



## PREPARING FOR THE SUPER BOWL

### *By Watching Soccer Overseas*

For many people, there's no sporting event more exciting than the Super Bowl. It's the final game of the NFL season and determines the American football champion. I enjoy football and try to watch my New York Giants play whenever I get the chance. Living in Minnesota, it's not too often that I get that opportunity, but 2023 did give me the Giants coming to town and beating the Vikings in the Wild Card round.

One of my favorite Super Bowls in recent memory took place during the 2007 season. Anyone who watches football probably remembers this season, as the New England Patriots were a dominating force, going undefeated in the regular season and making a push to the Super Bowl. Their championship dreams drifted away on that fateful February night as they faced off against Eli Manning and the New York Giants. The Giants came out victorious, 17-14. It was a great game and is an excellent Super Bowl memory to reminisce about.

Interestingly, my Super Bowl traditions don't have much to do with football or the game itself. Before the pandemic, my brother and I would travel to London during Super Bowl weekend to take in some English Premier League soccer games. I enjoy soccer and usually spend my weekend mornings watching Premier League games.

This tradition started when my brother and I decided to take a trip to London to see the Premier League live for the first time. We diligently searched for affordable flights and found cheap tickets during Super Bowl weekend. We expected the weather in London to be drab since we were visiting in February, but it was 50-60 degrees and beautiful. We were hooked after taking that first trip and have gone back countless times since then. We've gone during other times of the year, but Super Bowl weekend always seems to be the best time to visit.

We make an event out of our trip when we visit, even though we only stay for a weekend. We try to go to a live game one day and then head to a pub to watch a full day's worth of soccer with the locals on the other day. We usually see Fulham F.C. because tickets are relatively cheap, but we have also seen Arsenal, Manchester United, and West Ham. I love visiting Fulham's stadium because it's a unique atmosphere. The stadium has



hosted the team since 1896, so there's plenty of history. The seats are tiny and narrow, which makes for a tremendous old-timey soccer-watching experience.

It's been a few years since we've been able to make the trek to London during Super Bowl weekend. We haven't gone since the pandemic started, but that last trip was memorable. My brother and I brought our wives along and celebrated his birthday together. We're hoping to get back soon, but it's becoming more challenging to plan as the kids grow older. Hopefully, we can return to London next year and see Fulham come away with another win.

Just because we spend Super Bowl Sunday in London doesn't mean we ignore the big game. It comes on at two in the morning, and we try to stay up and watch as much as possible. We usually fly back on Monday morning, though, so there's a limit to how late we can stay up!

I hope you all have a safe and enjoyable time watching this year's Super Bowl!

*- Andrew M. Ayers*

# Yes, Habit Tracking Actually Works!

## The Easy Way to Stay Motivated

Back in the 1980s and '90s, almost every sports movie included a training montage — and no montage was complete without a giant paper calendar hanging on the hero's wall. As time ticked by and the big game or contest approached, the hero crossed the days out one by one. Each square was a success, and it was another day of training down!

It sounds silly, but according to habit expert and "Atomic Habits" author James Clear, that giant calendar isn't just movie magic. It actually works! For some people, tracking their habits — literally writing down their successes and failures in order to keep a record — is an effective way to build and stick with new routines, like New Year's resolutions.

In his book, Clear writes that habit tracking works because it makes a particular behavior "obvious, attractive, and satisfying." Tracking our habits in a visible place (like a calendar on the wall) reminds us to keep our "streak" of good behavior alive and holds us accountable if we mess up. It also just feels good to cross a square off of the calendar.

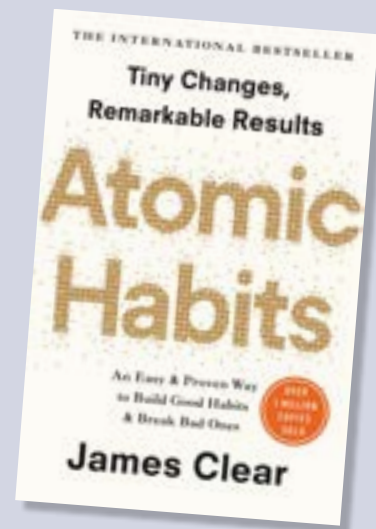
"The most effective form of motivation is progress," Clear explains. "When we get a signal that we are moving forward, we become more

motivated to continue down that path. In this way, habit tracking can have an additive effect on motivation. Every small win feeds your desire."

You don't need to use a '90s calendar to track your habits in 2022. Instead, Clear recommends leveraging technology to make tracking as easy as possible. If you want to build better spending habits, put your credit card statements (which track your spending automatically) front and center. If you want to take more steps each day, buy a Fitbit so you don't have to count them.

That said, if you go the pen-and-paper route — or prefer an Excel spreadsheet — Clear suggests tracking your habit immediately after you finish it. That way, you'll associate your positive behavior with the rush of satisfaction you get from checking a day off the calendar.

To learn more about Clear's methods and download his free Habit Tracker Template, visit [AtomicHabits.com/tracker](https://AtomicHabits.com/tracker).



## Even War Couldn't Hold These Players Back

### A Ukrainian Soccer Team Finds a Home

A bright spot is burning in the middle of the darkness brought on by the Russia-Ukraine War: the Shakhtar Donetsk soccer team. Since the war began, its players have provided entertainment and modeled resilience for Ukrainians caught in the middle of the conflict. They continue to play and win, even though their team has been "homeless" for almost 10 years.

According to ESPN, Shakhtar Donetsk hasn't played on its home turf since 2014. That year, Russian-backed separatists forced the players to flee Donetsk and leave behind their beloved stadium, Donbass Arena. Things have only gotten worse since then.

"For the past eight years, Shakhtar has led a nomadic existence ... playing home games in Lviv (750 miles away), Kharkiv (190 miles), and Kyiv (450 miles)," ESPN reported.

And yet, the team continued to succeed! Nothing could hold them back from competing. In 2022, they lost 15 of their best players to the Ukrainian military and had to suspend a game because of an air raid. They simply replaced the missing soccer stars and moved forward.

This perseverance paid off. In a way, Shakhtar Donetsk finally found a home last year: The team qualified for the UEFA Champions League, placing them among the best soccer teams in the world. It was quite a feat for the underdogs, largely because they beat and later tied the powerhouse team Real Madrid along the way!

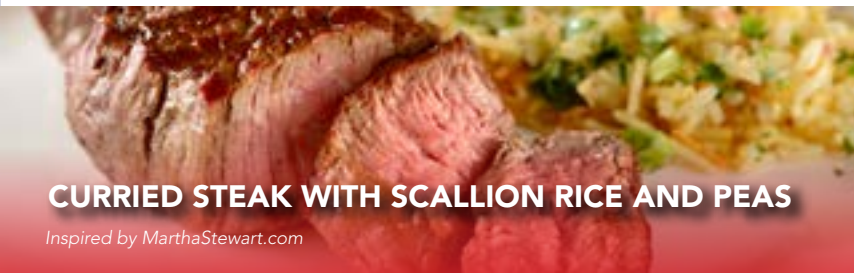
"Our challenge was to make the impossible possible," the Shakhtar Donetsk coach, Igor Jovicevic, told ESPN.

This month, Shakhtar Donetsk will keep doing the seemingly impossible in the Europa League. Team captain Taras Stepanenko told ESPN that continuing the play will "show our defiance, our spirit." Stepanenko's village is in ruins, but he still dreams of going home to Donbass Arena — which the Russians are likely using to store weapons.

"It is my biggest dream to go back to the arena and play," he said. "I have thought about it since we moved from Donetsk. Maybe I won't be a footballer anymore when we go back, but I will play as a veteran, as an old man. The club can organize a charity match, invite all the legends, and we can fulfill our dream. But I am confident it will happen."



# TAKE A *BREAK*



## CURRIED STEAK WITH SCALLION RICE AND PEAS

Inspired by [MarthaStewart.com](http://MarthaStewart.com)

### Ingredients

- 1 lb flank steak, room temperature
- 4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- Kosher salt and ground pepper
- 1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced, white and light-green parts separated from dark-green tops
- 3 tbsp massaman curry paste, divided
- 8 oz sugar snap peas, trimmed and halved on the bias
- 1 1/4 cups white rice
- 2 1/2 cups water, divided

### Directions

1. Season steak with salt and pepper. Brush with 1 tbsp curry paste, and let stand 10 minutes.
2. In a saucepan, combine rice, 1 3/4 cups water, 1 tbsp oil, and 3/4 tsp salt. Bring to a boil, then stir, cover, and reduce heat to low. Simmer about 15 minutes before adding white and light-green scallions. Cover to steam.
3. Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Swirl in 1 tbsp oil. Add the steak, flipping once; cook this for 7–9 minutes, then transfer to a carving board.
4. Reduce the skillet to medium heat, then add 1 tbsp oil and the remaining 2 tbsp curry paste. Cook this for 1 minute. Add 3/4 cup water and cook until reduced, about 30 seconds. Transfer to a bowl and cover.
5. Wipe skillet clean, then add remaining 1 tbsp oil. While stirring, add snap peas. Season with salt and cook this until crisp-tender, about 2–3 minutes.
6. Fluff rice before stirring in scallion tops. Slice steak against the grain, then serve with rice, peas, and curry sauce.

## GOODBYE, DIVORCE MONTH. HELLO, ROMANCE!

### 3 Expert Tips for a Stronger Marriage

Here's a not-so-fun fact: January is the most common month for couples to divorce.

#### Why is January 'divorce month'?

No one is entirely sure why so many spouses choose January to cut the knot, but family law attorneys and other experts have floated several theories.

- As the first month of the year, January is the perfect time for a fresh start. It may take ending their marriage for spouses to achieve their resolutions and find happiness.
- Many couples stay together for their kids. After the high-pressure family holidays of Christmas and New Year's are over, it may feel easier to initiate a separation.
- If you stay married for even one day of the new year, you can file your taxes jointly! This could incentivize couples who separated earlier in the year to wait until January to seek divorce officially.

It's hard to say which of these theories is the real reason behind January's high divorce rate. It could be a combination of the three. Whatever the reason, the good news is that we've made it through "divorce month" and into February — the month of romance.

#### How can you keep your current (or future) marriage strong?

We've gathered tips from couples married 50 years or longer to help you strengthen your marriage and navigate future divorce months. Reader's Digest originally published these quotes, but they are so wonderful that we couldn't resist sharing them!

- Zelmyra and Herbert, married 87 years, offered these words of wisdom: "Remember, marriage is not a contest; never keep score."
- Don and Estelle, spouses of 50 years, told RD: "We look back only to the good times. Remember and revel in your successes."
- Jenny and Manny, married 65 years, shared our favorite advice: "When you go to bed at night, it doesn't matter how angry or sad you are; always touch toes. It's a little reminder that I'm here and I love you no matter what."



We hope you enjoy this month of romance and many more!





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## 5 Feel-Good Movies To Chase Away the Blues

Are you stuck in a TV rut and starting to feel down in the dumps? (Thanks, seasonal depression.) If so, check out one of these heartwarming movies for a pick-me-up.

- 1. 'Rescued by Ruby'** — If your family loves dogs, this kid-friendly flick will be a real crowd-pleaser. It stars a pup named Ruby, who starts life as a shelter dog. After a state trooper rescues her, she becomes a search-and-rescue worker who finds and saves people. A true story inspired the uplifting tale, and according to some reviews, you may want to have tissues ready.
- 2. 'Yes Day'** — Imagine spending an entire day saying "yes" to everything your kids requested. Congratulations: You've stepped into the plot of "Yes Day"! In this film, parents Alison and Carlos go along with their kids' wildest desires and watch family bonding magic unfold. The Raising Children Network recommends this movie for adults and older kids only.
- 3. 'Chickenhare and the Hamster of Darkness'** — The plot of this animated movie is as creative as its title! It follows a cartoon

hero named Chickenhare, who is 50% rabbit, 50% bird, and 100% confused about his place in the world. He's also on a quest with friends to defeat his evil uncle before it's too late. Think of the film as a funny, adventurous, family-friendly take on the classic tale "The Ugly Duckling."

- 4. 'Dumplin''** — Mashable called "Dumplin'" "the definition of sweet." The movie stars Rosie (played by Jennifer Aniston) as a pageant-obsessed former beauty queen whose daughter, Willowdean, doesn't fit conventional beauty standards. When Willowdean enters her mom's pageant in a protest complete with dancing and Dolly Parton tunes, she sparks a small-town revolution. This movie is recommended for children ages 13 and up.
- 5. 'We Can Be Heroes'** — Since its release in 2020, this superhero movie has quickly become a family favorite. The story opens with an aliens-versus-superheroes showdown, and when the aliens win and take the heroes hostage, their kids come to the rescue. As the title implies, the film will leave you feeling like you can be a hero, too.