

What about the beer?

Last Sunday, I was invited by friends to celebrate the yearly tradition of watching the NFL Championship play-off games back-to-back. On the way to the party, I entertained profound and lofty thoughts about the football season officially ending in two weeks. The end of the season presents a problem of monumental proportion that annually rears its ugly head, and this year is no exception.



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

I couldn't believe I was actually watching the games from probably the best possible seat on the planet, bar none. The only way to get closer would be to stand in the huddle, on the field, next to the quarterback. In addition, other televisions and monitors had been strategically placed throughout the house so the games could be viewed in other areas where guests might gather. The place was football fan heaven on earth.

When I thought nothing could possibly improve this perfect venue, the hosts served a smorgasbord of tasty delicacies, fine wine, and other libation designed to titillate the palate of the most discriminating epicurean.

The affair was a civilized social event that if photographed, would have been published in one of those magazines you find in the waiting area of an upscale salon.

Even the guests were perfect. They were a study in sartorial splendor. The women's attire was strictly haute couture with designer heads and bodies to match. The men were equally coifed. The scene was like being in a beer commercial. However, there was one difference — there was no beer. Oh no — not at this party. This was definitely not a beer-swilling crowd.

The ladies drank fine wine or vitamin-vodka concoctions from crystal goblets, while the men savored the bouquet of vintage cognac in warmed snifters. The only six-packs found here were in the abdominal areas of people who obviously spent serious time with personal trainers. Nonetheless, the party was still football heaven, only without the beer.

When a beer commercial flashed across the TV screen between plays, it looked as if it could have been shot in the very room where I was sitting. The only difference was that the actors held bottles of beer in the commercial, while at the real party, guests

sipped cocktails and wine. The operative word in the previous sentence is "held." I almost forgot, in America, the land of the free, beer cannot be consumed on television, lest people be inspired to actually drink an alcoholic beverage.

It's quite all right to show beautiful people enjoying a party in an opulent setting that is somewhat unrealistic for most working-class folks, as long as they don't actually take a sip from the bottle of beer they are holding with the label conspicuously turned toward the camera so it can be easily read. I guess it's obvious to everybody but me why that would deter people from (Gasp!) drinking beer. I suppose the logic is: As long as the beer does not pass over the actor's lips, viewers will not be encouraged to drink alcohol.

You will see beer bottles raised, but two frames before one touches a human lip, there is a cut to a different scene. Did the writers of this inspired piece of legislation think it would make people buy cases of beer so they could serve it to a gathering of their closest friends and not drink it? Please, say it isn't so. Are they aware that the rest of the civilized world laughs at us because of strange laws like this? If the legislation is working, why do we have so many alcoholics in this country?

Land of the free . . . hmmm . . . sometimes I wonder. Maybe beer commercials are scenes from football fan hell? It's a place where friends gather to watch the Super Bowl and they have access to an endless supply of beer. The only rule is, they aren't allowed to drink it. What a nightmare. I guess censorship laws are yet another part of this system we can't understand.



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Jazz ensembles to compete at URI


Young jazz musicians from high schools around Rhode Island, performing in 17 ensembles, will gather at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston on Saturday, Feb. 2, for the annual Rhode Island Music Educators High School Jazz Festival.

The ensembles, including one from North Kingstown High School directed by Toni-Annette Silveira, will spend the day performing in competition before a panel of judges from the URI Music Department Jazz Program and band faculty.

The festival, which takes place in the URI Fine Arts Center Concert Hall runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call the URI Music Department at 874-2431.

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