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What Super Bowl XLII Meant to Me



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Super Bowl XLII was, without a doubt, one of the all-time best. But, to me it had more far-reaching effects than just seeing the team I favored win it all. It was another way God spoke to me. Sound nuts? Read on.

Although I was raised in the Bronx, NY, I was never a Giants fans. My father was a Mets and Jets fan, so I became one, too (misery loves company, I guess). When I entered Wall Street in 1984, I found most of my colleagues were Giants fans, not Jets fans. And as a Jet fan, by the time December rolled around the only thing left to root for was the Giants *not* to make it. (Obviously, this strategy didn't work in 1986 and 1991.)

My football preferences stayed pretty much the same until the new millennium when my true Christian conversion took hold. There are ample articles that detail this so I won't rehash it, but I would like to note how the Giants ended up playing a significant role in my life.

Like many newbie Christians (I'm a born-again Catholic), I dove into my faith, which led me to a ministry called The Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I soon joined the NJ board and there I met a man named Lee Rouson. Lee played on both the 1986 and 1991 NY Giants Super Bowl teams. But, because he was one of only four NFL players who dared to challenge the NFL back then about their restricted free agent plan, in 1990 he was not allowed to play a down. Lee and the three others won their case 14 years later and helped free agency become part of the NFL, but the four made very little financially. Why do I share this? Read on.



When I told Lee of my career up until 2000, he told me that he believed I was the person God wanted him to hook up with and start a Christian financial services company geared toward professional athletes. Upon hearing this I said, "I can't be because I used to root for you to drop the ball and die like all other Giants." (Spoken like a true Jets fan). Despite this, we co-founded Trinity Financial Sports & Entertainment Management Company and well, the rest is history.

The second person to join our board was, of course, another former NY Giant player, Keith Elias. But God is always fair, and he soon showed he wears all jerseys by bringing into my life my all-time favorite sports figure and the NY Jets' greatest defensive player, Joe Klecko.



So how does all this play into the recent Super Bowl? It's coming.

The second person to join our board was, of course, another former NY Giant player, Keith Elias. But God is always fair, and he soon showed he wears all jerseys by bringing into my life my all-time favorite sports figure and the NY Jets' greatest defensive player, Joe Klecko. We soon became great friends and I now spend most NFL Sundays with Joe, many times watching his son, Danny, (who has three Super Bowl rings from the last five years) play.

The final piece of the puzzle about how I know God spoke to me through the Super Bowl comes via my involvement with the sports ministry Athletes in Action. The Tri-State chapter of AIA is led by a man named George McGovern who does chapel and Bible studies with both the Giants and Yankees. George and I have become heavily involved in building the ministry through the Giants and Yankees, which has allowed me to participate in chapel and Bible study groups with both teams. As I became more involved with the Giants, I not only found myself no longer rooting against them, but pulling for them--first for individual players I got to know, then the whole team. And, at the same time, I became disenchanted with the Jets organization for a reason I can't discuss, but I know every Jet fan would, too, if they experienced what I did.



Okay, I think enough groundwork has been laid so most can follow how God used the Super Bowl to speak to me.

Through most of the season, and especially in the months of November and December, I found it ironic that I, Peter Grandich, a former Giant hater, was defending the team and certain players to friends and the public-at-large. Most Giants fans won't admit it, but they were throwing certain players and the team in general under the bus. I wish I had a dollar for every "Eli must go" comment I heard or "the team doesn't have it," etc...

Now, I can't and won't divulge things I saw and heard in the sanctity of a chapel service or Bible study, but I must tell you how the end result was so God-inspired.

Let's start with the one subject I heard more of than any other: Eli Manning. The media and fans constantly chastised him for not being a so-called vocal leader. We were told he should be getting mad or fired up on the

field, and by not doing so he was hurting the Giants chances. My response back then was the same as now: being a leader isn't always John Wayne leading the Cavalry. Screaming and yelling aren't the best ingredients for any leader except maybe General Patton. What was not being considered was that his teammates were rallying around him because he didn't yell and scream. Even more important was the fact that since his first day as a NY Giant, he never once threw anybody under the bus except himself. His team, and especially his offensive teammates, knew that many of the so-called blames placed on Eli's back were none or only partially of his own making. But, unlike the big babies that get all the press (and the popcorn), Eli is a man of honor, humility and character, and that's what the majority of his teammates respect most. He's humble on and off the field. While our interactions have never been more than a handshake and a hello, I can tell you he was the same Eli every single time I saw him.



Another example of God using the Super Bowl as a way to speak to me is what many now consider to be the single greatest play in Super Bowl history—not the play itself, but the men involved. Of course, I am referring to Eli and an extremely special man, David Tyree.



And, like cream that always rises to the top, his unique character finally molded together with a team of destiny and now I think the greyhound buses are deservedly forever off his back. Just replay his acceptance speech at City Hall the day of the parade and compare it to the other Giant who spoke and you'll see a shining example of a Christian man.

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I'm convinced that TFSEM has prospered mostly because we use the company not for financial reward, but to philanthropically support Christian ministries, events and other charities. I realized a long time ago that professional athletes have a platform unlike any other from which to share their faith. So, through the Grace of God, we've been given the means to support many of their efforts.



No other NY Giants player I have met has done more to use his position to spread the Gospel than David Tyree. (Jay Feeley, their former kicker, used his celebrity to spread the Good News, but this past year he played for the Dolphins.) David made every Bible study, chapel and outside event he was asked to help with. His love for God pours out of

him. In fact, most didn't know that after the second game of the season, Dave personally wrote to each player telling him God had a plan for all of them and not to give up. (You can read about it at <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=27285> .) This took courage because not everyone wants to hear things like this, especially when the world is beating you down (how fast fans forget their feelings after starting 0-2).

I have had the honor of breaking bread with David, praying together and speaking to him and other players at Giants chapel and Bible study. David is not an attention-grabber. His thoughts pour from a heart so filled with the Holy Spirit. When you know of his past and how he became a Christian, you'll only then start to appreciate what that catch really means.

David is a great special teams player, but many of us knew he was also a very capable receiver. I won't begin to explain the politics and worldly ways of the NFL, but David never really got a chance to play much. When he did, he was like a vacuum cleaner—he caught everything thrown at him, especially the tough ones. So, it came as no surprise to see Dave catch a TD in the Super Bowl. Naturally, that would have been good enough, but we all know that wasn't the end of his great plays. The fact that Dave made that amazing catch and held on was not surprising to me or anyone who has watched him. However, what that game has led to appears to be a truly “Giant” leap for his faith and his desire to share it. Dave's persona is near perfect for being able to use and handle the fame. I believe he can, with the Grace of God, leverage this recognition into a permanent platform to share his faith while being greatly blessed in doing so. With the possible exception of Dave's loved ones, no one is more happy for him than I.

So how does this add up to God speaking to me?

- We're told not to judge, and if we must, not judge too quickly. Hindsight is 20-20, but be fair: were many judging Eli and giving him a verdict before it was time? Heck, Phil Simms took six years before becoming Giants lord. We all need to remember not to judge unless we want to be judged. “Judge not lest ye be judged.” Matthew 7:1
- Character is not what the world (or the media) tells us. It's God-given and Eli proved it. “We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Romans 5:3-4
- David Tyree gives hope to all. He may not be all things to all people at the moment, but with hard work, dedication and the right moral principles, all these are possible. “Be joyful in hope, faithful in prayer.” Romans 12:12

There are a couple of other points that were also inspiring:

- I watched the Super Bowl from the home of my all-time sports hero, Joe Klecko who, ironically, was also rooting for the Giants. So, the former anti-Giants fan and the greatest Jet player ever, both rooting for Giants proves “..but with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26
- Remember Lee Rouson and his falling out with the Giants? Lee recorded this song right after the Giants beat the Packers and spoke in the media about how the bondage of hurt was removed from him and led to this recording. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_4UinjCEBI It

received wide coverage in the New York area. “Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Colossians 3:13

So, this Super Bowl Giants team taught me much, thank God. But, before anyone gets the wrong impression, remember that although the Giants may be my number one football team, I am first and foremost a Joe Klecko fan. When the Jets finally do the right thing and help get him into the Hall of Fame, I then will surely root for both NY teams (who both happen to play in my new home-state of New Jersey).

... Now, if they change their names to the **NJ** Giants and **NJ** Jets, we’ll really know there was Divine intervention.

**Take a few minutes to watch this great You Tube tribute
to the Super Bowl Champion XLII Giants**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKBhcymWkd0>

