



Super Bowl XLI: Indianapolis Colts vs. Chicago Bears
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MORWICK IN MIAMI

Dear Peyton: Rub dirt on it

Youngsters take pen in hand to celebrate Super Bowl game

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The students at Pleasant Grove Elementary know what to do when they get hurt: just rub some dirt on it.

They picked up that bit of wisdom from watching one of Peyton Manning's television commercials. In letters they wrote for class, the Center Grove fifth-graders told the quarterback how much they liked his acting.

When students came to school the day after the Colts won the American Football Conference title, the fourth- and fifth-grade students were excited, teacher Mandy Hassell said.

Teachers capitalized on the enthusiasm.

Lessons about writing focused on the Colts. The children wrote letters to team players, stories about what it would be like to attend the Super Bowl, predictions about the outcome of the game, and poems.

Fourth-graders worked in groups to write renditions of "Twas the Night Before the Super Bowl," patterned after the Christmas poem.

In the hallway outside their classrooms, students placed life-sized paper cutouts of Colts players. Next to each player was a stanza or two from the poem.

The students wrote: "Field goal kicker Adam Vinatieri, Was stretching his hamstring, He had visions of kicking the ball, In between the posts it would fling."

Fifth-graders wrote letters to team players. Many asked questions about what it was like to be on the team, to play football and to handle the pressure of a big game.

Katherine Gulling wrote that she and her uncle watch all of the Colts games together. She promised to wear her jersey during the Super Bowl.

Many promised to see the team through the ups and downs of the game.

"Even though I'm just another fan, know we're cheering you on at home and would love to be

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STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/sroberson@thejournalnet.com

Pleasant Grove Elementary school teacher Debbie Shaw's students showed their support for the Indianapolis Colts.

there," wrote Rachel Gravens.

Students said they had been fans all through the season.

"I don't hope you will win, because I know you will win," Brent Ham said.

Others wanted to know how the Colts really feel about themselves.

"Who has the better offense, you or the Bears?" Kyle Estervelt asked Peyton Manning in his letter.

Another assignment involved students imagining what it would be like to be at the Super Bowl.

Essays contained descriptions of confetti flying, Gatorade being dumped and trophies being carried overhead.

Some students wrote about their forecast for a final score. Fifth-grader Justin McNeely predicted the Bears being tackled at the 50-yard line, with the Colts intercepting the pass to win the game.

Most students imagined large leads by the Colts. They wrote that fans' anticipation would be in waiting for the end of the game to celebrate a Super Bowl victory.

"I kept wanting to leap from my seat like a kangaroo, I was so happy the game was over. Let the celebration begin," Aaron Hunt wrote.

One fifth-grader pictured a heart-gripping, last-second victory by the Colts due to a field

goal by Vinatieri.

"We were not surprised that we would win by three. That was the best experience ever," Devin McDaniel wrote.

Some commentators have said the Manning playoff curse was beaten with the Colts AFC title win. But apparently one fifth-grader was not convinced.

"I think the Colts will win 38-28 as long as Peyton doesn't choke," Daniel O'Brien said.

One tiny fan may be signing her heroes up for more than they are ready to face.

"They are so good, they could beat every team in one day," Kaitlyn Grace wrote.

Others thought about all the fun times that would go along with a trip to the Super Bowl.

"At the game, I would buy lots of jerseys, foam fingers and lots of food," Emily Hoard wrote.

Another fifth-grader even predicted a Bears victory. But he had to admit the two teams playing against each other would make for a great game.

"Peyton Manning's offense against Brian Urlacher's defense. That will be a great matchup," Alex Aukerman wrote, coming close to the proper spelling of Urlacher.

One student's prediction was based solely on the physics of the mascot.

"A small horse can beat a bear any day because a bear is too slow," Kara Johnson wrote.

WHAT THEY SAID

EDITOR'S NOTE — Students from Pleasant Grove Elementary School wrote letters, poems and songs about Super Bowl XLI and the NFL conference championship games. Here's a sampling of some of what they wrote. Visit thejournalnet.com for the complete collection:

Dear Reggie Wayne,
 Congratulations on the win. You guys made an amazing comeback. I'm really glad you made it to the Super Bowl. You had a fabulous game! Good luck in the big game; I hope you win MVP. I also wanted to ask you if I could please have one of your gloves or an autograph.
 Your #1 Fan,
Corey Music

Dear Peyton,
 My name is Rachel Knies. I'm one of your biggest fans. I watch almost every game (sometimes I don't get to see it all because I have to go to bed). To me you are a very inspiring role model. You're a good thrower and that will help in beating the Bears. I know you are nervous but we have all been there plus I know you'll do great. Please tell Marlin Jackson that was an awesome catch. Every team dreams of going to the Super Bowl you guys are doing great. Just concentrate on the ball not the fans. Oh by the way could you send me an autographed poster?
 Your biggest fan,
Rachel Knies

Dear Mr. Peyton Manning,
 How are you doing? I'm really looking forward to the Super Bowl. How about you? You guys are going to do great. Don't tell anyone else, but you're my favorite Colts Player. How is Ashley? Well good luck at the Super Bowl.
 Your #1 Fan,
Sydney Piercefield

Dear Peyton,
 You will do great at the Super Bowl you are inspiring for all of us. Work on some of your plays. Can you send me an autograph football?
 Your #1 fan,
Chris Crowder

Dear Peyton Manning,
 I am your biggest fan. I was at the game against the Patriots. It was a great football game. I thought you were a good athlete. You did a lot of quarterback sneaks. I hope you win the Super Bowl. What are you going to do to win the Super Bowl?
 Your biggest fan,
Austin Shumate

Crowd growing bigger as game draws nearer

MIAMI

The moment we've been waiting for is getting closer. Here's how I know.

The crowded, congested downtown is exponentially more crowded and congested today than it was during any other day of the week.

You've probably heard how horrific Miami traffic is. It's that and much, much worse.

The Super Bowl isn't helping.

When I arrived to catch this morning's media shuttle in front of the downtown Hyatt, the first thing I saw was a long line of cars packed with people arriving at the hotel (I'm guessing) for the game.

What I didn't see in the sea of confusion was my shuttle, which arrives and departs promptly every half hour, all day every day, from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m.

It was late. The traffic caused it to be.

That was my first clue that the kickoff is indeed rapidly approaching.

My second occurred at the media center, where the 3,500-odd (you can take that anyway you want) journalists covering the game began picking up game-day credentials.

Today was the first day to do so. It was obvious by the line of humanity outside the credential center that resembled a Saturday afternoon queue to ride The Beast at Kings Island (OK, it wasn't that bad, but it wasn't that good).

My third and final clue that the game is at hand occurred when I had my game-day credential in hand.

Critical mass is on the horizon. Well, sort of.

Today is still pretty much the same as the day before and the day before and the day before and the day before: News conferences, news conferences, news conferences, news conferences — and more news conferences.

Will the game ever get here? No doubt players are thinking the same thing. If they weren't sick of answering the same questions over and over by Wednesday, you can bet your cold-weather gear hat they are now.

If you don't believe me, take it from Colts offensive tackle Ryan Diem.

"I didn't know we were going to do this every day," Diem said. "I knew we had media day on Tuesday. I didn't know we had to do it every day. It's been interesting. I've got a lot of the same questions over and over, but that's part of the job."

Hang in there, Ryan. Only two more days to go, and then the real circus begins.

Remembering high school

Most of the questions Bears quarterback Rex Grossman has fielded this week have been unpleasant, to say the least.

He's answered thousands, and each revolve around a few common themes: Why are you so terrible? Would you bench yourself if you were Bears coach Lovie Smith? What would you write about your wretched games if you were a reporter? Did you know Peyton Manning is great and you're not?

Somehow, the Bloomington native has maintained a smile throughout. He's not lost his cool or caved with flip, sarcastic or demeaning answers.

REPORTERS' **NOTEBOOKS**

Daily Journal staff report

But what if they lose?

You have your blue Colts jersey ready, a smorgasbord of food prepared for the game and money saved to buy a Colts Super Bowl championship T-shirt, hat, sweat shirt and commemorative DVD.

But what if the Colts lose? It's normal to feel a sense of loss, said John R. Schafer, director of the counseling center at Franklin College.

"It can be a disturbing event in your life," he said.

Schafer offered the following tips to help fans cope with a possible loss:

- Keep the loss in perspective; it's not the end of the world.
- Be responsible with alcohol consumption. Drinking too much makes it easier to react aggressively and in unhealthy ways. Plan ahead to limit alcohol.
- Remember, there is always a chance for victory in the future.
- Remind yourself of your true priorities in life, such as family, friends and faith.

Roger Fisher, a licensed clinical social worker with Indianapolis Psychiatric Associates, offered the following advice:

- Look at the team's effort and remember they went further than they ever have.
- Get together with friends and family and commiserate together. Talk about the game and overall season. Remember the potential for a Super Bowl championship next year.
- Find ways to continue to support the team. The city likely will have a rally to support the team, win or lose.
- If your team wins, keep any ribbing with friends who supported the losing team in good nature.

Colts fan in enemy zone

A Colts fan in Boston couldn't help but laugh at the Patriots party supply discounts this week.

James Fisher, a Whiteland Community High School graduate, was happy to see New England Patriots items marked 50 percent off after the team lost to the Colts.

The grocery store apparently loaded up on Patriots party supplies expecting the team to make

it to the Super Bowl, Fisher said.

His father, also James Fisher, still lives in Whiteland.

The elder Fisher sent his son Colts posters to decorate his office and home for the conference championship game, he said.

Since he works in downtown Boston, he was glad no Patriots victory parade will pass by his office window, Fisher said.

He's hosting a Super Bowl party at his house. He said his e-mail invitations featured a photo of Patriots quarterback Tom Brady being sacked by the Colts' Dwight Freeney.

True blue fan

Betty Hite said her Colts decorations get better every year.

Throughout her home, she has jerseys, T-shirts, blankets, pom-poms and bobblehead dolls.

She adds blue and white confetti to a village of small houses. She paints her fingernails blue.

Neighbors and passersby know she's a fan as soon as they see the large Colts football player and wagon in front of her house.

Hite decorates her son's grave for holidays. This year, she added the Super Bowl. She clipped faces

of Colts players from the newspaper and put them on a poster.

She wasn't discouraged when it was stolen, she just made another. She plans to keep the decorations up long after the Super Bowl.

Youngster's on the ball

Bargersville resident Kyra Baker made a paper necklace and card-board poster for the Super Bowl.

She'll wear her Peyton Manning jersey and Colts blue beads while shouting herself hoarse Sunday.

The 4-year-old feels a special connection with the Colts: Running back Dominic Rhodes gave her a football after the Dec. 18 game against the Cincinnati Bengals. The Baker family had first-row seats near the players' entrance tunnel.

Rhodes just noticed her, pointed and tossed her the ball, said her mother, Cara Baker.

More than a month later, Kyra still tells everyone she sees around town and at church that Rhodes gave her the game ball. After the season ends, her parents plan to send it off to be signed.

Web extra: For the complete text of notebook items, visit thejournalnet.com.

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