

Camel picks N.Y., but one hump or two?

Now that it's been confirmed that **Tom Brady's** ankle is all right and it's only that perpetually pesky right shoulder that has him on the injury report, Patriots fandom finally can enjoy the big game.

And sure, the local squad is involved in the Super Bowl and trying to finish an historic undefeated season, nachos are tasty and beer is soothing, but I dare say there is even more fun to be had this weekend by challenging friends, acquaintances and the shady fella sitting in the corner eating all the shrimp at your Sunday party to a prop bet challenge.



Josh BOUSSQUET

It's the rare sporting event that gives birth to the interesting entities that are prop bets, and the Super Bowl is the king of them. How to score any contest based on them should be a system of your own making and concocted to favor you under the guise of "house rules," but the place to scour for potential categories of fun is bodoglife.com.

Don't think that the propositions on that beautiful Web site involve only in-game activity, either. Wagers can be placed on whether the entire Fox pregame team will pick the Pats to win, whether the coin toss will come up heads or tails (and which team wins it), and whether **Jordin Sparks** sings the national anthem in over or under 1 minute, 42 seconds.

Though not officially on the board, Sparks' crooning sets up another wagering possibility: I recommend instituting a prop of how many times Fox pimps out "American Idol" throughout the night. Coming from the station whose blitzkrieg attack of "The Sarah Connor Chronicles" made viewers feel like Poland circa 1939, a fair over/under boundary should be 48½.

Returning to the actual bodog categories, a couple of other O/U possibilities begin just prior to kickoff concerning how often **Joe Buck**

mentions **Peyton Manning** (5½) and how many times **Archie Manning** is shown in the broadcast (4½). If either of those numbers pay off the under, I'll be shocked as social norms dictate that the Manning family doesn't have to pass their ubiquitous clan crown to the Clintons until Super Tuesday.

Eventually on Sunday, a game will take place amidst all the hoopla. Bets can be placed on which team scores first and if it comes on a touchdown or a field goal/safety. Don't forget also to postulate whether the player who records that score wears an even or odd number. Then, if you're feeling really adventurous, take a guess at the actual player who scores and, yes, even **Madison Hedgecock** is listed as a possibility though he's a 40-to-1 shot.

And then, will the team that scores first win the game? Though not as exciting as putting points on the board, there are numerous other firsts to be wagered on, such as which team punts first, is penalized first, and gets the game's first first down — and does it come via a rush, pass or penalty?

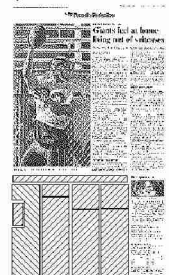
It doesn't stop there, for there's also first timeout, first to cross midfield, first turnover — and will it be a fumble or interception? — first sack, first coach's challenge and, of course, does it result in the call standing or being overturned?

And who will attempt the first field goal? Will it miss or hit? If it misses, is it short, wide left, or wide right?

After digging deep into the rosters to guess which lineman will receive the first holding penalty, the initial spate of wagers is over, but there are still many things to hope you can correctly predict.

Will there be a two-point conversion? A safety? A special teams or defensive touchdown? Will the game ever be tied after the first score? Will either team score in every quarter? Will any quarter be scoreless? Will it be the first Super Bowl to go into overtime?

Don't be fooled into thinking that halftime gives you a break from these rapid-fire propositions, for bets can be placed even on which song **Tom Petty** will use to close his



performance. The contenders are "Free Fallin'," "Don't Do Me Like That," "Learning to Fly," "Great Wide Open," "Last Dance with Mary Jane," and "Runnin' Down a Dream."

I refuse even to take a guess at this question due to the utter disrespect given to "Refugee" and "American Girl" — how they didn't get on the list is beyond my capacity for understanding. That's not saying too much, though, for as the ladies will tell you, that part of me is severely limited.

There are further questions to be handled after Mr. Petty leaves the stage, too, such as will there be a lead change in the second half? Then there's the final scoring play to be considered — which team gets it, what type of play it comes on, does the scorer wear an odd or even number, and — for extra points — what's his name?

After the game, an MVP will be announced and we can wonder whom he will thank first — his teammates, God, family, coach, or the daring "no one" possibility.

Then, of course, there is the question of who wins. The Patriots are the obvious sentimental pick in these parts, but fans, be forewarned. The Associated Press reported on Monday that Princess, the pigskin-picking camel, deemed the Giants will emerge victorious.

Before you scoff, know that this humpy girl went 11-6 in the regular season and an astounding 8-2 in the playoffs — take that, **Hank Goldberg**. To select a team, Princess is presented with a pair of graham crackers with team names on them; whichever one she nibbles first is her pick.

This is not the most comprehensive, university-level, double-blind study, and I became even more skeptical when finding out that Princess' home, the Popcorn Park Zoo, is located in New Jersey. Think it's possible the New England cracker

found itself "accidentally" dropped into a steaming camel pile before being offered for consumption?

For the prop bet world, though, it's a bonus if the Patriots do win. Only then can questions like "will **Bob Kraft** mention the '72 Dolphins? and "will **Don Shula** shake **Bill Belichick's** hand?" become relevant.

Regardless of Princess' decree, it's still worth including a few of the game's finalities into the contest, as someone should be daring enough to distrust the camel. Even if everyone believes she's correct, though, there's still the matter of by how many points the Giants win and total points scored. There also are over/unders and comparison bets between anyone expected to get any semblance of significant playing time. Thankfully, that includes a clash between **Kevin Boss** and **Jabar Gaffney** that will be settled by their receiving yards. Yes, we can finally put that ages-old question to rest. Phew!

Then it's time to total up the points and not so much decide who won, but who lost. Victory only results in the pleasure of receiving the most "entertainment purposes," while the loser gets to drive the shady fella home. He drank too many wine coolers and got a tummy ache.

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