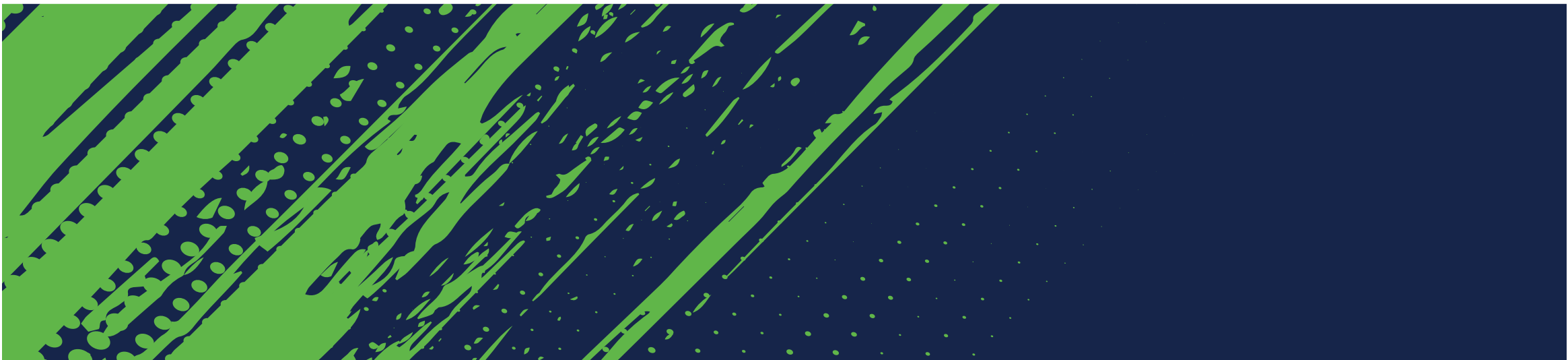
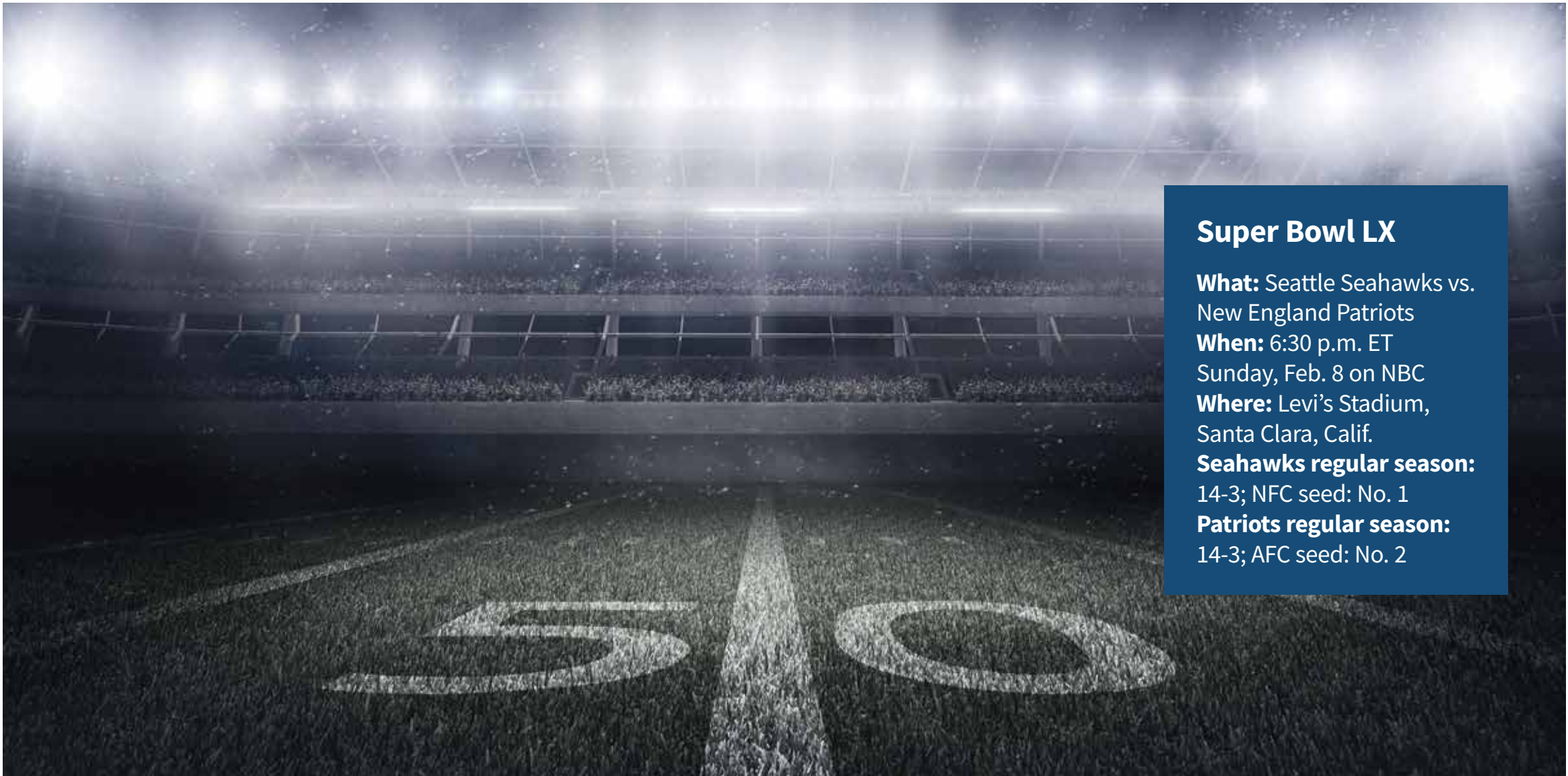




BIG GAME **PREVIEW**





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Inside Super Bowl LX

The NFL's highly anticipated championship match has been set, with the Seattle Seahawks facing the New England Patriots at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif.

This will be the second time this venue has hosted the big game, following Super Bowl 50 in 2016. In that earlier title contest, the Denver Broncos defeated the Carolina Panthers, 24-20, in the final game of quarterback Peyton Manning's career.

The Patriots will represent the AFC in February after knocking off the Broncos, while Seattle claimed the NFC crown after beating the Los Angeles Rams. This is a rematch of 2014's big game, when the Patriots defeated the Seahawks, 28-24. New England completed a perfect road record in snowy Denver, finishing 9-0 this season away from Gillette Stadium to advance to their league-leading 12th title contest.

New England would also have been playing a rematch if the Rams won the NFC championship. The Patriots have beaten the Rams twice in the Super Bowl, 20-17 in 2001 and 13-3 in 2018. That second victory against Los

Angeles was the Patriots' most recent title, with quarterback Tom Brady and head coach Bill Belichick on the sidelines. For Super Bowl LX, New England will be led by Drake Maye and Mike Vrabel, respectively.

Meanwhile, the Seahawks' top-ranked scoring defense has been celebrated for their speed and physicality. Seattle will look to limit explosive plays from Maye, who's already been sacked 15 times this post-season. On the other side, journeyman Seattle quarterback Sam Darnold remains something of a question mark. He played far better in the first half of the regular season, but then

seemed to regress late in the year. In fact, Darnold had a lower quarterback rating during the regular season than he did in 2024 before being let go by Minnesota. (Thankfully, he had that stingy defense.)

The NFL continues its tradition of gala halftime performances, following recent appearances by the likes of Lady Gaga, Justin Timberlake, Shakira, the Weeknd, Usher, Kendrick Lamar and Jennifer Lopez. Headlining this year's LX championship game is Bad Bunny. Mike Tirico and Cris Collinsworth will call the big game from the booth; Melissa Stark and Kaylee Hartung are set to report from the sidelines.

Super Bowl LX

What: Seattle Seahawks vs. New England Patriots

When: 6:30 p.m. ET
Sunday, Feb. 8 on NBC

Where: Levi's Stadium,
Santa Clara, Calif.

Seahawks regular season:
14-3; NFC seed: No. 1

Patriots regular season:
14-3; AFC seed: No. 2

Patriots: Breaking NFL Records — Again

The Patriots aren't just returning to the NFL's biggest stage. New England will set a new record before the opening kickoff on Feb. 8 inside Levi's Stadium.

The Patriots have already made the most Super Bowl appearances ever, with 11. This now makes a dozen.

Once things get underway, the Patriots will also be vying for an even more vaunted place in history: Currently, New England is tied with the Pittsburgh Steelers for the record with 6 victories in the big game. It's been seven years since the Patriots' last title match — and they've made a change at both the coach and quarterback positions since then.

Their AFC championship game win over the Denver Broncos marked New England's 40th total playoff win, tied with the San Francisco 49ers for the most in league history. The Patriots are currently 6-5 in the Super Bowl. They won in 2001 (20-17 over the then-St. Louis Rams), 2003 (32-29 over the Carolina

Panthers), 2004 (24-21 over the Philadelphia Eagles), 2014 (28-24 over the Seattle Seahawks), 2016 (34-28 over the Atlanta Falcons) and 2018 (13-3 over the Los Angeles Rams). New England lost in 1985 (Chicago Bears, 46-10), 1996 (Green Bay Packers, 35-21), 2007 (New York Giants, 17-14), 2011 (New York Giants, 21-17) and 2017 (Philadelphia Eagles, 41-33).

The Patriots are currently tied with the Broncos with a league-leading five Super Bowl losses. Still, all of that adds up to a truly remarkable stat: The Patriots have appeared in 20% of all Super Bowls. Ironically, this year's AFC championship was New England's first-ever playoff victory in Denver. New England had never won there in four previous tries.

Head coach Mike Vrabel will now try for his own personal record as the first coach to win



TENNESSEE TITANS/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

a Super Bowl as a player and then as a coach with the same franchise. (Vrabel was part of the Patriots' 2004 championship team.) At 23 years and 162 days old, his signal-caller Drake Maye will be the second-youngest quarterback to start in the big game. The youngest remains Dan Marino, who was 23 years and 127 days old on game day with the Dolphins in 1983.

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Seahawks: Sam Darnold's Comeback Story

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Sam Darnold was the No. 3 overall pick in 2018's NFL Draft but it took almost eight years, four previous teams and nearly 3,000 pass attempts before he reached the NFL championship game.

Despite all of that adversity, the ex-New York Jets, Carolina Panthers, San Francisco 49ers and Minnesota Vikings quarterback completed 25 of 36 passes for 346 yards, three touchdowns and no interceptions against the Los Angeles Rams to help the Seattle Seahawks to a 31-27 victory — and their fourth conference title.

He'll now face the New England Patriots in this year's Super Bowl LX. He shared the 2018 NFL Draft class with Baker Mayfield and future NFL MVPs Josh Allen and Lamar Jackson, but has now become the first to win a conference title as a starter. Before this year, Darnold's biggest claim to NFL fame was as a backup two years ago when San Francisco advanced to the Super Bowl.

He later led the Vikings to a 14-3 record in 2024, but Minnesota let him go in favor of J.J.

McCarthy following a shaky performance in last year's 27-9 wild-card loss to the same Los Angeles Rams. Darnold went on to sign a then-surprising three-year \$105 million deal with the Seahawks, who hadn't advanced to the Super Bowl since a pair of appearances with quarterback Russell Wilson in 2013-2014.

Darnold made the most of his next chance, completing a career-best 68% of his passes last season for more than 4,000 yards and 25 touchdowns. As with the NFC Championship Game, he was at his best when it mattered most in 2025. That hadn't always been the case.

Darnold was expected to turn the floundering Jets around when he became their Top 5 pick. But in three terrible years, New York went 13-25 as he threw 39 interceptions against 45 touchdowns, averaging fewer than 7



TENNESSEE TITANS/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

yards per attempt. By early 2021, Darnold had been traded to the Panthers for a trio of picks. He didn't improve over the next two seasons. Carolina let him go and Darnold landed as a backup to San Francisco's Brock Purdy in 2023. He signed with the Vikings and career highs in completion percentage, yards, touchdowns and passer rating followed.

Now, he's Super Bowl-bound.



This Year's Key Matchups

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The Seattle Seahawks take on the New England Patriots in this year's Super Bowl game. Here's a look at some key matchups and statistics that could determine the winner.

PATRIOTS QB DRAKE MAYE VS. SEATTLE'S DEFENSE

As the old saying goes, defense wins championships. Seattle has an elite unit. NFL teams have struggled to run against the Seahawks, in particular with designed plays. In fact, their opponent success rate on designed runs is the lowest in the league. They went almost 30 games without allowing a 100-yard rusher. At the same time, the Patriots are the NFL's best in passing offense. So in order to win, New England will have to put the ball in Drake Maye's hands and let him improvise as needed.

Seattle also allowed the fewest regular-season points with just 16.4 per game. They got better into the playoffs, holding San Francisco to a pair of field goals. (The Seahawks also had three takeaways, while forcing three turnovers on downs.) Meanwhile, Maye put

up some gaudy numbers: He led the league in completion percentage, passer rating and yards per attempt.

More importantly in this game, however, is his knack for making plays on the run, even on deep passes. Maye used his legs to make key plays in both the wild-card round and AFC title game.

SEAHAWKS TURNOVERS VS. PATRIOTS TURNOVERS

New England and Seattle are champions of their respective conferences, and Seahawks quarterback Sam Darnold made the Pro Bowl, but one negative stat nevertheless stands out: turnovers.

Seattle committed 28 turnovers during the regular season, second only to the Minnesota Vikings. Darnold led all NFL players with 20 turnovers, though he performed much better in



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the playoffs. On the other sideline, Patriots quarterback Drake Maye began as a fumble machine in the playoffs. He'd already lost three of six before finally cleaning things up in the Denver win to advance. (He also had a tipped-ball pick against the Los Ange-

les Chargers.)

Injuries on the Seattle side and New England's youth may be a factor in all of this. Darnold was playing through an oblique injury and the Patriots are playing with four undrafted free agents and all 11 draft picks from 2025.

History of the Big Game

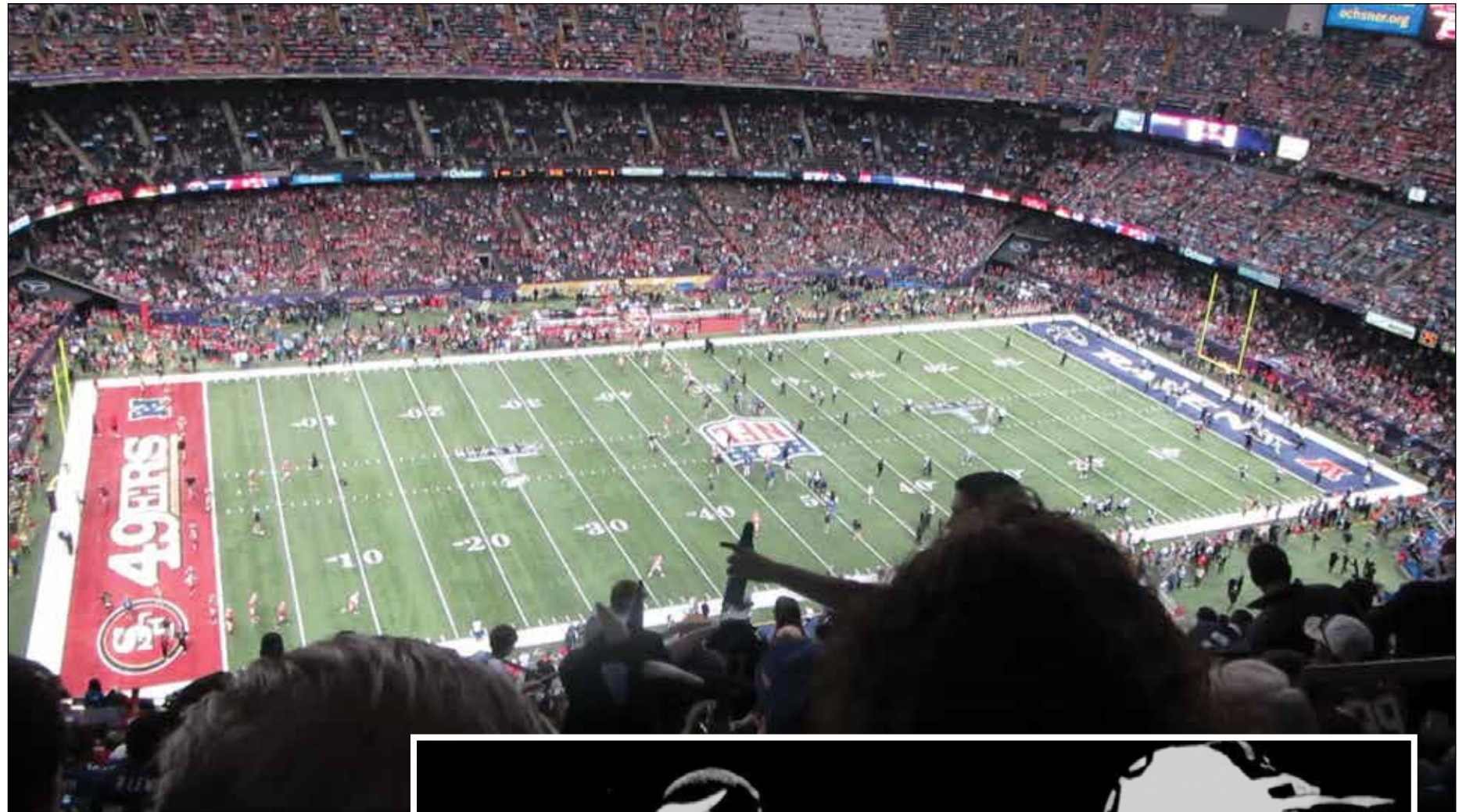
There was no Super Bowl until the NFL merged with the rival American Football League in the late 1960s.

They agreed to a season-ending title match, which began in 1967 as the AFL-NFL World Championship Game. Tickets cost just \$12. Dubbed the Super Bowl a few years later, the game eventually gave rise to a series of gridiron legends.

Tom Brady won a league-leading five Super Bowl MVP awards, including four with the New England Patriots and one with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The San Francisco 49ers' Joe Montana and Kansas City Chiefs' Patrick Mahomes earned three. The Green Bay Packers' Bart Starr, Pittsburgh Steelers' Terry Bradshaw and New York Giants' Eli Manning won the award twice. Starr, Bradshaw and Mahomes are the only back-to-back MVPs.

The Buccaneers' Doug Williams became the first black quarterback to win the game and its MVP award in 1988. Fast forward to 2023, and the big game featured two black QBs for the first time in league history, as Mahomes faced off against the Philadelphia Eagles' Jalen Hurts.

The Patriots, this year's AFC champion, share the record of 6 total Super Bowl victories with the Steelers. The Minnesota Vikings are tied for most losses, going 0-4 along with the Buffalo



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Bills. They join a list of 12 NFL clubs without Super Bowl titles, also including the Cleveland Browns, Jacksonville Jaguars, Houston Texans, Cincinnati Bengals, Buffalo Bills, Los Angeles Chargers, Arizona Cardinals, Atlanta Falcons, Carolina Panthers and Tennessee Titans. Four — the Browns, Jaguars, Lions and Texans — have never advanced to the big game.

Over the years, Super Bowl Sunday became something of a cultural holiday in the U.S. Industry experts predict that billions of chicken wings will be consumed while Americans spend a billion more on beer. In total, food consumption on

this day is second only to Thanksgiving. The halftime show eventually became its own big draw too, though the first Super Bowl with a singer

wasn't held until 1970. The combination of championship football, family fun and a huge musical draw led to blockbuster ratings.

The game now regularly bests viewership totals that had stood since the 1983 finale of *M*A*S*H*, which drew 105.97 million total viewers.



ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 13 JANUARY 1975/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Going to the Big Game

This year's championship game will be held at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., in the Bay Area. A wide range of events will take place around the game.

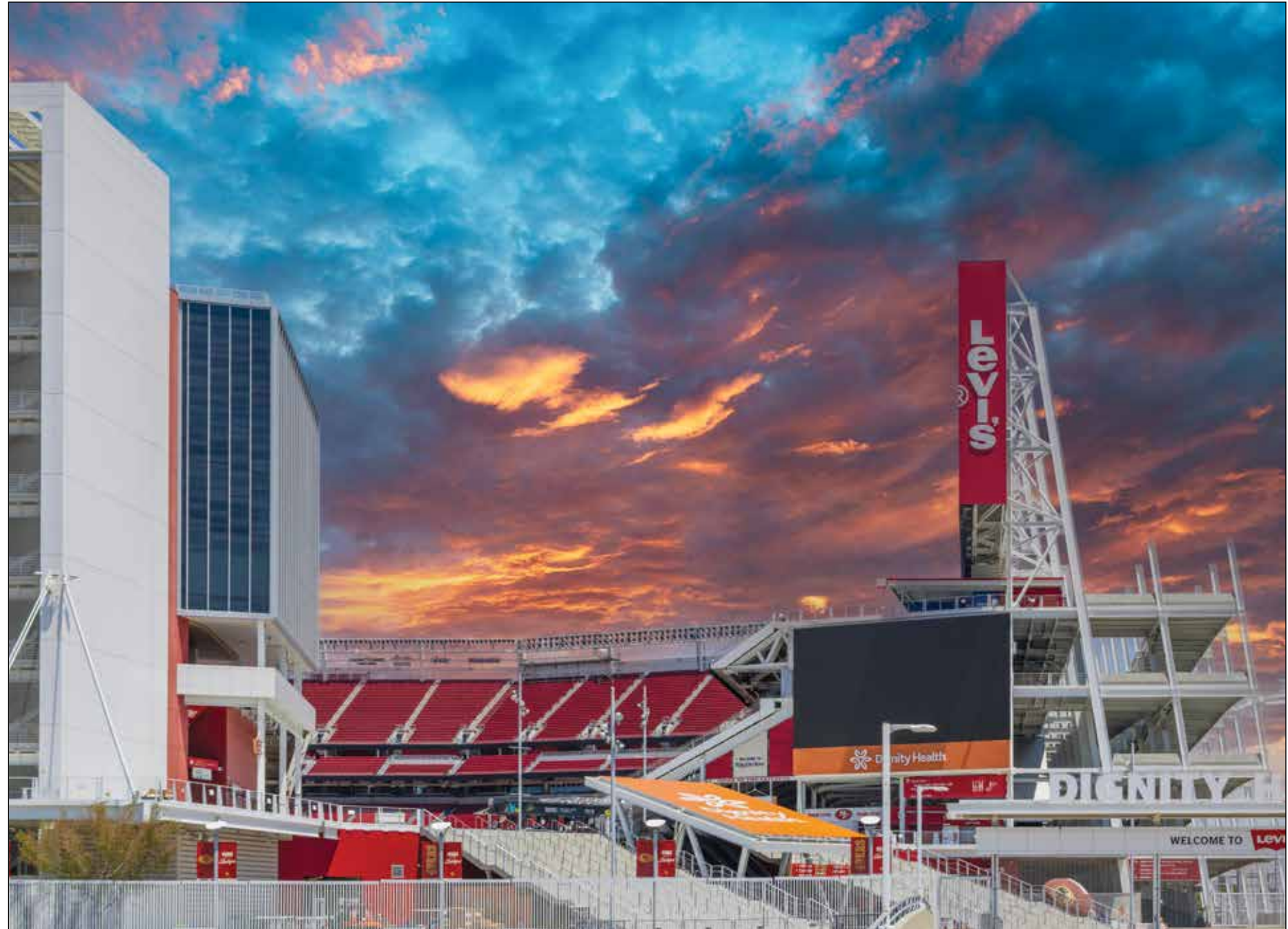
Here are several related events that show how the Super Bowl is much more than a football game.

TASTE OF THE NFL

Andrew Zimmern and Carla Hall will host the Taste of the NFL on Saturday, Feb. 7, at The Hibernia, 1 Jones St., San Francisco. This even brings together NFL legends and culinary superstars from around the Bay Area with a curated menu of dishes reflecting the culinary diversity and innovative spirit of San Francisco. Event proceeds benefit GEN-YOUth, fighting youth food insecurity across the United States.

SUPER BOWL EXPERIENCE

This interactive fan festival will run Feb. 4-7 at the Moscone Center in San Francisco. There will be immersive exhibits, player appearances and entertainment for the whole family. Visit the NFL Interactive Zone to test your skills, listen to panel discussions from NFL analysts and Hall of Famers, take pictures with the Lombardi Trophy,



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enjoy concerts and witness surprise celebrity appearances.

The Players Tailgate 2026

Hosted before the big game on Sunday, The Players Tailgate features more than 50 active NFL players, celebrities and guests. The show will be emceed by Sage Steele, host of The Sage Steele Show, and entertainment will be provided by DJ Irie. The event features

open premium bars and all-you-can-eat dining from host chefs Marcus Samuelsson, Marc Murphy and Aaron May.

NFL HONORS 2026

The NFL's annual awards presentation is held the week of the big game in San Francisco. Awards handed out include Associated Press Most Valuable Player, AP Offensive

and Defensive Player of the Year, Offensive Rookie of the Year, Defensive Rookie of the Year, Comeback Player of the Year, Coach of the Year and Assistant Coach of the Year.

Other awards presented include the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year award, Moment of the Year, Art Rooney Award, Deacon Jones Award, Jim Brown Award, and

the Don Shula NFL High School Coach of the Year.

SHAQ'S FUN HOUSE

The Shaq's Fun House party isn't in San Francisco, but in New Orleans, last year's host city. It will be held Feb. 6 at Mardi Gras World and feature performances by John Summit, Ludacris and Shaq himself as DJ Diesel.

Watching for the Commercials?

For many viewers, the NFL's title match is appointment viewing — even if they don't have a favorite team playing for the Lombardi Trophy.

That's because the advertisements associated with the Super Bowl have become so popular over the years. They've become eye-poppingly expensive, too.

This year's Super Bowl LX will feature the New England Patriots, the Seattle Seahawks and the priciest commercials in NFL history. A single 30-second spot will cost around \$8 million this year, according to AdWeek. That's up from \$7 million in 2024.

So, the commercials you watch during the big game are costing advertisers about \$266,666 per second on the air. Interest is so great, however, that all of the advertising slots were sold out by last September — months before the broadcast.

More than 100 million viewers are expected to tune in, creating a prime opportunity for companies to leave a lasting impression. Some of the most famous spots have included Coca-Cola's "Hey Kid, Catch" in 1980, Apple's original Macintosh commercial in 1984, Budweiser's "Whassup?" in 2000 and Snickers' "You're Not You When You're Hungry" ad with



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Betty White in 2010.

It wasn't always like this. The price for an ad for the first Super Bowl broadcast back in 1967 was roughly \$37,500. The average number of viewers was 26.8 million back then. By 1968, 70 million Americans had tuned in to Super Bowl II and commercial

time was selling for \$150,000 a minute. In 1977, they sold for \$250,000 a minute. Spots were \$1 million in 1985. They reached seven figures in the mid-'90s, when ads for the XXIX edition went for \$1.15 million.

More and more people were watching — sometimes, yes,

just for the commercials. The 2024 edition was the most-watched Super Bowl of all time, and the most-watched broadcast in the U.S. since the moon landing in 1969. Companies are now paying as much as \$4.5 million for pre-game ads, according to Variety.

The internet has only

attracted more viewers. The LIX edition drew a record-breaking 127.7 million viewers across television and streaming platforms. That marked an historic milestone as streaming viewership nearly equaled traditional viewership numbers for the first time.