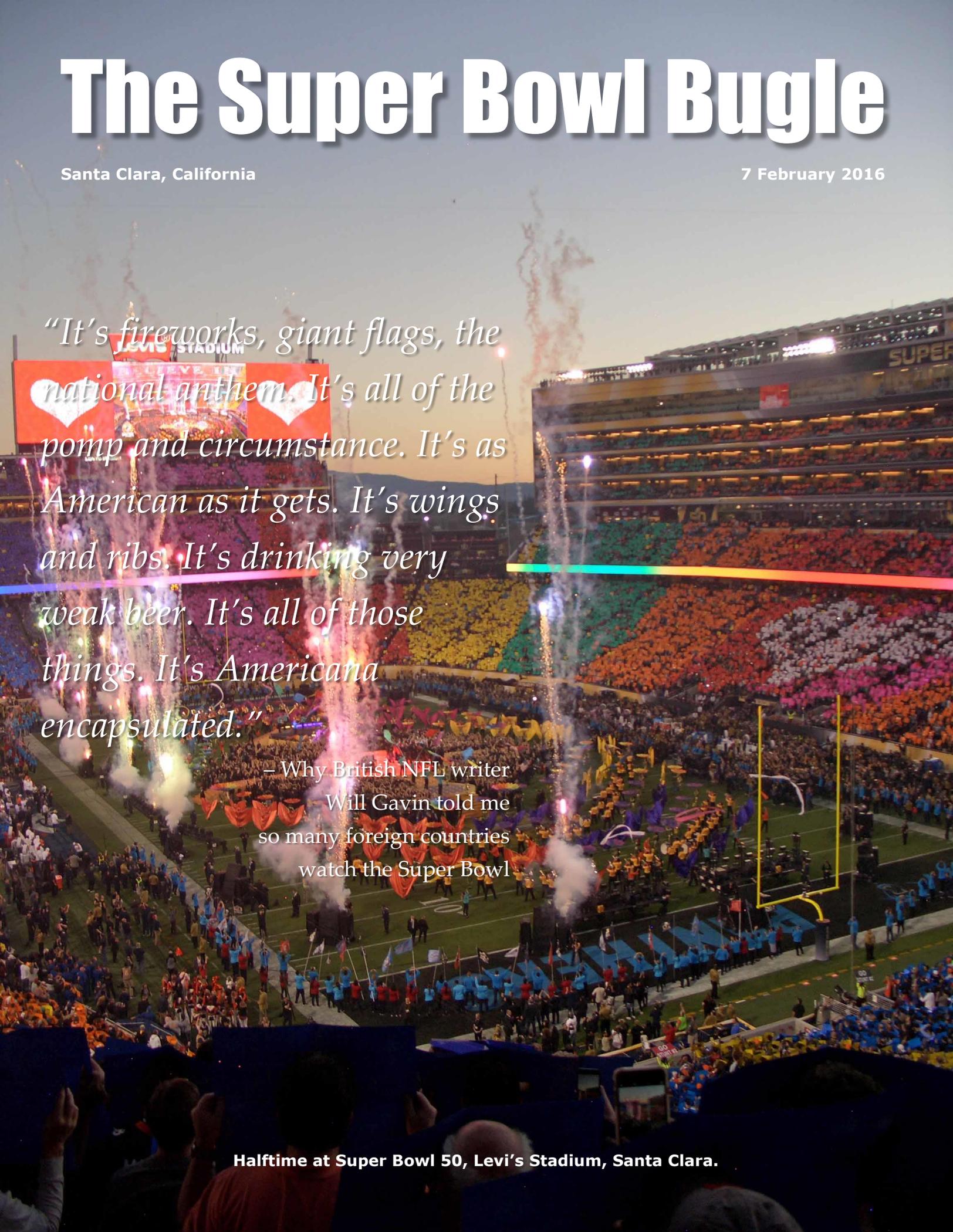


# The Super Bowl Bugle

Santa Clara, California

7 February 2016



*"It's fireworks, giant flags, the national anthem. It's all of the pomp and circumstance. It's as American as it gets. It's wings and ribs. It's drinking very weak beer. It's all of those things. It's Americana encapsulated."*

– Why British NFL writer  
Will Gavin told me  
so many foreign countries  
watch the Super Bowl

Halftime at Super Bowl 50, Levi's Stadium, Santa Clara.

# The Agony of Defeat

The careers of even the longest-lived athletes are unmercifully short.

An Olympic figure skater has about 7 minutes over the course of two days to create a lifetime dream. I've watched many fail to achieve it because of one tiny slip.

If all you were was a skater when you slipped, the next 60 years or so would be long indeed.

Carolina Panthers offensive tackle Michael Oher has played in the NFL for seven years and earned around \$20 million, so in many ways he's had it much easier than a skater.

He's the real-life person on whom the Oscar-winning Sandra Bullock movie "The Blind Side" was based. It's about Oher's adoption by a wealthy white family in Memphis, Tenn., his introduction to football and going on to play at the University of Mississippi.

But he and lesser-known Mike Remmers had a bad Super Bowl, making mistakes that led directly to the Panthers' defeat. They're paid to give their quarterback time to find someone to throw to.

On Sunday, Cam Newton was rushed too frequently and hit too often.

Newton's two fumbles led to both Denver touchdowns for which the Broncos only had to move the ball a



## Michael Oher speaks at his locker after the Super Bowl.

cumulative total of 4 yards.

Seven years is twice the average NFL career. The Panthers are Oher's third team.

Things don't look good for an eighth year for him at Carolina or elsewhere.

"You don't choose to retire," former NBA player Adonal Foyle told me in one of the first

stories I wrote about this Super Bowl. "You cease to exist to your team or you get hurt."

This reality is a part of why we watch these games.

The emotional risk we take in adopting athletes or a team – for brief moments – as our own allows us a vicarious hint of their willingness to gamble for real stakes.



A Denver TV crew packs up after its post-game broadcast from the confetti-covered field at Levi's Stadium

Another season completed, the circus packs up and moves on.

