

**Commentary**

# Super Journey for the Super Chargers

As I stepped off the airplane and felt the warm, humid air soak my skin, excitement shot through my body. I was on my way to watch Super Bowl XXIX (or 29 for you who can't read Roman numerals) at Joe Robbie Stadium in Miami, Fla.

**Straight From the Gully**



**SCOTT GULBRANSEN**

What made the journey even more exciting was the fact that my team had made it to the big game. A team no one gave a chance to even get past the first round of the National Football League playoffs. I am, of course, speaking of the San Diego Chargers.

Growing up in San Diego since I was eight years old, I had become a Charger fan in the heyday of the franchise - the early 1980's. My heroes were Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Fouts, wide receiver extraordinaire Charlie Joiner, bruising defensive lineman Louie Kelcher, running back Chuck Muncie and the incomparable Kellen Winslow, who is the finest tight end to ever suit up in the NFL.

But one thing I never saw as a young boy and adolescent growing up in America's finest city was my beloved Chargers in the Super Bowl.

This past season, 17 years of hoping and wishing finally came true as the "Bolts" finally made it to America's biggest game.

*Their competition: the mighty San Francisco 49ers. A team, after watching them dismantle my beloved Chargers, I feel to be one of the best to ever step on the playing field.*

The Chargers made the trip to Miami by winning two exciting and close games in the first two rounds of the playoffs. So the East Coast media and odds makers in Las Vegas made the Chargers the biggest underdog in Super Bowl history. But that didn't phase me. I was a true and loyal fan and I thought my team had a shot—no matter how slim the chances were.

So I spent the money to travel to Florida to watch and support my team—win or lose.

The Super Bowl is known as one of the biggest week long parties outside of New Orleans' famous Mardi Gras celebration. It lived up to its billing for most of my journey. The night before the game, I gathered for a private Charger party that was thrown by the some 2,000 San Diego faithful that had made the trip from the West Coast.

It was one helluva time. It was a dream come true for a displaced Charger fan like myself. Lighting bolt T-shirts and hats everywhere. It was just what the doctor ordered for a city marred by an economic slump. It gave people who were down and out something to cheer for and something that brought a city to-

gether. Although we were all 3,000 miles away from our favorite city, we all felt a bond. Something that had been lacking in previous years.

It was as though the game took a back seat to the experience. Maybe that was different for the players but as fans we were glad to be there. We were glad the world looked at San Diego for another reason. San Diego was being noticed for its football, not its luscious beaches and exciting night life.

I don't know if I ever thought the Chargers couldn't win. Sure, I heard what all the experts said, and, in retrospect, they were correct. But as a true fan I refused to give up on the Chargers.

Finally, it was game time. The stadium was filled, the pre-game show was underway and butterflies circled my stomach. Adrenaline zinged through my veins.

"They're going to do it," I whispered to my girlfriend.

Then it happened.

Steve Young passed to Jerry Rice on the third play of the game.

Touchdown! The 49ers took the quick 7-0 lead and that would be the closet San Diego would come to being in the game.

I had a sinking feeling in my stomach. I knew what was about to happen. I kept telling myself, "They're the youngest team in the NFL, they'll be back." But who knows if they'll ever be back to the Super Bowl. That thought threw me straight into depression.

Finally, it ended. San Francisco 49, the Bolts 26.

About an hour after the game, my depression turned into satisfaction. What a great season to be a San Diego Charger fan. They were the best team in the AFC in 1994-95 and no one, not even the East Coast-biased press, can ever take that away.

I also truly believe that the 49ers would have beaten anyone they faced in the Super Bowl. That's how good that team was.

As I flew home on Monday night, I reflected on my experience. It as one I will never forget.

For one shining moment, the eyes of the world were on the San Diego Chargers. And having followed them for 17 years, no one was more proud at that moment than this reporter.

A memo to the AFC: The Bolt is back—and this time it's for good!

—Scott Gulbransen is a former Rebel Yell sports writer and current Opinion Editor. He spent this past weekend in Miami at Super Bowl XXIX.

## A listing of sporting events

**Today**  
Runnin' Rebels at UC Irvine.  
Men's tennis at Rolex In-

## UNLV Sports Schedule

door Nationals, Dallas, Texas.  
Lady Rebel tennis at Rolex Indoor Nationals, Dallas.

**Friday**  
Men's tennis vs. UNR, Fertitta Complex 1 p.m.  
Hustlin' Rebels vs. New Mexico, Wilson Stadium 3:05 p.m.  
Lady Rebel basketball vs. UC

Irvine, South Gym 7:30 p.m.  
Intramurals SOA preseason basketball tournament.  
Lady Rebel tennis at Rolex Indoor Nationals, Dallas.

**Saturday**  
Hustlin' Rebels vs. New Mexico, Wilson Stadium 1:05 p.m.

## Corner

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due anyway." Riley said he lost in a playoff last summer to go to the Masters.

"A lot of people would be happy just going there," he said of the Buick Invitational. "But I want to do really well there. So I've been working pretty hard on my game and it's coming around."

There's that inner drive thing again.

"It's going to be interesting to

see how I compare to these guys," Riley said. "I feel I can play with the top college players in the country. But these are the top pros in the world."

But before he turns pro, there are a few things Riley would like to accomplish first. And this time, he knows exactly what drives him in these pursuits.

"All the hype about Tiger Woods," Riley said. "Tiger Woods is a great, great player and you can't knock what he's done. But I feel if I'm playing on my game, I can play right there with him."

And that means winning an

individual championship at the NCAA's, following in the footsteps of Rebel alum Warren Schutte, who won his in 1991.

"But I'd also like to win a team championship," Riley said. "Coach has been here for eight years and he works really hard. I'd love to see him sitting in the winner's circle."

And Riley is willing to drive him there, both literally and figuratively.

—Paul Gutierrez is sports editor at The Rebel Yell.

## Baseball

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the game with multiple hits.

Kleiner, a sophomore, also had two stolen bases and three runs scored, while Anthony, a junior, hit his first home run of the season.

Third baseman Chad Ohira had two hits, including a home run, for three RBIs, but also two errors, for the Lions.

Sophomore Erik Oliver (1-0) gained the win in relief for UNLV, while junior Joel Garber pitched 2 1/3 innings of scoreless relief for his first save.

On Sunday, the Rebels' bats were quieted as they lost the rubber game of the series by a score of 9-2.

LMU's Andy Collett hurt the Rebels again in this game, this time with his arm, as well as

with his bat. Collett, a junior, pitched a complete game, allowing two runs, one earned, on four hits, while striking out 11. He also hit his second home run of the series, driving in three.

"He's a good college player, and he's a big, strong guy," Dallimore said. "And he gave them what they needed—a complete game."

Rebels' pitcher Tom LaRosa (0-1) lost despite a strong outing. LaRosa, a sophomore, allowed seven runs in 5 2/3 innings, but only one was earned.

Hankins committed the error which contributed to LMU's six unearned runs in the second inning. It was the freshman third baseman's third error of the series.

"I don't know if any of (Hankins') errors were costly, as much as our breakdowns in our pitching," Dallimore said. "They

weren't routine plays. ...That's his first college weekend he ever played, so in all fairness to him, he did an outstanding job."

Hankins finished the weekend 6-for-14 (.429) to lead the Rebels in hitting.

Travis Wilson and Marc Mirizzi each had three of the Lions 13 hits on Sunday.

Anthony, who finished the weekend batting .385, had two of the Rebels' four hits. Hankins and Vincent supplied the others.

This weekend, the Hustlin' Rebels host New Mexico for three games.

Yeskie will start Friday's 3:05 contest, DeMartini will start Saturday's 1:05 affair, while LaRosa will be on the mound for Sunday's 1:05 game.

Dallimore said all three pitchers will have a 100-pitch limit, after starting them at 90 last weekend.

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