

Monday Morning Analysis – BY MATTHEW HATFIELD Super Bowl XLI (41) Recap – Monday, February 5th, 2007

In the pouring down rain, they did it; the Indianapolis Colts won Super Bowl XLI (41). No, it may not have been their most talented team over the past few years, but this one may have overcome the most as they had the league's worst-ranked rush defense, didn't have a first-round bye, had to go on the road and win at a Baltimore team with an outstanding defense and rallied from 18 points down to beat their arch nemesis, the New England Patriots, to reach the big game. By defeating the Chicago Bears 29-17 on Sunday night, not only did Indianapolis win its second Super Bowl in franchise history, but Tony Dungy became the first black Head Coach to win a Super Bowl (and just the 7th different African-American to win a pro sports Championship). Enjoy our final edition of Monday Morning Analysis for the season as we breakdown what happened in the 'big game'... we're not going away completely, though. Be sure to stay tuned to Hatfield Sports – www.matthewhatfield.com – as we'll be giving you in-depth, wall-to-wall coverage of the NFL Draft before and after the picks... we'll even our own Mock Drafts!

1st Quarter:

*** What a way to start Super Bowl 41 for the Chicago Bears. Rookie return phenom Devin Hester, who had six touchdown returns this season, goes 92 yards to pay-dirt for a score on the opening kickoff. It marked the first ever touchdown on an opening kickoff in Super Bowl history. Furthermore, it was the first kickoff return for a touchdown in Bears playoff history and the eight kickoff return for a score in Super Bowl history. Just 14 seconds in and the Bears are up 7-0. Remember, Indianapolis gave up 220 return yards two weeks ago in the AFC Championship game vs. the Patriots and that was the most return yards given up in a Conference Championship game ever.

*** The Colts' first possession of the game isn't exactly a thing of beauty. Bears LB Brian Urlacher tips the first pass thrown by Indy QB Peyton Manning, he's nearly picked off by Nathan Vasher two plays later on an inside route, and after a couple false start penalties, Manning is indeed intercepted on 3rd & 12. Chicago safety Chris Harris gets the pick and the Bears are in business. Or so we thought. Rex Grossman comes onto the field and Chicago goes three and out.

*** Indy's second possession produced better results. After LB's Urlacher and Lance Briggs stop Colts rookie tailback Joseph Addai on the first couple of plays, Marvin Harrison comes through with a first down reception on 3rd & short. Another third down – this one 3rd & 4 – stares Indy in the face and unsung tight end Dallas Clark, who had 17 catches for 280 yards in the postseason coming into this one, hauls in a six-yard pass. Third time is truly a charm for the Colts as their third and final third down of this possession ended with a 53-yard TD strike from Manning to a wide open wideout named Reggie Wayne. Three consecutive conversions on third down for the Colts, and it's worth bringing up the fact that Indy's 56% conversion rate on third down was the best in NFL history this year. Manning also has an 18-3TD/Int. ratio on third down. That's

when their offense seems to be at its best – third down. Extra point is botched and the Bears still lead 7-6.

*** At this point in the game, the Chicago Bears must feel like they have let their chance to play from ahead slip away. They got a special teams touchdown and the defense was able to create an early turnover, yet it's a 7-6 game (should be tied) and the Bears could be in some trouble if the offense doesn't put together a drive here. Following that thought, Gabe Reid fumbles a squib kickoff and the Colts have great field position. Can you say uh-oh? Actually, Chicago gets a break as defensive end Alex Brown comes fast across the line and gets in the middle of the handoff exchange between Manning and Addai, causing a fumble. That gives Manning two turnovers – a fumble and an interception – in the opening period of this Super Bowl. Neither turnover appears like it will end up crushing them, though. Thomas Jones busts off a 52-yard run – the longest of the season for the Bears – and they're in great position to tack on another score, which they do. Grossman finds Muhsin Muhammad (60Rec. during the regular season), a two-time Pro Bowler, on a four-yard scoring strike that gives the Bears a 14-6 edge with 4:34 remaining in the first period.

*** Indy doesn't panic, but their offense doesn't quite jump all over the Bears defense. Starting at their own 16-yard line, Addai gets stuffed, the Colts throw a short pass to Bryan Fletcher and on 3rd & 7, Manning's pass intended for Aaron Moorehead is nearly picked off. Chicago still needs to show us something offense, especially through the air since the Colts are going to focus on stopping the run and make the Bears pass. On second down, Indy safety Bob Sanders shows why he's so valuable to that defense, popping the ball loose from RB Cedric Benson. DE Dwight Freeney hops on the ball, giving Indy good field position at the 43-yard line of Chicago. The Bears defense makes a good stand, forcing a punt, and Indy's defense would force Brad Maynard (who had a record 11 punts with the Giants in their Super Bowl 35 loss to the Ravens) out to punt it back to them before the end of the quarter. Wacky first quarter, too, as there were four turnovers – two by each team – in the opening quarter; that's a first quarter Super Bowl record.

2nd Quarter:

*** You can sense the Colts' offense is beginning to get into a rhythm and gain some momentum. Addai gains a total of 26 yards on three plays (either runs or short pass catches), putting it at the Bears 17-yard line. There he loses three yards, Manning completes a pass for four yards to Harrison, and on 3rd & 9 Addai gets wrapped up by Briggs. That brings out kicker Adam Vinatieri, who connects on a 29-yard field goal. Vinatieri now has hit 38 field goals in his postseason career, the most ever. The score is now 14-9 in favor of the Bears with 11:17 to go in the second quarter.

*** Indy decided after that opening kickoff to kick to Devin Hester **NO MORE**. That's why the Bears start out at their own 22-yard line. Jones picks up four yards, then gets nothing and Lovie Smith's team faces a 3rd & 6. Grossman completes a pass to Rashied Davis, who is short of the first down and stopped in his tracks by Sanders. Makes me wonder would they have gotten a first down there without Sanders on the

field? Maybe. All this talk about his importance to the defense coming into this game so far looks true. Another thing that caught my attention was the fact that the Bears were 4-for-24 when facing 3rd & 4 or longer in the postseason entering this game. No surprise they came up short in their attempt to keep that drive alive.

*** Plenty of time for Manning to throw and he delivers a completion to Harrison for his fourth grab of the night. Indy suddenly finds itself on the Chicago 37-yard line. Manning finds Clark and in no time the Colts have this Bears defense on their heels (going to a little quicker pace to keep the Bears from subbing) as well as themselves in the red zone. Speaking of which, the Colts have scored on 32 of their last 33 red zone drives, including 22TD's and 10FG's. On 1st & goal, Dominic Rhodes gets to the one-yard line. The very next play, Rhodes punches it in the end zone. Colts now sit on top 16-14 with 6:09 to go in the half.

*** Anything new going on with that Bears offense? Nope. Same old, same old – they punt. Hey, how come I've yet to hear Phil Simms with Jim Nantz on the TV broadcast say what a great job Ron Turner has done with the play-calling? Or come I haven't heard Boomer Evisason on the radio broadcast tell his partner Marv Albert how impressed he is with the plays Turner is sending in? My guess is because the Bears probably should be sticking to the run more than they are and try somehow to come up with a trick play, even if it means getting Hester out there on offense. I mean, he is your fastest player and very dangerous with the ball in his hands right? It doesn't make sense to me.

*** After Chicago corner Charles Tillman strips Fletcher of the football and recovers it for the Bears, they decide to be real generous and give it right back. The next play, Grossman can't handle the snap from center Olin Kreutz, a Pro Bowl selection year in and year out, resulting in Colts RDT Raheem Brock recovering it and giving Indy nice field position before the half to add to their lead. Personally, the snap to me looked fine; it's the slippery ball that Grossman failed to protect and that led to the turnover, Chicago's third of this game and we haven't even gotten to half-time. We said coming in that Grossman couldn't make mistakes like those and that the Bears had to win the turnover battle by no less than two for a great chance of winning. It's even and their defense is going to have to do an awful good job of being opportunistic to turn things around.

*** Indy takes over right before the intermission, but is unable to get a touchdown. They settle for the field goal, however, I tell the folks watching the game with me that even though it's Vinatieri out there, it's no given the field goal goes through. Other than predicting the outcome (not the final score) and that it would go Under 48, that was the only thing I predicted with conviction that I got right (took me long enough, huh?). Vinatieri missed the field goal, so our score at the break is 16-14 with the Colts in front. Quick notes on Vinatieri worth mentioning again... Vinatieri was 27-of-53 on field goals in college at South Dakota State and nearly got benched his junior year for an offensive because of missing extra points. In addition, ex-Patriots Head Coach Bill Parcells planned on cutting him if he didn't make a 50+ yard field goal in a 31-0 game

New England was winning several years back. Imagine all that – this for a guy who hit two game-winning field goals in the Super Bowl as time expired and another that essentially was the difference in the Pats beating the Eagles in Super Bowl XXXIX (39).

*** Before really diving into the third quarter, it's worth mentioning a couple things from the first half. The Colts had 193 passing yards in the half compared to 32 by Chicago, plus they scored the final ten points of the first half. Defensively, the Bears were on the field for 46 plays for nearly 20 minutes and went nearly 16 minutes without a first down on offense. Chicago had four punts, three turnovers and three first downs. You can be the judge, but that doesn't exactly have the look of a recipe for success in a Championship bought.

3rd Quarter:

*** We're starting to see that Bears defense sucking wind against the Colts offense. Indy put together its 11th drive of ten plays or more this postseason, converting a couple more key third downs. Already in Chicago territory, on 3rd & 8, Manning finds tight end Ben Utecht for a first down. Then on 3rd & 5 at the Bears' 25-yard line, Manning connects with Addai for a first down. Their next third down attempt didn't go through as Manning falls down and hit his wide receiver, who falls short of the first down. Interestingly enough, Dungy decides to challenge that there weren't 11 men on the field for the Chicago defense. He loses his challenge at the 7:30 mark of the quarter. On comes Vinatieri for a 24-yard knuckleball field goal. Up 19-14 with 7:26 to go, the Colts are feeling pretty good and a key reason why is Addai. Some people, me included, weren't sure about him as a first round draft choice for the Colts, but he stepped up on this drive with 44 yards of offense.

*** Grossman (now 7-for-9 with 45 yards passing) throws a 14-yard completion to Jones to begin the Bears' first drive of the second half. Remarkably, the first down there was the team's first in the last 25:44 of the game. That's a nice start as it gets them out to their own 46-yard line. All they need to do is go 54 yards against a defense that was 32nd in the league vs. the run during the regular season and they will take the lead. Of course, that's easier said than done. Grossman completes a nine-yard pass to Muhammad. On 2nd & 1 inside the Colts' territory, Grossman slips and Anthony 'Booger' McFarland, a mid-season acquisition by Indy at defensive tackle, sacks him. An important play on 3rd & 12 from their own 44-yard line, Grossman can't handle the snap and nothing comes out of the play.

*** What postseason Dominic Rhodes is having for these Colts. A backup to Edgerrin James for a few seasons, Rhodes seems to thrive when he comes off the bench and his carries increase as the game progresses. Rhodes breaks off a big run and then a personal foul penalty by the Bears pretty much guaranteed Indy some points as they were put in the red zone. But on 1st & Goal, 2nd & Goal and 3rd & Goal, the Colts get stopped. Vinatieri hits a 20-yard field goal, extending his team's lead to 22-14 with a little over three minutes to play in the quarter. Indy declines a running into the kicker penalty.

*** Right now, you can't help but wonder whether or not the Bears will score another touchdown in this game. Obviously, without one they will go home unhappy (so what I'm saying is don't count on three Robbie Gould field goals and Indy scoring zero points from here on out). After Jones carries the ball a couple times, the Bears find themselves in a 3rd & 7 situation at the Indy 25-yard line. Grossman is almost picked off there in that spot (sign of something to come?) and Gould comes on for a 44-yard field goal that is not easy by any means. Nonetheless, Gould, who was 15-of-17 on field goal tries for 40+ yards this season, makes the kick and the Bears trim the deficit to 22-17 with 1:14 left.

*** Dungy uses a challenge near the end of the third quarter on a 2nd & 13 play where Manning completed a pass to Harrison. At first glance, it appeared he wasted another challenge, which would give him none for the remainder of the contest. However, his challenge works and they're rewarded with a 3rd & 2 that they convert on a pass to Wayne. One note on Harrison – this was one of his better postseason performances considering he, like some of his teammates (Manning included), struggled in the past in the playoffs. A ring helps solidify his spot among some of the all-time great receivers. After all, Harrison is the only NFL player with eight consecutive seasons with 1000+ yards and 100+ receptions.

4th Quarter:

*** The Bears finally show some physicality and stop the Colts on 3rd & 8 to get the ball back. As much as Indy has dominated statistically, all the Bears need is a touchdown and they re-take the lead. A John Tait holding penalty puts them in a tricky spot, making it 1st & 20. That kind of takes the run out of the equation at least on second and third down. Jones picks up five yards, and on 2nd & 15, Muhammad – who played for the Panthers in their Super Bowl 38 loss – comes through with his third catch of the evening, good for 21 yards. Muhammad is open in the spaces behind the linebackers; it's just a matter of Mr. Grossman finding him as well as wideout Bernard Berrian, their speedster that has been rather quiet thus far. The very next play on a pump and go pass, Grossman floats one up there and Kelvin Hayden, a defensive back product out of Illinois, burns the Bears. Hayden returns the interception for a touchdown and Indy goes up 29-17 with 11:44.

*** Heavy underdogs, the Bears would get a couple more cracks to get back in the game. Grossman, on 3rd & 2 from his own 28-yard line, threw a completion to Desmond Clark (his first catch this game) for 11 yards. Another poor pass was sure to come, though. Sanders would create his second turnover of the game, interception Grossman on a ball that was well under thrown. He either must throw that pass deeper or inside of his receiver rather than outside. Officially, this game is called the 7th multi-interception performance for Grossman this year.

*** Rookie defensive end Mark Anderson makes the first sack of the game on Manning. Makes you wonder why didn't they apply more pressure instead of dropping seven and making them throw it underneath? They certainly missed the presence of defensive tackle Tommie Harris up front as well as safety Mike Brown, someone who

I've always thought has been one of the game's most under appreciated, clutch performers. The Colts decide to run a draw play on 3rd & 18, much to the dismay of Manning, who wanted to test the Bears deep and put a dagger in them. At least that's what my impression was with him going off the field in a disappointed manner.

*** On his 14th carry of the night, Jones picked up a first down and reached 100 yards rushing. Averaging over 7YPC, it indicates to me he didn't get enough rush attempts. Anyhow, the Bears get in a 4th & 9 scenario and are unable to convert, for all intensive purposes, pretty much ending this one. Manning is named MVP, the Bears score three points over the final three quarters, Addai racks up 143 total yards of offense, Rhodes (21Att. 113Yds.) runs for over 100, Grossman turns the ball over three times and Indy finishes off a 29-17 Championship victory.

Final Thoughts:

*** As was the case in the National Championship game when Ohio State's Ted Ginn Jr. broke the opening kickoff for a touchdown and the Florida Gators responded to win by double-figures, the Indianapolis Colts weren't phased by an opening kickoff return for a touchdown by Chicago's Devin Hester and they also won by double-digits.

*** The weather affected this game. Did it affect the outcome? Not really, but it was a factor that bothered both teams. The field wasn't as big a problem as was the slippery ball, which contributed to neither squad protecting it very well. Case and point – both teams combined to commit eight turnovers – the fourth most ever in Super Bowl history. It now bodes the question should the Super Bowl be played in a dome? They put it in Miami Beach, expecting good weather. The weather wasn't terrible all week, but this goes down as one of the worst Super Bowls ever as far as the elements go. Some may counter by saying they don't play Conference Championship games in domes. Thing is the Super Bowl is a neutral site. You work hard during the regular season for home-field advantage, which sometimes means bad weather in certain places.

*** I think Jim Nantz and Phil Simms are a good broadcasting team for CBS for the Super Bowl. That being said, Simms made one comment that had me puzzled. When talking about one of the quarterbacks (I believe it was Grossman... but if it wasn't him it was Manning then), Simms said he had two hands on the football. Not sure what Phil was watching because if you rewind the tape, you'll notice only one hand is on the ball. Everything else was solid, and it's good to know there wasn't a wardrobe malfunction with the Prince half-time show. Glad we've gotten away from that stuff.

*** The one person I'm the happiest for after Super Bowl XLI (41) is Colts Head Coach Tony Dungy. It has been a long time coming for him. You especially feel good for him given all that he had to go through last year, losing his son tragically. In regular season games with the Colts, Dungy has a 60-20 record. His .648 winning percentage ranks best among active coaches entering the night. You'll struggle to find a classier human being and nicer man than him. Criticized for being too soft on his players and not cracking down on them as well, it must feel good for Dungy – who also nearly got to a

Super Bowl in Tampa Bay only to watch those group of Buccaneers win one under Jon Gruden – to finally get his much-deserved ring.

*** One observation I took from this game was that Manning had more of a ‘hohum, we won’ attitude after this victory as opposed to being much more jubilant when they came back from 18 points down to defeat the Patriots (a.k.a. ‘slay the dragon’) at home in front of the fans in the RCA Dome. Okay, he’s soaking wet and would like to get out of the rain, but it did surprise me we didn’t see much more emotion from him.

*** Indianapolis (430-265 total yardage advantage) had a decisive 38:04-21:56 time of possession edge on Chicago. Wasn’t that the kind of time of possession edge the Bears were looking for in this game? Their offense never posed to be a real threat for the Colts defense. Another thing that stood out to me was that the Bears’ short passes didn’t go for much; they were usually gains between 2-4 yards. Meanwhile, Indy got the most out of its short passing game, producing 6-12 yard gains out of them. Chicago decided after that big Wayne touchdown that they weren’t going to get beat over the top by the Indy passing game. Instead, they were going to make them beat the run and force them to throw short passes. Problem is the Colts don’t mind throwing passes underneath and running the ball. They’ve taken on a more physical approach with Addai and Rhodes and that was a major difference for them, especially their transformation on defense with Sanders.