

Inside a Factory

Barb Ulrey:

We've been here in Ada since 1953. This is Wilson Sporting Goods, and here today we're working hard to make the NFL Super Bowl XLIII football. We've been, um, making the Super Bowl footballs ever since the very first Super Bowl, so it's been forty-three years.

Barb Ulrey:

This is the first step in the process of making a football. The hydraulic press will just press the die right down to the leather. After she cuts the panels, she's going to put four panels together that look good, um, with their color and their match, and those will stay together to make the football throughout the factory.

Barb Ulrey:

Now to every leather piece we sew a lining. The lining is the strength of the football. It-it helps the football keep its shape.

Angie Howard:

Want to try it? Want to try to sew?

Barb Ulrey:

These men, uh, turn our footballs from inside out to right side out.

Emmitt Lawrence:

I've never dreamed I'd be making the balls for the NFL. I know I got, I-I-I think, well, I got a small part, that's a small part of my job that I'm going to see in progress, and, uh, I know it's going to be top-notch, and it's going to make it through the game.

Barb Ulrey:

We're stamping the Arizona Cardinals and the Pittsburgh Steelers on the balls. Today, our goal is to send out fifty-four footballs to each team. These will be for their game, and then each team will get twelve kicker balls for their kickers to use.

Barb Ulrey:

A lacer who will put, who will put a bladder inside the football, fill it with some air, and then she'll lace it.

Sue Nichols:

You never know if you're going fast enough or slow enough. There's thirty balls in a lot, and I do twelve or thirteen of those a day.

Journalist:

How old were you when you learned how to tie your shoes?

Sue Nichols:

How old was I? You know what? I don't know! I have no idea how old I was. I'd have to ask my mother.

Barb Ulrey:

After the ball's totally done, it's going to be a little lumpy and bumpy-looking, and we want to mold those seams out real nice and smooth.

Barb Ulrey:

These are our final inspectors. Every football will be checked, and then they're going to pass it on for packing.

Factory worker (off camera):

I mean it takes a lot of practice to do it right, and, eh, we take a lot of pride in what we do. So, we make sure it's good.

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