Izenberg, a master of the mixed metaphor, adds, "If I added up all the miles I've traveled going to Super Bowls, I could probably fly to Saturn."

With 2,000 reporters and broadcasters given just 45 minutes with each team during the week before the game, Izenberg's access is limited. "At the first Super Bowl, which didn't even sell out, there were 13 reporters at a press conference," he says. "In those days, you could go to a player's room or meet a player or a coach at a coffee shop. When I reflect back, I rarely think about who won or the score. For me, it's all about the characters and special performances."

Here are a few of Izenberg's favorite memories from the early days:

Super Bowl I: Green Bay Packers 35, Kansas City Chiefs 10

"The thing I remember most about it was Packers receiver Max Magee, the greatest curfew breaker in the history of the National Football League. The night before the game, [Packers coach Vince] Lombardi looks right at Magee when telling the team that the winner's share for the game is \$15,000 and the fine for breaking curfew is \$10,000. 'If you think something's worth \$10,000, take me along,' Lombardi tells them.

"On the bus trip to the game in Los Angeles the next day, a hungover Magee tells some teammates, 'It's super Sunday and I'm a super sub, so I'm going to take a super nap.' The 35-year-old Magee is half asleep on the sideline when [Packer] Boyd Dowler goes down and Lombardi yells, 'Magee, Magee, Dowler's on the ground, get in the #&!@\$ game!'

"Well, Magee makes two unbelievable catches. One of his catches was the first Super Bowl touchdown ever scored. Later he tells me: 'It isn't fair to say I broke curfew since a couple of nights before I met this charming lady. The only decent thing to do was to pay my respects to her.'"

Super Bowl II: Green Bay Packers 33, Oakland Raiders 14

"A mano-a-mano battle between Raiders tackle Tom Keating and Packers guard Gale Gillingham in Miami was one of the most memorable encounters I've witnessed in my career. Keating had a badly swollen ankle that looked like a pregnant grapefruit, and Gillingham had dislocated his shoulder earlier in the year and was also hobbling. At one point, Keating breaks Gillingham's nose and there's blood all over the place. These guys were literally killing each other. They never let up and never said a word to each other. It was the Super Bowl that very few focused on."

Before that bowl . . .

"The bus is ready to head for the game, Lombardi gets on and spots someone he's never seen before. 'Who are you?' he asks. 'Coach, it's a long story,' says the guy. 'Well, make it a short story,' Lombardi tells him. He says something like, 'My name is Joe Schmukalovich and I'm crashing the game.' Lombardi asks him how he weaseled his way onto the bus, and the guy tells him that he simply walked on. 'I'm taking you,' says Lombardi. 'I like that kind of tenacity.'"

Super Bowl III: New York Jets 16, Baltimore Colts 7

"Jets offensive lineman Dave Herman's wife was incredibly nervous because her husband was matching up against the much-feared Colts defensive tackle Bubba Smith in Miami. After all, Smith was 6'7" and close to 310 pounds and Herman was at least 50 pounds lighter. She begged her husband not to play, but he took on Bubba and more than held his own, which was key to the Jets pulling the upset. When I

Izenberg's Super Picks

Greatest Game

Super Bowl XXXIV, 2000
Tennessee Titans vs. St. Louis Rams

Most Significant Super Bowl

Super Bowl IV, 1970
"When the Jets [of the AFL] beat the Colts [NFL] the previous year, it was perceived as an enormous upset. But Kansas City's [AFL] victory over Minnesota [NFL] proved that the AFL had arrived and that the two leagues were ready to merge."

Greatest Moment

Super Bowl XVIII, 1984
Los Angeles Raiders Marcus Allen's 74-yard, third-quarter touchdown run

Coaches

Marv Levy (most underrated)
Vince Lombardi (most charisma)
Bill Belichick (best football mind)

Greatest Performance

Super Bowl XXIX, 1995
San Francisco 49ers Steve Young's six touchdown passes

Favorite City

New Orleans
"Great food and music and accommodations for media."

Favorite Restaurant

Commander's Palace, New Orleans
"Don't go there if you have a mortgage."

asked him how he managed to contain Bubba, Dave told me, 'Coach [Weeb] Ewbank let us live with our families down here. After dealing with a new baby in our little hotel room for over a week, Bubba was a relief.'"

Bill Glavin is senior editor of RUTGERS MAGAZINE.