

How They Get Us to Watch the Super Bowl:
An Inquiry into Sport Marketing Strategies
Robert S. Griffin
www.robertsgriffin.com

The 2012 Super Bowl football game won by the New York Giants over the New England Patriots drew the largest American television audience of all time. That's for any kind of programming, entertainment, public affairs, anything, not just sports. One hundred thirteen million people in this country watched that football game. Advertisers paid millions upon millions of dollars to pitch their wares during the breaks in the action and people were willing to pay thousands of dollars a ticket to watch the game in person. And it wasn't just the game itself that got enormous attention: the upcoming game was the lead story in the media for the two weeks preceding the game, and the pre-game shows started six hours before the start of the game.

While I didn't watch the pre-game hype, I knew what time it was all that Sunday, known familiarly as Super Sunday--how's that for a successful promotion, getting the day named after you. By and large, my day involved waiting around for the game to start. There I was at 6:30 sharp in my easy chair in my bedroom upstairs in front of my new TV set that gets high definition. I needed a new set, but the timing of the purchase took the Super Bowl into account; I was thinking how nice it would be to watch the big game in HD. They said the game would start at 6:15, but past history told me that that really meant about 6:38. I didn't have the courage to turn on the set at 6:38, though, and run the risk of missing the kickoff and, who knows, an eighty-yard touchdown strike to a wide receiver. Better safe than sorry, I had concluded.

Given the possibilities I perceived as available to me in my life at that moment, the Super Bowl seemed the best option, though, really, I didn't think about it much at all. It was watching the Patriots and Giants versus, uh . . . uh . . . well, maybe I could pick up a DVD at Waterfront Video down the street, or something . . . The HD was dazzling. I had never had seen any kind of game in HD before. Eerie how real it looked.

I made sure I had a book in my lap to read during all that would go on during the game other than football, the lead-ins, commercials, promos for NBC shows, challenges to official's rulings,

and so on. I had remembered reading a *Wall Street Journal* article that said the ball is actually in play for only fourteen minutes during the usual three-and-a-quarter hour televised football game, and that there are three times more commercials than football in these programs. I don't know the exact numbers, but I'm sure those proportions are even more disparate in a Super Bowl game with the greater number of commercials and the lengthy halftime show--in 2012 it was a Madonna unintended burlesque, which to my eyes set a new standard in tastelessness and excess--which extend the game from kickoff to final whistle to upwards of four hours. In any case, I finished a biography of the novelist Henry Miller during the Patriots-Giants game without missing any of the action.

I turned off the game at about 11:00 p.m., a bit after it ended. I wasn't up for the fawning and banality of the after-the-game trophy presentation. Good game, it held my attention, although I did have the gnawing feeling after it was over that I had just spun my wheels for four hours, and that there was something kind of sad about anonymously sitting motionless staring at dots on a light bulb for all that time, even if they were well-done HD dots. And I was left in the personal state I get into after a long session with TV and having ingested a lot of food and drink, which in this case was most of a bottle of cheap red wine and about three-quarters of a large bag of salty pita chips: the uncomfortable combination of feeling speedy, bloated, and vaguely depressed. What do I do now? Is it time for bed? Yeah, that's it; I'll go to bed. I'll feel better in the morning.

Even though going to bed seemed like the best idea, the speediness element of my experience of being alive at that moment tipped the scales toward staying up a while longer. I filled that time with ruminations on what I had just done with, well, my whole day. Why did I do that? This was a show put on by the employees of two privately owned, profit making sport exhibition companies. How did they get me and another one hundred and thirteen million people minus one to attend to their football performance, and more than that, care about how it came out? People, me included, thought it mattered, really, that one or the other of these corporations' employees came out on top of the other. I wanted the Patriots to win and got down because their star receiver dropped a pass that cost them the game. Why? I don't know a one of the owners or the players on the Patriots and they don't know I'm alive. I could have gagged on those pita chips and died in that bedroom

and they wouldn't have known, and if they had somehow found out about it they wouldn't have cared. It struck me the connection between the Patriots and me is a dictionary definition of a one-sided relationship.

My ponderings lasted only about fifteen minutes and then I went to bed. It had gone on long enough, though, to put the issue of what hooked me and all the other people into this football game, and professional sports in general, on the front burner. What accounts for our enchantment with commercial sports: the Red Sox and Cowboys and Lakers, and all the rest? How do these sport show companies market their product with such remarkable effectiveness? This writing outlines nine things that have come to mind in this regard. Perhaps this list will be useful you in itself and, if you are so disposed, you might employ it in going deeper into this phenomenon, one that I find fascinating and highly significant in its impact on this society and culture and on our individual lives, or many of us at least.

Anything people do in their lives, you can be sure somebody is going to try to package it as a product and sell it to them. If people engage in it, whatever it is, it will be commercialized. People eat food, so entrepreneurs set up restaurants to sell them meals. People play music, so you have a music industry selling them CDs and putting on award shows for them to watch. Sex happens, so you have a porn industry and racy HBO shows. The list goes on. The focus here, people play games and businesspeople think that a lot of these people just might want to watch other people really good at these same games play them and be willing to pay for the privilege.

Let's say you've got the idea of putting together a sport exhibition company. You'll hire some people who are talented at playing a game; let's say it's baseball. You'll divide your employees into teams and they'll play games against each other, or a team made up of your employees could play against a team comprised of the employees of another sport exhibition company. Either way, you'll charge admission for the privilege of watching your employees perform the game they are so adept at playing, and you'll charge a fee to television and radio stations and networks that see your company's sport performances as a good way to attract an audience for the advertisers that pay them to show their commercials. While you have all these people sitting there at the

game, you could have vendors hectoring them to buy food and beer to consume while they take in the action. As they leave the stadium, you could sell them hats and tee shirts and jackets with your logo on them and not only make a profit that way, when they wear the hats and so on they would be walking billboards for your product.

You have an inherently good product to sell. Baseball is entertaining to watch: your paying customers would get to see your hired hands hit balls with a bat and run to first base and slide into bases and hit doubles and home runs, and they would get to witness pitchers striking batters out. There's drama in the game--your audience won't know who's going to win and then they'll find out. Baseball is a little slow, and there are long intervals where nothing is going on, but on balance it provides a good time for people watching it.

Let's say, though, that as good as the game is in itself, you want to go beyond that and make it as appealing and compelling as you possibly can to your paying customers so that you can maximize your profits. What are some steps you could take toward achieving this end? As you think about it, nine come to your mind (and mine, this writing goes back and forth between those two perspectives) that should help in this direction.

Name your company after a city. Your name is Fred Johnson, and you were thinking of calling your company Johnson's Baseball Exhibitions, Incorporated. But as you thought it over it hit you that it would be better to name your company after a city. Instead of Johnson's Baseball Exhibitions, Incorporated you could call your operation, say, the Boston Red Sox. If you associate yourself with a city, Boston in this case--you are from San Diego, but you could move corporate headquarters to Boston--you could transfer the affinity and allegiance Boston-area people feel for their home town and the immediate geographical area to your company and get them to care more about your baseball shows. You might even make it seem to your customers that your baseball performances are a civic endeavor and not just a way for you to make money.

If you can get an owner of a similar company, like Ken Jones, to call himself the New York Yankees instead of, as he was planning on doing, Jones' Baseball Extravaganzas, when the two of your employees play a game against each other you might even get across the idea that this is a competition between the cities of Boston and

New York. It stands to reason that people are going to be more invested in a baseball game between Boston and New York, their home towns, than Johnson's Baseball Exhibitions, Incorporated and Jones' Baseball Extravaganzas; and anyway, the "Extravaganzas" part of Ken's name sounds to you to be over the top for a sport company in any case. If this naming ploy works, you might even extract money from the earnings of taxpayers in Boston and New York to buy you and Ken places of business, that is to say, stadiums, in which to put on your performances. This would be a real coup if you could pull that off; department stores and movie theaters have to pay for their stores with their own money.

Wrap yourself in the flag. You could link your baseball games with the nation's story, patriotism, and the fate of the Republic. The ideal is that your baseball performances are not just a show like a circus or something; they are interwoven into the fabric of America, no less. The baseball games you charge people admission to see aren't just your business enterprise; they are the country's business. Really. You could call them collectively America's game. You could do things like get the President to attend your first show in the spring and throw out the first ball, and get somebody to sing the national anthem before each game (where else is it sung?), and bring on a color guard, and honor the troops in uniform, and make sure you have the Stars and Stripes waving in the breeze as a prominent part of the setting for each baseball performance, things like that.

What you are shooting for is that people will buy into the notion that when they put money in your coffers they are being loyal Americans and doing their part in helping to face down evil terrorists and so on. It sounds like a big stretch to sell this idea, but you recall that just about the first question on people's minds after the John F. Kennedy assassination and right after 9/11 was, Are the National Football League games going to be played? You know how grateful the masses were when the commercial football enterprises announced, Yes, we are going to keep selling our products (they didn't say it quite that way) because--straight face--"we owe it to the nation." Bingo parlors have not been as successful in weaving themselves into the national fabric--who cares whether they stay open when something big happens or not. Nobody paid attention, at first anyway, when Jack Ruby closed down his strip club after the

Kennedy assassination. But we do remember that the Dallas Cowboys stayed open for business after that Dealey Plaza tragedy.

Create a narrative line. You could put on your baseball exhibitions as one-shot deals, like a Broadway musical or a dog show. People go, watch your game--let's say it is your people versus a team made up of the employees of another company--and that's it. A good time is had by all, but it doesn't lead anywhere; when it is over, it's over, that's it. Actually, some of the best of the Negro baseball teams in the 1920s and '30s did it this way. They barnstormed, as it was called: they would travel from town to town and play a game against a local team and then pack up and leave and go to another town, and that was it. They didn't even keep track of who won the game.

It would work better, though, you realize, if you and other baseball exhibition company owners got together and formed a league. Under this arrangement, instead of playing a game and forgetting about it when it is over you could maintain a tally of who wins and loses the games and publicize the won-loss record for each team. You could order the teams hierarchically on the basis of overall won and loss totals--call them standings. This arrangement would give people something to attend to beyond the individual games: how the teams in the league are doing in the standings. Each game, then, would have meaning beyond just who wins and loses that particular game. Each game would be significant, and important, and worthy of paying attention to and caring about, because its outcome would contribute to the overall won and loss records of the teams involved and change the standings. So boring or not, good game or not, pouring rain and cold and you are miserable sitting there or not, the game would matter because it affects the league standings and goes on a permanent record.

With the league arrangement, at the end of a designated time you could give an award to the team with the best won and loss record. You could give them a trophy and/or designate them the champion, something of that sort--a big gaudy ring to the employees on the winning team is a possibility. This would give the standings meaning and increase their importance: they are going to determine who is the champion and gets the trophy and rings, or plaques, whatever it is that you decide to give out. It would enhance your narrative line, give you a finish, a denouement, drama and

suspense: who is going to win the championship? Pay your money and see.

The key in all this is to get across the idea that it really, really, *really* matters who becomes the champion and gets the trophy and rings or whatever. Of course, it doesn't matter at all; it changes nothing. It's just something you made up. You are peddling a fiction. But it far from an impossible task. At minimum, you could get your employees to say that the reason they are working for you is not to make a living and support their families but rather to "win it all" and "get a ring." The media will go along with your ploy because it will help their circulation and ratings. And the public will too, because if they can get themselves to believe that it matters in a big way who wins the championship, or the title, whatever you call it, it makes things more enjoyable for them. Human nature being what it is, people will sincerely believe anything that makes things go better for them. Back to the Super Bowl that started off this discussion, it would significantly detract from the attraction of the game if the watchers thought the outcome didn't matter a lick.

It is best that you keep the intervals between awarding trophies and rings to your employees and their teams reasonably short. You don't want to keep them *too* short; designating a champion every month, month after month, would soon lessen the "big-dealness" you are trying to attach to your finish. On the other hand, if you have a champion just every five or ten years, you are asking your clientele to project too far into the future and wait too long for the final curtain. Plus, with champions only every five years, let's say, you'd going to have teams fifty games behind other teams in the won or loss column after a couple years, with the result that any single game wouldn't have importance in the standings--fifty games behind, forty-nine games behind, so what?

A good segment to block off would be a year's worth of games --you could call it a season--and designate the team with the best won and loss record the champion for that year, or season, and start over from scratch the next year. With that arrangement, not too long, not too short, every game counts and every team would get a fresh start the next year and be on an even plane with every other team. With a fresh start comes renewed hope. Hope feels good; you want to link your product to hope. There's the chance things will be better next year. Next year will bring a new beginning. That's what you are selling, which is in stark contrast to people's individual

lives: one big long season ending in old age, disability, marginality, sickness, and death. In a very real way, your baseball shows represent the stoppage of time. In contrast to all the rest of us, and to you yourself, your baseball performers are, in the words of the Bob Dylan song, forever young.

Another marketing idea, you could divide your league into divisions. If you have thirty teams in your league, cluster them into, say, six divisions of five teams each. Give each division a name--American League East, National League West, and so on. Now, instead of having just one championship competition, you could have six division races. Six is better than one: more races, more drama, more teams in contention. You could use all those races as draws: who is going to win the divisions? Given the way statistics work, if you have enough divisions it's likely all a team has to have to be in contention for the top spot in a division until very late in the season is a .500 record--an equal number of wins and losses. That will keep interest customer interest in mediocre teams up.

Also, instead of simply giving the championship trophy to the teams with the best won and loss record in each of the divisions in any particular year, you could, in addition to that, have a playoff among the division winners along with the non-division winning teams with the best records--you could call them "wild cards," kind of catchy--culminating in an overall champion. You could have as many as a third of your league's teams in the playoffs, and that will increase costumer interest. Under this arrangement, the overall champion might not have even been a division champion, so the games of teams that are out of the running for a division championship would still have importance ("Hey, we might get into the playoffs!"). All the playoff games will have significance beyond just being another baseball show ("Is my team going to continue in its march to the big championship?"). This year's Super Bowl winner, the New York Giants, had the mediocre regular season record of nine wins and seven losses. Without a playoff, the last few games in the Giant season would have been meaningless ("No matter how this game comes out, the Giants aren't going to get to the Super Bowl."). There wouldn't have been the packed stadium and big television ratings of a playoff game between the Giants and another non-division winner, the Atlantic Falcons.

The bottom line, you want your paying customers saying to themselves "The truth is I have seen this same ground ball to

shortstop a zillion times before and I'm bored stiff, and I'm sick of people walking in front of me and vendors yelling in my ear, and passing somebody's beer over to them, but the winner of this game gets into the first round of the playoffs, so I'll hang in here with this game and come back for the next game if there is one."

Make your shows seem part of history. Under a league and season arrangement, where you keep track of all the wins and losses and champions, you can create an historical saga that will enhance the perceived importance of your product in the scheme of things. There was such-and-such an outcome in a game or season in past years and that's kept in mind and gives meaning and importance to this year's games; each game is a continuance of what has gone before, not an isolated incident. This year's games are a backdrop to next year's games. You've created continuity, a story line, and given heightened meaning to any game or season, its link to the past as well as to the future. Five years from now, your company's team will undoubtedly have virtually all new players, and, more than likely, a new manager, but your consumers will get caught up with "The team hasn't won since '12, maybe they can break the string this year" or "They've won two years in a row; can they make it three?" and that will heighten interest and activate your cash registers.

Irrational as it may sound, your customers could come to see the history of who won and lost in your baseball shows to be an integral part of the history of America, not just baseball, and think that when they pay to see your performances they are making American history, or at least witnessing it. That's how all this marketing ties together. The national anthem and wrapping yourself in the flag and recruiting the President to throw out the first pitch at your first performance of a year, and so on, support the historical-event angle--rodeos and high diving contests haven't been able to pull that off. To the extent you can tie your company's activity to the story of this country the more likely it is that people will fork over their hard earned money to take in your corporate undertakings.

If you can get your customers hooked into an historical line--the media will help generally, and it can be big part of the job description of the announcers of your games on TV and the radio to get that done--it will not only increase attendance at the games and

the numbers parked in front of TV sets, it will also make it easier for you to slowly but surely hike your prices and thereby your profit margins.

Be in the Nostalgia Business. Having an historical frame for your shows gives you the opportunity to milk a nostalgia angle. You aren't just dressing up adult men in uniforms and having them play a kid's game for the enjoyment of an audience. Your shows represent fathers and sons playing catch in the back yard way back when, the innocence of childhood, a simpler, purer time and less corrupted pastoral way of life, that kind of thing. They call up memories of sitting in the bleachers at ten with a Coke and peanuts between mom and dad, both of them now gone, so cozy and safe then, and almost catching a foul ball with a baseball glove that, all these years later, is hanging on a hook in the garage stiff and unused. Now your customers are selling insurance for Aetna and behind on the mortgage and car payments, but this ballgame they are watching brings them back to an earlier and better time for them. It might go through their minds that you could take down the volume of the music you blast incessantly a notch or two or four, and that the gigantic scoreboard with the batters' pictures overwhelming everything rings of something out of the old movie *Rollerball*, but still there are the positive connections with times past that commercial baseball performances have for them that add greatly to your product's appeal.

Make winning the big thing. The narrative line you set up to promote your operation is determined by which teams win and lose. If your customers don't attend to wins and losses, or don't care about them, you have a problem. You want people to enjoy the process of the games, the thrill of watching a player trot around the bases after smacking a home run and charging home from second on a single to center, but you want them to come back to what it is all about: who wins and who loses. It has to be that way, because wins and losses drive everything: the standings and division winners and playoffs and the ultimate big winner and the historical record.

You have to take on the adage attributed to sportswriter Grantland Rice that it isn't whether you win or lose that counts but rather how you play the game. No Grantland, in corporate sports, it's whether you win or lose that really matters. Focusing on how

they play the game is not going to get one hundred thirteen million people to watch the Super Bowl. What's going to get them to obsess about the Super Bowl is the drama of who is going to *win* the Super Bowl.

So woe be it to any of the people whose checks you sign that says, "This is my job, I'll do the best I can with it, but winning doesn't mean all that much difference to me. No matter what happens in this Super Bowl, they'll just start the process all over again next year, so I personally don't sweat the outcome." Decades ago, an all-pro caliber running back from the Dallas Cowboys by the name of Duane Thomas said essentially that just before a Super Bowl involving the Cowboys, and the roof caved in on him. Being an all-star player didn't keep him from doing something the next year other than running with a football for a living. Thomas didn't get that it is in everybody's interest--the owners', the players', the media's, and the spectators'--to go along with the idea that who wins the Super Bowl is super important. Why it is so important? Well, it just is, or it better be, because if it isn't the show dwindles in appeal in the direction of Stars on Ice with Kurt Browning and Sasha Cohen.

All to say, the overall marketing strategy is to embed what is happening right in front of people in a larger context that you create as part of your marketing plan. Just going by tangible reality--things people can discern with their five senses--the Super Bowl was the employees of two commercial sport companies, the Patriots and the Giants, doing what they always do and in fact had recently done--the same players and coaches only two months before had played a game (New England won 24-20). The reason it was a gigantic event this time--the largest audience in the history of television--was the context of meaning and significance within which the game was played that the sport companies had created. Next year they'll repeat the process and it will again end in a championship game whose name was inspired by the superball toy of a team owner's son.

Make your employees seem like really big deals. You could define your ballplayer employees to the public as skilled labor, craftsmen along the lines of electricians or carpenters. Alternatively, you could pitch your workers' identity as being akin to Los Vegas performers like those in Circus de Soleil: jugglers, acrobats,

tightrope walkers and the like. This second option is better, but that leaves them simply facile at playing with a ball, human versions of trained seals. Best would be to promote an image of them as gladiators heroically fighting our battles and defending us against enemy forces (it helped to name the company after a city, this all goes together)--seriously, heroes, it can work. You might even be able to sell the idea that the ability to field ground balls well qualifies people to be considered exemplary human beings, not just athletes. You could hold up your workers as role models for children--role model an affected term, but it gets your point across. You can promote your employees as inspirations to young people. Forget healing the sick: aspire to play center field for the Yankees and bat third in the order; that's really making it in the world. All of this is going to be a lot better for your cash flow than talking about your workers as if they were trick ponies in a carnival.

The idea is that your baseball shows aren't just nobodies playing with a ball to support themselves and their families; these are somebodies, *really* somebodies. The best of them you could promote as stars along the line of movie stars. You could ritualize your employees signing autographs before the games. Truly, there is something very special about these people; that's the sell. Of course, it is easier to get an audience to pay money to see very special people than to watch a collection of independent contractors, which, with the advent of free agency, ballplayers in fact are today.

The media will support you in all this because it helps circulation and ratings and advertising revenue. Even without trying, the media elevates to celebrity status anybody they attend to. The media can be especially helpful to you in getting the word out about the large salaries you are paying your employees. You'd rather not fork over ten million dollars to somebody to participate in your baseball shows, but at least you can take advantage of it. A high salary is connected with merit and worth in this society and puts a person on a higher plane than others and gives weight to whatever he or she is doing to generate that kind of financial compensation. Your customers will conclude that if someone is making ten million dollars for doing something, it must be worth their time and money to watch him do whatever that is.

While you let it be known what your employees make, you'll want to be sure never to tell anybody what you make as the owner

or what your profits are. That would underscore that you and Coca Cola are in the same business of producing, marketing, and selling a product for a profit. The Red Sox again, a story that the company didn't want to get out is that the owner, who is from nowhere near Boston, took some players for a ride on his yacht last year in an attempt to cool down some internal problems on the team. A yacht? The public doesn't need to hear about that. The next thing they'll be doing is asking about a profit statement. You don't need anything like that.

Statistics can help you call attention to your players and puff them up in the eyes of the public. The old barnstorming teams, with their focus on stand-alone single games, were very casual about maintaining the batting averages of the hitters, the earned run averages of pitchers, fielding statistics, and the like, if they bothered to keep them at all. You can be meticulous about maintaining these kinds of data and using them to increase the visibility and importance of your employees. With every action in a game a matter of permanent record, every time one of your ballplayers comes to bat it will have significance because it will affect his batting average, as well as the record of the opposing pitcher. Your viewing audience will think, "If he gets a hit, he'll raise his batting average to .300." They'll compare current players' records with their own or other players' performances in past years ("He is hitting 30 points lower this year than last," and "He now has more total stolen bases than any player that's ever played the game"). You can let it be known that such-and-such a player has hit in thirty straight games. And so on. All this will increase consumer interest and people's personal investment in your product.

Also, you can give out lots of awards. Just like with high salaries, if something merits getting an award it must count for something. The movie industry gets tons of publicity and validation with the Oscar awards it gives out to itself. The music industry has its Grammys and Country Music Awards. In theater, there are the Tony and Obie Awards. There are Noble Prizes and Pulitzer Prizes and National Book Awards, and so on and so on. You can follow suit by giving out awards to your people for everything you can think of: the batting title, the home run title, the Cy Young Award to the best pitcher, the Most Valuable Player, Manager of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Gold Glove Awards to the best fielders, Silver Slugger Awards to the best hitters at each position, the Comeback Player

Award, you can pick an all-star team--the only limit to what awards you can give is your imagination in making them up.

Last but not least, outfit your employees in snappy uniforms. It wouldn't do if they played the games in sweatshirts and cut-off jeans. They could play the game just as well that way, but somebodies ought to dress like somebodies. Make sure to get the city on the front of the jersey to punch up that even though neither you nor a one of your players is from around here the players on the team are *our* men, bless them all, representing *our* town and *us*. Hurray for them, and hurray for us to be here in the seat we paid to sit in cheering them on. This year's employees ought to dress like the ones in past years to support the historical continuity and nostalgia angles. You don't want the current Red Sox uniform to look totally different from the one worn in 1967, when Carl Yastrzemski, remember him?, and the rest, almost won it all.

Get on TV. Back when they were just starting to televise baseball, the owners of the teams worried that if they put their games on television free nobody would come to the stadium and pay to watch them, and there would go their revenue. At least, they argued, let's televise just the away games; no television for home games. Back in those early days of television--the late 1940s and '50s and into the '60s--the standard of success for a major league baseball team was a total home attendance of one million people in a year. In 1955, the New York Yankees drew 1,490,000, and that was considered very good. In 1965, another illustration, the Boston Red Sox drew 652,000 to their home games. For comparison, the Yankees' attendance in 2008 was 4,298,000, and Red Sox drew 3,054,000 that year. My conclusion is that the remarkable growth in attendance figures from decades past is primarily due to the cumulative effect of being on television all that time: national and regional coverage of selected games on the networks and cable, local coverage of every game, and the remarkable emergence of ESPN over the past couple of decades.

The owners in the early years didn't understand the fundamental nature of television as a medium. Television makes anything on it important, it doesn't matter what it is, and everybody on it with any regularity somebody big, and that includes baseball games and right fielders. More, not only does television make everything and everybody on it important, it makes them just about

equally important. Jay Leno, Simon Cowell, the judge from *The X Factor* television show, the President of the United States, and a baseball team and its shortstop--all important and all pretty much on an equal plane of significance. They are all on TV, and that fact makes them basically all alike. Imagine no television coverage of the 2012 Super Bowl. Same game, same stadium in Indianapolis, but it wasn't televised. And no ESPN leading up the game, and no televised pre-game shows. Just radio, newspaper, and Internet coverage. The Super Bowl is nowhere near as enormous an affair without television, and next year's game will be even less an event, and the next year still less. You have to be on TV.

Professional baseball, commercial sport in general, is well suited to television. The fundamental messages of television, apart from the content, and your baseball business are fundamentally the same: stop doing what you are doing and look at us, what we are doing is worth your time; watching is good, you are just fine watching; and stay tuned, don't go anyplace, what's coming up is going to be at least as good as this and probably better. Something is a success on television if it can hold people's attention. By that measure, you have the makings of a really good TV show with your inherently interesting and well-marketed baseball exhibitions. So negotiate a cable deal to televise all your games home and away and get yourself some announcers/salesmen who can pitch your product effectively, and trust that things will work out well for you.

Don't call your customers customers. You are making people pay to watch your shows, but it is best if they don't feel like consumers buying pizza or a pair of pants. Certainly don't treat them like voyeurs, peeping toms of a sort, peering in on other people doing something they care about. And it's not as if they are watching a movie in the dark. They are an integral part of something, that's your pitch. They are *participants* in an endeavor, not audience members. They aren't customers but rather *fans* supporting their team--*their* team, *their city's* team, not *your* team. The team needs their support; without it, all is lost; they really matter. Even though they have to buy their way into the stadium and are nameless and, if they know what's good for them, will sit where you tell them and stay off the field--you'll taser them if they don't--and nobody cares whether they are on time to the game or leave early, still they are crucial to the team's success, that's what you get across to them.

Play your cards right and you might even get people to feel a genuine obligation to buy your product. If they don't purchase a ticket to your performances they are letting down their team, and even more, their city. You might even be able to outright shame people for not giving you their money ("Where is the support for our team and our city?). Snickers can't make anybody feel guilty for not buying their candy bars, so your baseball business is way ahead of them in that regard. Much less Snickers bars, I'm trying to think of another corporation that can make people feel bad about themselves for not patronizing their product. And what other companies can get you to actually root for them? You might like Pepsi over Coke, but you don't root for Pepsi, or put a Pepsi poster on your wall, or wear a Pepsi jacket, anything like that.

When a company's product takes the form of a sport it opens up a host of possibilities it can exploit. You don't want to get too heavy handed about it, but you could hold out the threat that if the public doesn't build you a better place of business, a new stadium, and pay to attend the games in greater numbers, you'll name your company after another city and leave town.

So those are nine things that contribute significantly to getting us to watch the Super Bowl, and contribute to the Red Sox selling out Fenway Park, their home field, seven hundred and some times, and to my hometown of Minneapolis thinking that a laconic big lug by the name of Joe Mauer is somebody really special: Name your company after a city (or, thinking of my home area, the Vikings, Twins, Timberwolves, Lynx, and Wild) a geographical area. Wrap yourself in the flag. Create a narrative line. Make your shows seem part of history. Be in the nostalgia business. Make winning *the* big thing. Make your employees seem like really big deals. Get on TV. And don't call your customers customers. Undoubtedly you can come up with other things to add to this list.

I hope this examination of sports marketing gets both you and me thinking more about how things are marketed, pitched, sold, to us. That includes truly important things such as wars, ideologies, social policies, cultural ways, and political agendas and candidates. With reference to the sport show companies, the big question that remains is what impact their operations have on this society and culture, and on our individual lives and the lives of our children. I believe the consequences of the commercial sport industry and the

way it sells its product are huge, especially for children and adolescents, and that we need to look hard and critically at them. I'll go into detail on that in another writing.