



Richard Seidel pictured in front of Cowboys Stadium, the site of Super Bowl XLV, wearing 7-years' worth of Super Bowl field passes.



RUNNING WITH THE BOWLS

BY MICHAEL PETITTI

AS THE GREEN BAY PACKERS outhustled the Pittsburgh Steelers on their way to a Super Bowl XLV championship, Richard S. Seidel was doing some running of his own through Cowboys Stadium. For the seventh straight year, the immediate-past chair of the Bar Association's Board of Governors attended America's biggest sporting event. But like all the other games, he wasn't there as spectator. He was there as a volunteer for NFL Films.

Since 2004, when his beloved Philadelphia Eagles reached Super Bowl XXXIX, Seidel has spent the last weekend of the football season working as a "runner" for NFL Films. Along with seven other volunteers, he carries film to and from the equipment room at the stadium to the cameraman he is assigned to throughout the game. NFL Films provides Seidel a hotel room; all other arrangements are up to him. He owes the opportunity to his friend of 30 years, Allen Sandrow, equipment manager at NFL Films. The

iconic company, independently founded in 1962 before bought by the National Football League in 1965, produces commercials, television programs, feature films and documentaries on the league.

"It was amazing my first year as a runner was when the Eagles were playing," Seidel, who "bleeds green," said. "Al had asked me to go months before anyone knew they would be in the Super Bowl. I just got lucky."

That first year in Jacksonville, Fla., Seidel got



Seidel and Sandrow on the field at Super Bowl XXXIX. Photo courtesy of Richard S. Seidel.

paired with the cameraman stationed in the end zone for a fan's dream vantage point. After the Eagles' loss, he shook Donovan McNabb's hand.

Lucky indeed.

But the work of a runner is not all fun and games. During several Super Bowls, like last year's, Seidel was part of a roving group – called a “weasel crew” – whose job is to film inside and outside the stadium as well as in the stands and the parking lot. In these instances, the pace is frantic and he is rarely still during the game. But the toughest work always comes the day after the Super Bowl.

“Mondays are brutal,” Seidel said. “I have to load literally 30-40 pallets full of film equipment that are being sent back to NFL Films. I'm just thankful I don't have to be back at NFL Films to unload it.”

Seidel has followed the Philadelphia Eagles since he was a sophomore at Robert E. Lambertson High School. He and Sandrow grew up in the Overbrook Park section of West Philadelphia cheering for the team. From the very start of their friendship, both dreamed of one of them entering a career in sports.

“It was what we talked about when we were kids,” Seidel said. “Al was going to be a videographer and I was going to be a rock star.”

Seidel's childhood aspirations may not have panned out, but Sandrow made sure their other goal was achieved.

“That was the job Al always wanted,” Seidel said. “We both fantasized about it. When video cameras became vogue, he had one and we filmed high school sports and videotaped games. It's amazing how things worked out.”

Seidel's passion for football carried into college, where he was a walk-on at Temple University as a freshman in 1982. He played inside linebacker and nose guard but had to leave the sport when he fractured his patella during practice. Surgery was an option, but with all the time he spent worrying about the playing field instead of the classroom he decided it wasn't worth it.

“In a way it was a good thing because [the injury] changed my focus from playing football, which I never would have done professionally, to studying,” Seidel said.

The attention to schoolwork paid off. Seidel is now a trial attorney with a private practice in Philadelphia. He concentrates in personal and catastrophic injuries.

Seidel's membership in the Philadelphia Bar Association goes back to 1989. In 1999, he ran for and was elected to a three-year term on its Board of Governors. Last year, he was named chair of the Board of Governors by Immediate-Past Chancellor Scott F. Cooper, a fellow football fanatic who often joins Seidel at regular season Eagles' games. In all, Seidel goes to about five Eagles games a year.

“When I'm not at the games, it's still easy to find me on

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Sundays: on the couch in front of my TV,” Seidel said.

Seidel was also a founding officer of the Association’s State Civil Litigation Section and now serves as chair of the Commission on Judicial Selection and Retention, which evaluates judicial candidates to help citizens make informed decisions at the voting booth.

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Among these experiences, Seidel has been on the field during the halftime performances of Bruce Springsteen (Super Bowl XLIII) and the Rolling Stones (Super Bowl XL), whom he met backstage after the show. He’s also shaken hands with Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore, talked for a few minutes with Michael Douglas, and shared stories with former New York Giants’ Jeremy Shockey while stationed on the 50-yard-line during Super Bowl XLII. At this same Super Bowl – which the Giants won, spoiling the New England Patriots’ perfect season – Seidel had one of his most memorable moments as a runner.

“I had [recorded] the game and when I replayed it, there was this spectacular catch by [then-Giants’ wide receiver] Plaxico Burress that happened right in front of me,” Seidel said. “I watched it again and you can actually read my lips saying, ‘Oh, wow.’”

At this year’s Super Bowl, Seidel was initially scheduled to be part of the weasel crew. On site, however, he was assigned to accompany the end zone cameraman instead. The change allowed him to see much of the game, although the enormity of Cowboys Stadium proved a challenge.

“We usually go to the stadium on Saturday every year to determine the routes from the cameraman to the equipment room,” Seidel said. “Figuring out where to go in Cowboys



A view from behind the camera where Seidel was stationed for Super Bowl XLV. Photo by Richard S. Seidel.

Stadium was like a maze. The place is massive.”

Once all was mapped out, however, Seidel fell right back into his annual routine. He also met some new celebrities, Harrison Ford and Jennifer Aniston, as well as saw the dress rehearsal of halftime performers The Black Eyed Peas. As for which team he was cheering for, Seidel had made that decision as soon as his Eagles were eliminated.

“I’d like Green Bay to win it all so I won’t feel so bad for having lost to them,” he said weeks before the Super Bowl contenders were known. “Because at least then we’ll have lost to the Super Bowl champion.”

Much like his involvement with NFL Films, Seidel’s wish came true. ■

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Seidel reprising his Super Bowl duties in the film vault at NFL Films headquarters in Mount Laurel, N.J. Photo by Jeff Lyons.