



Giants Parade: A Small Town Affair. Behind the Scenes in Battery Park

Benedetta Grasso (February 07, 2012)



To honor the winners of the 2012 Super Bowl today NY organized a parade for the Giants in the Financial District. Here's a report from someone who lives there and saw the event from behind the scenes.

There is not a hectic metropolis in the world that boasts the small-town spirit of the NY



neighborhoods...

How else would have I been able to climb up on one of the official NY Giants festive floats and play football with children before the parade even started?

Only this morning I realized that as a Battery Park resident I could be a much more active participant of this event. Also, I could tell from the relaxed faces of those surrounding me that this enormous celebration had turned everyone in a child who gets a snow day. "The traffic is blocked...I have to get to work later," "There are thousands of people and I can't reach the subway I really can't come..."

After celebrating the Giants' winning the Super Bowl on Sunday I had a choice: to watch the parade lining up in the streets under my house or to quickly leave avoiding the crowd...but I could also cross and get to the river, a quieter area from where I thought I could evaluate things better.

Doing that, almost by chance, I ended up being behind the scenes of the parade, where all the trucks and the main performers were waiting before marching.

It was early morning and everything was buzzing in the Spring-like air, but it was a quiet confusion, a happy one. Moms were fixing the decorations with duct tape, parents let their children skip school to take part in the preparation, adults took a day off and used their skills to contribute to the construction of colorful banners, costumes, floats.

The whole Battery Park area flooded to the streets.

The West Side Highway separates this idyllic scenario by the river from the street barricades where drunk fans emerged from the subway. On the one side it was impossible to reach the subway, or to find a good spot from where to get a glimpse of the players; on the other, not only people seemed to have come out of the Truman Show, but you could actually go and sit on the empty trucks, play around with the decorations and even greet the players.

All the organizers had passes, but the area was so big and green compared to most of the public spaces in Manhattan that it was hard to tell who was an organizer from who was a resident. More importantly, it was a moral obligation for the residents to be there at 8 in the morning and share a slice of cheese-cake with the people they usually only hastily run into before getting into the subway.

Blue and white were the dominating clothing choices, and the chalk drawings on the streets and the floats were blue and white as well. Everything looked home-made, far less glamorous than it would look on TV.

It felt like a school recital, where the principal is trying to figure out jokingly how to plug in something. It felt like a street-fair where instead of ice-cream trucks were the shop owners eagerly offering something to drink to those who had been up since dawn to help them staying awake.

The policemen took pictures and shares them with their relatives, and they were happy that people were coming up to them and cheering. The policemen on the other side were nervously looking at the fans, almost as if they were protesters.

Sports are an interesting aspect of life. They have been with men for centuries, they have always brought people together and even defined nations, symbolizing something way more universal than just the competition on the field.

I always preferred Arts and Humanities and sometimes looked down on over-fanatic sports fans, but lately I have started to thoroughly understand what this excitement can be about. There's a lot more to it than sheer pride and childish obsessions: the world of sports has its own set of canons, and they are equally important as the artistic ones. Athletes and artists are often on two opposite grounds, especially when we consider the different types of fans the two categories have, but there isn't anything quite spectacular and movie-like such as a sports game.



And there's nothing like this city that gives that sense of spectacle to sports.

The Super Bowl game this year, between the Patriots and the Giants, seemed to have been written by a Hollywood screenwriter, to the point that if it were an actual movie scene, I'm sure it'd be one of those of which critics would point out the forced twist at the end. I watched the game sitting on the edge of my seat, nervous for the entire second-half and terrified that the Giants would lose, fearing for them like for the fate of my favorite literary protagonists.

For the first time I looked at sports as something with a dramatic narrative, the players much like on a stage performing the role of a life-time, but like the best actors shining when they can finally improvise, add something to a set of rules.

The hopeful opening, the sudden set back, the side-characters to Eli Manning and Tom Brady, clear antagonists coming together and parting ways and finally the last touchdown...

Two days later, a few minutes before the parade started, two kids were wrestling to catch a football on a float, proving that every generation starts fresh, and every generation will always enjoy playing, no matter how "digital" we might become.

One of them tried to catch the ball that another kid threw at them from the street. Suddenly the float moved and the ball fell on the sidewalk. The kids laughed and quickly jumped down while the policemen and the players cheered for them.

The floats left one by one. I didn't need to actually see the parade, here it still goes before my eyes: the pride of common citizens loving their home-team to pieces and showing their love through hard work.

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