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COMMENTARY

Best sporting events of a San Diego lifetime

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U.S. Open hard to top, but our man takes a shot

By Bill Center
UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

June 18, 2008

San Diego has hosted three Super Bowls, two World Series, an NCAA Final Four and now a riveting U.S. Open that leaves many San Diegans believing it was the most memorable sporting event in the city's history.

Certainly, most everyone in San Diego knew of the U.S. Open. And by Monday morning, we were walking Torrey Pines with Tiger Woods and Rocco Mediate in mind if we couldn't be there in body.

But was the U.S. Open the greatest sports event ever in San Diego?

This observer of San Diego sports since USD billed itself as the Notre Dame of the West says not quite. One man's Top 10:

1. The 1984 National League Championship Series: Even before Steve Garvey's homer – which might be the greatest single moment in San Diego sports – this city had gone bonkers over the Padres-Cubs series. Fans flooded to Mission Valley to welcome home a Padres team that lost the first two games in Chicago. The crowds at then-Jack Murphy Stadium were the loudest I can remember. And Garvey's homer merely tied the series. The Padres won it the following day in the decisive fifth game.

2. 1963 AFL Championship Game: San Diego was a much smaller place back then. The city was only four years removed from San Diego High being the area's top franchise. And now the Chargers were playing for a championship. Everywhere you went, people talked Chargers. After the Chargers routed the Boston Patriots 51-10, every true San Diegan believed the Chargers were better than the NFL champion Bears. We became major league that day.

3. U.S. Open: Tiger has won here so often he seems like a local franchise. But at the end, we were pulling for Rocco, too. San Diego was electric over the weekend and again Monday. And many of us were hoping for a 20th

What has been the most memorable sports event in San Diego history?

- 2008 U.S. Open
- 1984 National League Championship Series
- 1998 World Series
- 1963 AFL Championship game
- Chargers' 1995 AFC playoff victory over Miami
- Super Bowl XXXII (Denver over Green Bay)
- 1975 Final Four (John Wooden 's 10th title)
- Ken Norton beats Muhammad Ali, March 1973
- Cigar loses at Del Mar, 1996
- SDSU beats Florida State, 1977
- Other (Holiday Bowls, America's Cup, 1992 All-Star Game, Hoffman's record save, Bonds ties Aaron etc.)

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hole.

4. 1998 World Series:

Yes, the Padres got swept by the Yankees. But the Padres were playing the Yankees . . . in the World Series. The Yankees were surprised by the noise of Game 3 and in awe the way Padres fans stuck around to salute their team after the Yankees completed their sweep. I still remember Steve Finley coming back into a quiet clubhouse and telling his teammates to "come back on the field; you aren't going to believe what is happening." Amazing.

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5. Chargers' 1995 AFC playoff victory over Miami: Although it would be the victory the following week in Pittsburgh that would send the Chargers to the Super Bowl, the rivalry that had become the Chargers-Dolphins got the blood boiling. Down 21-6 at the half, the Chargers won on an 8-yard Stan Humphries touchdown pass to Mark Seay with 35 seconds to go.

6. Super Bowl XXXII: The second of three Super Bowls to be played in Mission Valley had a local connection in Broncos running back Terrell Davis, who rushed for 157 yards and three touchdowns to be the MVP. Plus, it was John Elway's first Super Bowl victory.

7. 1975 NCAA Final Four: It ended with John Wooden claiming his record 10th championship. But the Bruins needed a dramatic comeback at the Sports Arena to top Louisville (coached by former Wooden aide Denny Crum) in the semifinals. Former Grossmont High standout Ralph Drollinger played center for the Bruins.

8. San Diego State's 1977 victory over Florida State: It was the Aztecs' bowl game and capped a 10-1 season that saw them ranked No. 16 in the nation. San Diego State owned the city back then. The fact that the Aztecs had nowhere to go after such a season led to the creation of the Holiday Bowl.

9. Ken Norton-Muhammad Ali I, March 31, 1973: Ali was a supernova, Norton a former Marine. Norton broke Ali's jaw early in the fight, then won a split decision. In two subsequent meetings, Ali would score narrow split decisions over Norton.

10. Cigar's loss at Del Mar, Aug. 10, 1996: A record turnout of 44,181 filled the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club to see Cigar seek to break Citation's record of 16 straight victories. The race created a buzz in San Diego. Alas, it did not happen. Dare and Go won.

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48 total comments

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By left coast on 06/18/2008 at 6:48 p.m.

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dozer: also, forgot to say, thanks for reading all my posts, appreciate you following my opinions!

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By SDBoltFan on 06/18/2008 at 7:02 p.m.

left coast, Where exactly did you spend your weekend? All I saw and heard this weekend was about the Open. Work, the mall etc. I was at Red Robin at North County Fair (or whatever they call it now...) and every TV was on the Open. Waitstaff was continually being asked to move TVs so people could see it from their tables. And, Monday at work everyone with access to a TV was watching, and e-mailing hole by hole updates to people who couldn't watch.

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By SDBoltFan on 06/18/2008 at 7:13 p.m.

According to Canepa, the attendance was close to 300,000 including the Practice Rounds...

<http://www3.signonsandiego.com/news/2008/jun/16/woods-was-not-only-victor-here----expect-open-usog/>

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By spikedirt on 06/18/2008 at 7:39 p.m.

Dad took me to the Ali fight on my sixteenth birthday so it is a very memorable event for me personally but the 84 series and the 98 superbowl had the whole town fired up. (seems there was a lightning bolt on every window) The US Open, while certainly a biggie, wasn't as inspiring. My son wonders where the X Games figure into the equation.

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By rutek on 06/18/2008 at 9:25 p.m.

You can't forget about the best San Diego teams of all-time...our San Diego Sockers!! They 5-peated..TWICE!!!! Perhaps the most electrifying show in the 80s. I'll never Juli Veee climbing up the boards as he would pump his fist after a goal...and don't forget the Sockers' Square Pan Pizza cup giveaways too...

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By left coast on 06/18/2008 at 10:12 p.m.

good lord you sheeple are unbelievable. a has-been columnist, who burbs out 1 or 2 pieces a month, writes that 300,000 attended the open.

let's think about that: was it really 300,000 unique ticket-buyers (read:people), or was it essentially the same core group (weeklong passes) going everyday?

so you see, only about a fraction of that 300,000 figure actually attended... think about it.

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By Turkeytag on 06/18/2008 at 10:34 p.m.

Official figures-----
 Attendance figures for 2008 U.S. Open
 Monday Practice 16,422
 Tuesday Practice 21,396
 Wednesday Practice 29,290
 Thursday Round 1 48,461
 Friday Round 2 52,843
 Saturday Round 3 53,962
 Sunday Round 4 51,425
 TOTAL 273,799

+ Monday Playoff - estimated at 25,000

That, to me, is just shy of 300,000 with at least 53, 962 being unique. I would estimate that at least 100,000 of them were unique.

Report Abuse**By left coast on 06/19/2008 at 9:10 a.m.**

how do you come up with 100k unique? how did you come up with 54k unique?

Report Abuse**By Turkeytag on 06/19/2008 at 9:30 a.m.**

Let's see, I came up with 54k unique because that was the attendance on Saturday...the tickets were scanned as people entered the gates and that is how they got their attendance figures. I don't think people could have attended twice on the same day.....the 100,000 is a personal estimate. Tickets were \$100.00 a day - pretty pricy.....I personally know many people that only went 1 day. The law of averages allows me to extrapolate out from my small sample size to see a trend.

Report Abuse**By dozer on 06/19/2008 at 9:32 a.m.**

all I know is that it was an awesome event but what really made it special was that I got to spend the day with my wife and father and we had a blast.

Report Abuse**By left coast on 06/19/2008 at 10:21 a.m.**

"The law of averages allows me to extrapolate out from my small sample size to see a trend."

lol, thank you for the laughs mr. einstein!! hey, you don't work in the bush admin, do you?

Report Abuse**By DJKARP on 06/19/2008 at 2:54 p.m.**

San Diego sports fans should know that Sid Gilman and/or Don Coryell did not invent the so-called west coast offense as someone here wrote. The west coast offense features short routes hitting the receiver on the move and depends greatly on yards gained after the catch. The Gilman/Coryell passing game was all about timing--having the receiver at a certain spot when the QB expected him to be there having already cleared the first down markers.

Report Abuse**By savit418r on 06/19/2008 at 5:57 p.m.**

Well I still think Sid Gillman and Don Coryell should be in the so-called hall of fame...

Report Abuse**By DJKARP on 06/19/2008 at 10:02 p.m.**

I believe that Sid Gilman is in the Hall of Fame. Coryell should be also. He's still the only coach to win 100 college games and another 100 in the NFL.

Report Abuse**By Hawgryder on 06/20/2008 at 7:34 a.m.**

DJKARP ...

So if I understand you correctly the west coast offense uses a player (say a tight end) to run short routes underneath then use their abilities to get yardage ...

Too bad Coach Coryell never had any players who could do that on a consistent basis ... that sure would have made for some exciting football

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