Fly, Eagles, Fly! On the Road to (Super Bowl LII) Victory!

By: Jessica Rakhman

The NFL Super Bowl has been an American tradition since 1967. Every year, two professional football teams battle it out for the championship title on national television. Millions of Americans watch the big game every year, anxious to see which team emerges victorious and takes home the coveted Vince Lombardi trophy. This year, the Philadelphia Eagles won Super Bowl LII (for the first time in history) and became national champions.

The road to victory was not an easy one. The team has taken many hits, including the loss of their starting quarterback, Carson Wentz. But the Eagles didn’t give up there. After Wentz’s injury during the team’s game against the Los Angeles Rams, backup quarterback Nick Foles stepped in and helped carry the team to victory over the Rams. Since then, they have trained hard and played even harder. All the hard work paid off when they beat the Minnesota Vikings 38-7 at the NFC championship and the New England Patriots 41-33 at the Super Bowl.

The night of February 4, 2018 was truly an unforgettable night. Over a million people gathered at the U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis, Minnesota for the experience of a lifetime. The energy in the stadium was electric. Spectators not only got to see the Eagles and Patriots go head-to-head in the final (and most important) game of the football season, but they also witnessed several musical performances, including the singing of “America the Beautiful” and the national anthem (sung by Leslie Odom Jr. and Pink respectively) and of course, the Halftime Show. This year’s Halftime Show featured Justin Timberlake, whose stellar performance had everybody on their feet. During the show, Timberlake performed a medley of hits, including “Cry Me A River,” “SexyBack,” “Can’t Stop the Feeling!,” and “Mirror,” to name a few. The performance also included a tribute to Prince, in which Timberlake delivered a moving rendition of the music legend’s “I Would Die For U,” complete with a video projection of Prince himself.

In terms of the game itself, both teams made a lot of great plays. Touchdowns were scored by Alshon Jeffery, Corey Clement, LeGarrette Blount, and Zach Ertz for the Eagles, and by James White, Chris Hogan, and Rob Gronkowski for the Patriots. Several field goals were made by kickers Jake Elliott and Stephen Gostkowski. Additionally, the quarterbacks of both teams made Super Bowl history; Tom Brady broke the record for the most passing yards in a game, and Nick Foles became the first quarterback to throw and catch a touchdown pass in the Superbowl, and he was later named Super Bowl MVP. All in all, the Eagles emerged victorious from Super Bowl LII, making this Super Bowl one that the Philadelphia area will never forget.

Above: Quarterback Nick Foles after winning Super bowl LII
News

Not so Open and Shut: Why the Federal Government Has Closed Twice in the Last Month

For the past five months, the United States government has been running on continuing resolutions, or CRs as those in Washington call them. A CR is a short term appropriations bill passed by Congress that funds the government at current spending levels. By law, certain mandatory programs such as Social Security are always funded, while programs like the National Park Service, Defense, and Education are funded by what is called discretionary spending. Before the beginning of each fiscal year, Congress has to pass legislation that funds discretionary programs, in order for them to run. The current fiscal year began on October 1st, and, in September before we reached that date, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, and President Donald Trump reached a compromise to pass temporary spending. They failed, however, to fund the government in any sustainable way.

Without long term government funding legislation, the House of Representatives and the Senate face a reckoning each time a CR is scheduled to end. The CR passed in September ended in December, when another CR set to end in January was created. Congress didn’t attempt to negotiate spending priorities of Democrats, Republicans, or Conservative hardliners; it merely pushed talks back a month. If this process seems confusing, know that the government is not intended to run on stopgap spending bills.

The Pyeongchang Winter Olympics: Our Place in the Future

Usually, Olympic figure skaters are accompanied by the classical music of composers, like Bach or Gershwin, but, like much of what we thought we knew about the world in recent years, the Olympics are changing. As Hungary’s Ivett Toth swirled around the ice, the electric guitar riffs of AC/DC’s Back in Black rang out through Gangeung Ice Arena. Toth was joined by a myriad of other skaters who played popular music during their programs. This was the first year non-classical music was permitted, but it has already become common practice.

As another cultural first this year, the United States welcomes its first openly gay team member, figure skater Adam Rippon.

Nathan Chen, the young, team USA member, is leading the charge in a new skating phenomenon: the quad jump. As a former ballet dancer, Chen brings a form of artistry that hasn’t been seen on the Olympic stage before. Even more stunning is that Chen is just a high school senior; in fact, he just got a perfect score on his math SATs.

NBC, which is leading the Olympic coverage, is both offering and heavily advertising its virtual reality Olympics experience, available in a new app.
A Hallmark Holiday:

To some, Valentine’s Day is believed to be nothing more than a Hallmark marketing scheme with the goal of fueling the economy. It is thought to be just a day upon which the average American spends too much money on teddy bears and chocolate; the average amount that each individual spends on Valentine’s Day is surprisingly high, at $142.31 per celebrant.

Unlike when the modern Valentine’s Day first took hold in the 19th century, most people are no longer spending their money on lace greeting cards and floral decorations. Most individuals now want to spend their Valentine’s Day budget on a night out (51% of consumers), a smartphone (39%), chocolate (33%), or flowers (27%). For businesses that specialize in these products and services, it is key that messaging is included in marketing material that reflects the idea that a gift is likely to be what their Valentine will want (that it is a “safe” bet). With this in mind, it makes you consider that maybe Valentine’s Day isn’t purely the day of love that it is chalked up to be.

A Thoughtful, Loving Day:

This holiday, just as many others, has its origins in religion and, in this case, is a celebration of one of the early Christian saints named Valentine. Valentine’s Day first became associated with romance and love during the time of Geoffrey Chaucer in the Middle Ages, when the tradition of courtly love first flourished. By the time of 18th century England, it had evolved into an occasion when lovers, or hopeful lovers, expressed their affection for each other by giving flowers, offering candies, and sending loving cards. That tradition carries on today.

Valentine’s Day is not just for lovers. Valentine’s Day is a special time to reach out to loved ones of all kinds. It is a day to appreciate and care for the people who support you. The chocolates and flowers commonly associated with the holiday have come to give Valentine’s Day a bad rep, as a consumerist holiday of gift-giving and not as a holiday of love. What’s more important, however, are the emotions attached to these material gifts. So, this Valentine’s Day, take the opportunity to thank your parents, siblings, grandparents, best friends, and friends, not just your boyfriends/girlfriends.
Groundhog Day: A Brief History
By: Jessica Rakhman

On February 2, 2018, Punxsutawney Phil, aka your friendly neighborhood groundhog, saw his shadow, which means, according to lore, that there will be six more weeks of winter. But why does America count on a groundhog to predict the weather? More importantly, why is Groundhog Day even considered a national holiday?

It all started in the 1700's. German settlers arrived in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, bringing with them the tradition of Candlemas Day. On this day, candles were blessed and distributed to the people by clergyman. The weather played an important part on Candlemas, according to the old English saying:

- If Candlemas be fair and bright, 
  Come, Winter, have another flight;
- If Candlemas brings clouds and rain, 
  Go Winter, and come not again.

In addition, the Germans watched a badger to see if the weather cast a shadow on it. If the sun came out on February 2, it would cast a shadow on the badger. This, for the Germans, meant six more weeks of winter. Seeing as there were no badgers in Pennsylvania, the Germans decided that a groundhog would be a suitable replacement. Many years later, the town of Punxsutawney celebrated the first Groundhog Day on February 2, 1886 with a groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil (sound familiar?).

From that day forward, Groundhog Day grew more and more popular each year, especially with the release of the 1993 movie Groundhog Day, in which a news anchor (played by Bill Murray) gets stuck in a time warp and is forced to relive the same day (which just so happens to be Groundhog Day) over and over again. The movie’s success brought thousands of people to Punxsutawney. In 1997, there were a record 35,000 visitors, the most the town has ever seen (as of 1886).

Since then, Groundhog Day has been observed by not only Punxsutawney, PA, but also the entire nation. Every year, on February 2, the now-famous Punxsutawney Phil would come out of his burrow at Gobbler’s Knob and make his annual prognostication. As far as prognostications go? Well, you know the drill. If the groundhog sees his shadow, then it’s six more weeks of winter. If he doesn’t, then spring comes early. Groundhog Day has been a national holiday for years, and it will continue to be an American tradition for years to come.