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Kevin O'Hara: A head-splitting Super Bowl

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By **Kevin O'Hara**

PITTSFIELD — Chuck called me on that long-ago Super Bowl Sunday. "Hey Kev, why don't you come over for the big game? I've got tons of food and a new 60-inch Jumbotron projection TV that will knock your socks off."

"Thanks, Chuck, but what about your six kiddies?"

"Millie's taking `em to her Aunt Betsy's. C'mon, it'll be a blast."

When I arrived at Chuck's just before kick-off, I was surprised to find his six tykes — ages two thru 10 — hunkered down in front of their humongous TV and hypnotized by the Care Bears.

I stalled at the door. "Gee, Chuck, I thought your wife had taken your rugrats — er, I mean, kids."

Chuck grabbed the six-pack from my arms before I could flee. "Naw, she decided her auntie wasn't up for our gang, and went on her own. Kids are cool with it, though."

He clapped his hands like a school teacher. "Okay, children, it's grown-up TV time!" He leaned in bravely and ejected their tape from the VCR machine, which incited a riot that rivaled the storming of the Bastille.

A deadly mob

Swift as a guillotine blade, I found myself buried beneath a scrum of *enfant terribles* who screamed, "This is all your fault!"

After Chuck rescued me from the deadly mob, he corralled them downstairs to the family room. When he resurfaced, sporting a fresh welt over his right eye, he cracked open two of my beers — both for himself — and asked, "Who's playing?"

"Who's playing? I thought you liked football."

He gave me a wink. "Naw, just the cheerleaders."

The screen came to life in a blur of iridescent colors; the reception so poor that a thrown football looked like a streaking dirty-tailed comet. Chuck got on his knees, trying to sharpen the hazy image. Having no success, he boasted, "Great sound, huh?"

Halfway through the first quarter, the oldest girl, Tammy, surfaced. "Daddy, little Dicky's soiled his pants, and he stinks."

Chuck waved her off. "I'll be right down." He turned to me, suddenly immersed in the history of the game. "Kev, why do they call the field a gridiron? Is the ball really made out of pigskin? Who's Knute Rockne?"

Stinky Dicky was shortly banished from below and came parading through the living room dressed only in a loaded cloth diaper. The kid was so malodorous my first impulse was to call in a HAZMAT team. "Gee, Chuck," I retreated, "what have you been feeding this kid — mustard seeds?"

Chuck, never taking his eyes off the blurry screen, picked up the kid and plopped him into the nearby playpen — unchanged! When the toddler protested with a screech that could rattle the cages of Hades, Daddy tried to calm him with a pat to the head. "C'mon Dicky, stop acting so infantile."

On the attack

Minutes into the second quarter, the five remaining brats broke from their confines, and attacked me like a well-oiled SWAT team. Tommy led the brigade with a battery-operated machine gun louder than a chainsaw, and Timmy followed with a percussion pistol that perforated my eardrums like a foot-long Q-tip. Simultaneously, the three girls attacked my flanks — their doughy arms flailing like windmills — and shouted, "Is your stupid dumb game over yet?"

I escaped their snare and stumbled for my coat, my head splitting like the Liberty Bell. "Sorry, Chuck, gotta go."

"Go? What about the halftime show?"

"New Kids on the Block. I don't think so."

He picked up Stinky Dicky and waved him around like a citronella torch at a summer barbecue. "But I'm just about to reheat some eggplant parmesan."

My skin turned yellow. "No thanks."

"Last question: Why do teams like to punt on 4th down?"

"Bye, Chuck."

I walked out into the night, taking in great gulps of fresh Arctic air, and drove directly to Pontoosuc Lake. There I parked beneath the spindly pines and winking stars, rolled down my windows, and listened to the last of the game on the car radio, never knowing the world to be so peaceful.

Kevin O'Hara is a regular contributor to The Eagle. Visit his website, thedonkeyman.com.