

SUPER

Continued from Page 5

My favorite Super Bowl of the three was in Tampa, where I was a much more integral part of The Associated Press team covering that game since I covered one of the teams, Arizona, all season.

Tampa was all decked up for the event. I made a trip to a local casino, which was packed, and caught a glimpse of Kim Kardashian and Mike Ditka there (not together). The minimum blackjack bet was \$50 so I didn't stay long.

There were big projects to complete, including features profiling Kurt Warner and Larry Fitzgerald.

The Cardinals were staying at a hotel along the water and if I missed the exit I'd have to drive across a floating highway miles and miles across the bay. It was beautiful. I saw a crane swoop in and catch a fish. But it was aggravating — I did it at least twice.

This was Arizona's only Super Bowl appearance. As I explained in my previous column, the Cardinals were historically bad. From 1947, when the then-Chicago Cardinals won the NFL title, through 2007, the franchise won one playoff game.

And this Cardinal team, which finished the regular season 9-7, did not roll in with a ton of



momentum. One national analyst called it the worst playoff team in NFL history. Two weeks before the playoffs started, Arizona lost at New England 47-7.

But with Warner and Fitzgerald mounting a record-breaking series of performances, the Cardinals mounted an unlikely run to the Super Bowl. They beat Atlanta in the wild card round and won handily at Carolina the following week. That's when a bit of luck helped. Philadelphia upset the New York Giants, meaning the Cardinals would host the Eagles for the NFC championship. Arizona won to set

up a Super Bowl match-up with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

In that game, Arizona led 23-20 after Warner connected with Fitzgerald on a 64-yard touchdown play with 2:37 to play.

I was busy at that time writing a story about Fitzgerald being named the game's MVP, which he surely would have been had Arizona won.

But Ben Roethlisberger directed a game-winning drive, Antonio Holmes made a tiptoe catch just inside the end zone with 35 seconds to play. Final: Steelers 27, Cardinals 23.

Holmes was named the game's MVP.

As I was rewriting on deadline, the image on my laptop screen literally flipped upside down. Other than writing while standing on my

head, I was helpless. So I commandeered the laptop of a co-worker.

The AP technicians even took a photo of my screen because they'd never seen that happen before. Apparently there is a hidden command that flips the screen image upside down. Who knew?

I didn't have a lot to do at my third and final Super Bowl. My main assignment was to cover the Pro Bowl, played in Glendale the preceding week.

But I had a great seat directly up from the goal line as Seattle, trailing 28-24, drove to the New England 1-yard line in the final minute.

You 12s all remember what happened next. With 26 seconds left, rather than hand the ball off to Marshawn Lynch, one of the best short-yardage backs in the NFL, the Seahawks decided Russell Wilson should pass. He tossed it over the middle, where Malcolm Butler intercepted to preserve the Patriots' win.

It's a moment of agony Seahawks fans will never forget, no matter how hard they might try.

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