

# 49ER FEVER:

In the aftermath of the San Francisco Forty-Niners' Super Bowl victory, thousands of people took to the streets in an unsolicited celebration of their underdog team. But the riotous affair that engaged all kinds of people, and engulfed nearly every section and neighborhood of this city, addresses issues more fundamental than the outcome of Super Bowl XVI. As one participant in Forty Niner Fever told the San Francisco Chronicle, this event happened "because people want something to celebrate... we need something to celebrate with all the problems."

#### Life in the Trenches

What happened on Super Bowl Sunday, and to a lesser extent during the "official" celebration on Monday, was the ignition of impulses both manipulated and repressed in this society. Unwittingly, the Chronicle's coverage of the event exposed some of the layers of this larger truth. At the conclusion of the Tuesday, January 26 front page story, one woman offered the explanation that the victory was "like going without sex for six months and then finally getting it. And it's not only good, it's damn good." Remarks such as these are not just kinky phrases from the Chronicle's sale of flesh and fantasy culture. They suggest that in a society characterized by defeat and repression, obtaining sex is identified with achieving a "victory." Within that larger arena of hollow victories and phony fantasies, the orgasm has been enshrined as the illusive and ultimate goal.

Football is not just an athletic metaphor for a militarized society. It is part of the content of such a society. Our lives are channeled into identification with teams that battle each other with the precision and sophistication of any military unit.

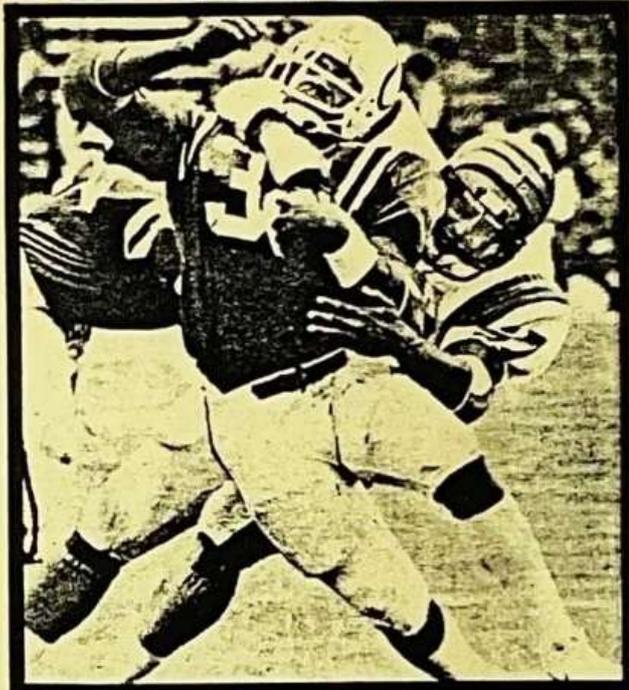
Though many of us aspire to it, few people can duplicate the accuracy and poise demonstrated by these troops. The limitations imposed on us amateurs are actually to our benefit. The career of a football player, like a soldier, is devastatingly short. After a few years, once glamorous stars are reduced to walking wounded. The hidden injuries of football's violence is surpassed only by the larger destructiveness inherent in everyday life. The number of American workers injured or killed on the job regularly surpasses the number of casualties on the field of battle.

Just like the uniformed players who carry out predetermined maneuvers on the field, our existence is similarly pre-determined. Our workplaces provide us with uniforms, or require "respectable attire" in order to identify us as part of the "team." Nearly everyone has a manager, foreman, or supervisor to "coach" us along at work. Like football veterans, we also get injured or grow too old for the job. At this point younger, hungrier players can replace us. We are left on the sidelines and the game continues to roll along.

#### Metaphor For The Oppressed

San Francisco - team and city - is an unlikely symbol of football victory. A lackluster bunch of athletes from a city nationally dubbed and scorned as a haven of "kooks, fags and rebels" wins it all. Amidst the fragmented commentary and riotous images produced by the Chronicle was the notion expressed by one fan that "the thing this tells me is that the underdog can turn it all around. People on the bottom can rise to the top again. It's not only a football game, it's life.

But who is the underdog anyway? The romantic populism of this All-American idea would be laughable, if it did not express some grim realities that we presently face. First is the realization that we are the



underdog. No matter how convoluted or repressed the idea, most people in this society experience defeat, injury, fear and humiliation. The character of San Francisco's two day party was somewhat the same. Scores of people were arrested and well over a hundred were injured following police sweeps on Market Street, in North Beach, and elsewhere.

But for one afternoon "the underdogs" completely shut down business in downtown San Francisco. This powerful fact was not lost on the city leaders, who directed the police to break up the event immediately after it ended.

#### Becoming No. 1

The result of Forty Niner Fever is to make the cry "We're No. 1" a hollow slogan echoed by people misrepresenting the nature of the game and its players. For the real contest is between the rulers of this society and the ruled.

Those who rule in S.F. (and elsewhere) intend to transform this city to their own needs. The once romantic City by the Bay is quickly becoming the financial center of the Pacific Rim. They take seriously columnist Herb Caen's assertion that San Francisco is home of "the rulers of the universe."

The long contest between them and us has seen more bloodshed than the latest round of football casualties. For their part athletic stadiums have been put to more authoritarian tasks than Super Bowl extravaganzas. The March Against the War in Washington, D.C. in 1970, and the coup in Santiago, Chile in 1973 are part of that grim scorecard.

The real victory for San Franciscans will be when we control our lives and exist without the menacing presence of coaches and captains. We have something of a gameplan in mind. Get in contact.

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# we're SICK of it