



BY ALAN J. STEINBERG
NEWJERSEYNEWSROOM.COM
COMMENTARY

On Tuesday, May 25, the National Football League owners will likely select the Meadowlands as the site of the 2014 Super Bowl. Unfortunately, if adverse weather conditions exist during the weekend of the game, this selection may well result in a debacle for the NFL — and New Jersey as well.

The last NFL championship game played in the New York metropolitan area was the Green Bay Packers-New York Giants contest on December 30, 1962. Until the famous Dallas Cowboys-Green Bay Packers NFL Championship "Ice Bowl" game in Green Bay of December 31, 1967, the 1962 title contest had the worst weather conditions to date of any professional football championship game, with a temperature of 13 degrees and a wind gusts up to 40 miles per hour, creating a wind chill of minus 11 degrees.

These weather conditions were even worse than those of the famous 1948 NFL Championship game between the then Chicago Cardinals and the Philadelphia Eagles in Philadelphia's Shibe Park, known as the "Snow Bowl". My late friend and legendary sports talk show host Art Rust, Jr. described the 1962 NFL Championship game weather conditions as "barbaric".

Packers' head coach Vince Lombardi, in my opinion the greatest coach in NFL history, said after the 1962 title game, "I think it was about as fine a football game as I've ever seen. I think we saw football as it should be played."

I loved Vince, but I'm not surprised that he said that. The weather conditions nullified any chances the Giants had of defeating the Packers on that miserable December day in Yankee Stadium. The heart of the Giant offense was their passing game, and the frozen tundra of Yankee Stadium that Sunday made it virtually impossible for All-Pro Giant receivers Del Shofner and Frank Gifford to make their cuts and be open for long passes thrown by quarterback Y.A. Tittle, the NFL 1962 Most Valuable Player.

The year before, in the 1961 NFL Championship game played in Green Bay's Lambeau Field, the Packers had slaughtered the Giants 37-0. In 1962, however, the Giant fans were optimistic about the chances of the Maramen to avenge the previous year's humiliation, due to the incredible comeback season of Frank Gifford. His career had apparently been ended in 1960 by the famous blindside hit he took at Yankee Stadium from Hall of Fame Philadelphia Eagles' linebacker Chuck Bednarik. He did not play at all in 1961, but in 1962, switching his position from running back to wide receiver (then known as flanker), Gifford had an astounding All-Pro season.

In 1962, the Giants' passing game was vastly superior to that of the Packers. Green Bay quarterback Bart Starr had not yet achieved the proficiency he would attain in the years 1965 through 1967, and Shofner and Gifford constituted the best pair of wide receivers in the NFL. To be sure, the Packers' running attack of Paul Hornung and Jim Taylor certainly was of a much higher calibre than the Giant running game featuring Alex Webster, Phil King, and Joe Morrison. Nevertheless, in minimally decent weather conditions, Giant fans had reason to hope that their passing attack would enable them to win their first NFL Championship since 1956.

On that Sunday in Yankee Stadium, however, long passes were impossible. The longest pass completion for either team was a 25 yard throw from Tittle to tight end Joe Walton. Both Tittle and Starr had an abysmal average of less than five yards per pass. The Giants were unable to make a single offensive score. Their only score was on a Max McGee punt blocked by Giant Erich Barnes and recovered for a touchdown by special teams player Jim Collier. With the passing game of both teams rendered ineffective by the horrendous weather conditions, the Packers were able to win a 16-7 victory and a second straight NFL title on a combination of effective running by Hornung and Taylor and critical Giant turnovers.

When the lodge brothers of the NFL agreed to a merger with the upstart American Football League in 1966, it was stipulated that the new NFL-AFL championship game, to be soon renamed the Super Bowl, be played on a neutral site with optimum weather conditions. The 1962 Packers-Giants championship contest was a key factor in that decision. I don't expect current NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell to remember this history since he was only seven

years old at the time of the NFL-AFL merger.

Now, however, Goodell is the prime supporter of a Meadowlands Super Bowl. Every one of the 44 Super Bowls to date has either been played in a city without winter weather conditions or in a domed stadium. By locating the game in an outdoor stadium with a high possibility of adverse winter weather conditions, the current lodge brothers of the NFL will be eliminating the rationale for playing the game at a neutral site. If the owners are willing to take the risk of weather conditions that prevailed at the 1962 NFL title game, there is no reason for not playing the game at the home field of the Super Bowl finalist with the better regular season record.

It is clear that New Jersey will definitely get far less economic benefit from the game than New York. While the teams will stay in New Jersey hotels and practice here as well, virtually all the official NFL events and parties will be held in Manhattan. There is no risk whatsoever of these indoor events being cancelled due to bad weather. Almost certainly, the overwhelming majority of fans from the home cities of the participating teams will be staying in Manhattan hotels.

There is no major pre-Super Bowl official event scheduled for New Jersey until the outdoor Saturday night concert, probably to be situated in Jersey City's Liberty State Park. Yet severe weather conditions may force the cancellation of this event. Also subject to cancellation due to adverse weather would be the extravaganza halftime show, which could result in the loss of millions of dollars to its sponsors. Remember: horrific weather conditions resulted in the cancellation of the halftime shows at the 1967 "Ice Bowl" in Green Bay and at the AFC Championship game in Cincinnati in January, 1982 between the home town Bengals and the San Diego Chargers, known as the "Freezer Bowl".

If adverse weather conditions in the Meadowlands cause the passing game of both teams to be rendered ineffective as well as the cancellation of the Saturday night concert and halftime show, New Jersey will be the object of jokes for weeks from late night talk show hosts like David Letterman and Jay Leno. Nobody will poke fun at Manhattan. So Manhattan stands to get the lion's share of the economic benefit from a Meadowlands Super Bowl, without any risk to its image as Fun City.

All I can say to the advocates of a Meadowlands Super Bowl is this: Be careful what you wish for — you may get it. Perhaps one of the few beneficial results of global warming will be that a 2014 Meadowlands Super Bowl will not be plagued by the weather conditions that prevailed at the NFL Championship game at Yankee Stadium on December 30, 1962.

Alan J. Steinberg served as Regional Administrator of Region 2 EPA during the administration of former President George W. Bush. Region 2 EPA consists of the states of New York and New Jersey, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and seven federally recognized Indian nations. He currently serves as Public Servant in Residence at Monmouth University.

ALSO BY ALAN J. STEINBERG

[Opposition to value added tax, not ObamaCare, is best N.J. GOP congressional election issue](#)

[Israeli 'Settlements': A New Jersey story](#)

[N.J. School Budget Elections: The New Christie Paradigm is triumphant](#)

[Alan Steinberg: Chris Christie will achieve three historic fiscal objectives](#)

[A bipartisan consensus on nuclear energy](#)

[Alan Karcher's challenge and Gov. Chris Christie's paradigm shift](#)