



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

## Canine Master on Pet Life Radio - Episode #12 Puppy Bowl Preview - Jill Rappaport and Laurie Johnson Join Chris to Discuss Animal Rescue and Adoption

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Hi, welcome to Canine Master on Pet Life Radio. Today on the show, we're going to talk about the Puppy Bowl. For 10 years, Animal Planet's Puppy Bowl has owned the world's cutest sporting event on television. The first Puppy Bowl came out I think on Animal Planet in 2005. And last year, more than 10 million viewers tuned into the Puppy Bowl to cheer the pups on. 10 million viewers. That's huge. Every Puppy Bowl Sunday two teams of the fluffiest line barkers, what we called the wide retrievers take to the ball field, for a played game full of tackles and tumbles. Tails wags and probably some fumbles here and there. This season representing more than 40 rescues, that's 40 rescues across the country, the pups return to The Animal Planet GEICO stadium for Puppy Bowl 12 on Sunday. That's February 7th from 3:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon with two hours of adorable fuzzy faces, licky, sloppy kisses and even some puppy penalties.

Today, our guest correspondent's going to be animal advocate Jill Rappaport, and she will be covering the top plays from the field as a sideline reporter. And Jill is going to fill us in on all the buzz as our celebrity rescue correspondent for the Puppy Bowl. And we're going to also talk to Laurie Johnson of Florida Little Dog Rescue, which is where I adopted my dog Dave. Florida Little Dog Rescue is dominating the Puppy Bowl with 12 players and all the puppies from Florida Little Dog Rescue were rescued from the local county animal shelters. Some of them had some really history to them, which is I think we'll probably get into on the show. Some of them from animal abuse and neglect cases. But I do want everyone to know that I'm talking to you today from China all the way across the world. So please be patient if you have any hiccups and a little static going on because it's not always the best signal here in China.

Before I welcome Jill Rappaport to the show, I wanted to share some of the cool facts of this year's Puppy Bowl. There's going to be 84 puppies from 44 rescues across the United States, and they all were drafted to represent the Team Rough and the Team Fluff teams

competing for the famed title of Bissell MVP, most valuable puppy. Visit [animalplanet.com/puppybowl](http://animalplanet.com/puppybowl) to see this adorable lineup, and you can find a direct link even on [caninemaster.com](http://caninemaster.com). If you want to learn more, go right to [caninemaster.com](http://caninemaster.com) or also Pet Life Radio. Viewers can now immerse themselves in this canine cuteness with... There's a Puppy Bowl virtual reality thing featuring a really cool, 360-degree experience with this year's players. These puppies who are not only sniffing for the field goals, but more importantly, they're looking for those forever homes too.

And Animal Planet also, and Pro Football Hall of Fame Announces the Puppy Bowl Hall of Fame promoting adoption for older animals. There's a lot going on in this show and I really encourage you to watch it all the way through. There's even pregame stuff, so if you want to get on before three o'clock, I think you're going to see some really cool stuff as well. The puppies range in age from 12 to 24 weeks. And there's all different types of breeds from Basset Hounds and Beagles, Boxers, Chihuahuas, Cocker Spaniels, Dachshunds. I even saw a Pomeranian and a Poodle. But the cool thing is there's also a lot of adorable mixed breeds, those Heinz 57s. Look out for some close-up coverage from shots from the water bowl and the kiss cams, which I think are pretty cool. One of the reasons we love the Puppy Bowl so much is because of all the puppies featured are from shelters and are up for adoption.

During the off-season Animal Planet does something pretty cool. Animal Planet brought the joy and the goodwill of the Puppy Bowl to 13 States, including the District of Columbia with the Road to the Puppy Bowl Events. And while promoting the importance of the animal adoption and local communities, remarkably, these events led to more than 3,000 animals finding their forever homes. Animal Planet really has helped to cover the costs of not only finding these forever homes, but covering the cost of these adoptions. And that is a very cool thing for Animal Planet to do. No one has done more to raise awareness for animal rescue than my good friend Jill Rappaport. Jill, who is our rescue correspondent here at Canine Master, is truly the voice for the voiceless. Jill is an award-winning animal advocate, a television correspondent, and this year at the Puppy Bowl, Jill's going to introduce Pup Close & Personal segments, and it's presented by Subaru, which kind of highlights those amazing animal bonds between puppy players and their best buddies, including a kitten and even check this out, a hedgehog.

**Chris Onthank:** Welcome Jill to the show.

**Jill Rappaport:** Oh, Thank you Chris. So nice to speak with you all the way from China. Wow.

**Chris Onthank:** I know.

**Jill Rappaport:** No, I'm so excited to be part of a Puppy Bowl. And again, because we're reinforcing the rescue element. Everybody watches the show and it can have up to 13 million viewers. It's definitely the greatest show on earth and gives the Super Bowl a real run for its money I must tell you.

**Chris Onthank:** Oh yeah.

**Jill Rappaport:** And what's so wonderful is that people see these adorable purebred puppies and they think, "Oh, aren't they perfect, and purebred and wonderful?" Meanwhile,

their story, their little story at six, eight weeks, 10 weeks old, they literally went from hell to the playing field. One of my stories, this puppy was found in a box alongside an Arizona highway. And again, we need to stress the message here that even purebred puppies can have a very rough time and need to be rescued. I'm so proud of Animal Planet, of Puppy Bowl, of Subaru, to again reinforce the rescue message, which you know is my oxygen.

**Chris Onthank:** It's amazing. And of course, your Ruby is a purebred that you got out of the shelter, right?

**Jill Rappaport:** Yeah, exactly.

**Chris Onthank:** We can find purebreds. A lot of people think, "Well, you can't find a purebred puppy." And not that I'm advocating get up pure because my Dave is a mixed breed, but I will tell you in the shelters, you can find a lot of pure breeds, and you can find puppies. So many times people are dumping these puppies out. You know?

**Jill Rappaport:** Exactly, and again, I've never rescued a puppy, but when I got Ruby, she was almost six years old and she had one day to live. She was on day 29 in a kill shelter when day 30 was her day. And she's a purebred Dachshund, but again, I try to rescue the older, what I call either senior dogs, or of the underdogs of the shelter world. Whether it be the bully breeds that have a hard time getting out, special needs animals, or seniors. But what's so great about Puppy Bowl is that it's showing people that purebred puppies are waiting for a permanent, loving home with wagging tails. Your point is so important that, I've had so many people say to me, "You can't find what I want in a shelter." I said, "What do you want?" Then, "Well, I'm looking for this." And I said, "Give me time. I promise you, whatever it is, 10 different mixes, or the perfect purebred that you might see as the perfect picture at Westminster, you can find that dog or a wonderful cat waiting in a shelter.

**Chris Onthank:** Oh, exactly.

**Jill Rappaport:** And that's what we need to tell people.

**Chris Onthank:** And then all these puppies, they need such loving homes. It's amazing. There's such a misconception too about shelter dogs, Jill. I don't know why there is such this misconception, but there really is. It's-

**Jill Rappaport:** Oh, I had the biggest fight with somebody. One of my closest friends who's in the media, she got a dog from a breeder. And listen, there are some reputable breeders. I'm not here to-

**Chris Onthank:** Of course.

**Jill Rappaport:** ... say that there are no good breeders out there. It's just that we have every cage full across the country, we need to go to the shelters first. But she said to me, "My dog is like a shelter dog because she has so many issues," and I was so ballistic. I said, "You're the reason those cages are full. You think shelter animals are damaged goods, second class citizens." And I have to tell you, I lost two of my beloved children in the last literally a year

and a half as you know, Chris. I'm down to... I have four rescue dogs now. But out of my six, my dogs are perfect. Ruby might bark a little bit, she's a little toy-obsessive, but my dogs don't have issues. I feel shelter animals are so wonderful because they know they've been saved, they thank you every day, and I find quite the opposite. The people I know that have gone heaven forbid to the store, or to a breeder, I see many more issues in those animals than my rescue dogs. And I'm sure you agree as a trainer, don't you?

**Chris Onthank:** I many times find that rescue dogs are the most adaptable. A lot of times these dogs are on the streets, they've been scavengers, hanging out at the local restaurant, waiting to get a little food here and there. And what's amazing is sometimes they're so much more socialized than the dogs that people have in their homes that get just attention after they get home at five o'clock in the afternoon.

**Jill Rappaport:** Right. It-

**Chris Onthank:** Some of these shelter dogs are actually some of the most socialized, which is amazing.

**Jill Rappaport:** Exactly. And as a trainer, don't you find... Animals are so in-tuned and so sensitive to all of our emotions and needs. I feel it again. I feel I can read them in a very special way. But I think that they really do know that they've been saved and they know you're their savior. And I do think-

**Chris Onthank:** Absolutely agree.

**Jill Rappaport:** .. that, that immediately creates a special bond. Ruby was in that cage on her little hind legs crying to me and there were 500 dogs and I walked by and I said, "Oh my goodness," and I saw day 29. And literally, I was in L.A. For one day to receive a Genesis Award from HSUS. And my friend said to me, "I've got to go to this animal shelter to look at a dog." And I said, "Oh my goodness, it's like asking a coke addict to go to a crack den."

**Chris Onthank:** Exactly.

**Jill Rappaport:** Will you take me? And we ended up, Chris, with three wonderful animals and one we couldn't save. Took him because he was so sick and we did not want him to die in that shelter and he wasn't getting the care he needed. And he died in the vet's office two days later. One was Ruby, who I saved in the 12th hour, and the other dog went to Bryant Gumbel. I so encourage your listeners to just go to your local shelter, see what's sitting and waiting in those cages. It'll be the best gift you can ever give yourself.

**Chris Onthank:** And you bring up-

**Jill Rappaport:** And that's what's so great about the Puppy Bowl.

**Chris Onthank:** It is, it is. But you bring up an amazing point, Jill, and I just want to get you, and then I want to get back to the Puppy Bowl. But one of the things is you just said, you said Chris, they know they're being saved and they absolutely do. Imagine this. These dogs

are unfortunately, where we keep them, they're sitting in cages, they're sitting in runs, they're alone.

**Jill Rappaport:** Right.

**Chris Onthank:** And a lot of these people, God bless the souls that are there working at these shelters and volunteering, just can't give enough attention to these dogs. And when you come along, these dogs are starving for affection and attention. And what is amazing is they absolutely do know they're being saved.

**Jill Rappaport:** You know what else you bring up another good point too? And these are the people I call them, the silent heroes. The volunteers and also the fosters that are the mediators between hell and heaven, meaning the shelter and the family that they're hopefully going to end up with. Those volunteers and those fosters that give their time to give a little love and support, and the middlemen and women who help with that transition to get them socialized and to spend time with them. It is so important. Some of those animals in some of these shelters, they're lucky if they get out twice a day.

**Chris Onthank:** Exactly.

**Jill Rappaport:** Imagine living in a box and getting out for 10 minutes a day to smell fresh air and feel grass. No, I'm telling you, it is so upsetting. And again, Chris, as you can tell, I get so passionate and upset about this because with all the benefits and all the wonderful things we're doing, I have yet to go into any shelter... And I make it my point when I drive all across the country for my shows in my project... I've yet to go into any shelter and see one empty cage. And I always say to people until I can walk through a shelter and see an empty cage, I know that we're making a difference. In the meantime, we're chock-full. And in an athletic event or a concert, being full and packed house is a very successful thing, but in the shelter world-

**Chris Onthank:** Oh, it's a disaster.

**Jill Rappaport:** ... it's hell in its reality.

**Chris Onthank:** And you are doing such an amazing job. And I don't know if people understand this. Jill travels around the United States and she's going to shelter to shelter, raise awareness, doing shows, she's promoting all these different shows and promoting different shelters and you do an amazing job with this, Jill, and I just want to thank you for that. And this Puppy Bowl on Animal Planet, you also are there covering. I think you're on the sideline, right? You're a sideline reporter at this year at the Puppy Bowl?

**Jill Rappaport:** First of all, you mean all the different shelters? I think there's over 44 different shelter groups-

**Chris Onthank:** At the pup-

**Jill Rappaport:** ... being featured this year.

**Chris Onthank:** Yes, this year.

**Jill Rappaport:** Yes, which is so unbelievable. And what's amazing, when you see these guys... This is the other thing that I love so much about this event. The cutest, the most wonderful, the most adorable and the most unusual and beautiful breeds you've ever seen. And when you think about the fact that they all were waiting, many on doggy death row, or on the street, and they all need a home. It's just such a great message. And Animal Planet is really trumping this up... Oh maybe that's an interesting word to use, trump. Hello. No, but I'm pumping this up this year. The rescue elements we've always, and in the years past, they've always dealt with shelters and rescue dogs. But this year, these Pup Close & Personal segments that I'm hosting, this is a new thing. They're really highlighting rescue. They're really promoting the message of going to your local shelter. And I'll tell you something, knowing that they get millions of viewers on the most important viewing day of the year, this is so great. Isn't it, Chris?

**Chris Onthank:** It's such an amazing... What a great day. I think I'm going to spend more time looking at Animal Planet than I am even watching the game because I'm just not a big sports guy. But I love watching the Puppy Bowl.

**Jill Rappaport:** Well, I hope so.

**Chris Onthank:** Oh gosh.

**Jill Rappaport:** I'm telling everyone, "Forget the Super Bowl".

**Chris Onthank:** Forget the Super Bowl.

**Jill Rappaport:** ... just watch Puppy Bowl.

**Chris Onthank:** Oh, it's just hysterical. It's just hysterical. Well, Jill, thanks so much for coming back on the show with me and really being our celebrity rescue correspondent. And our listeners really love listening to you and hearing from you, and of course, so do I.

**Jill Rappaport:** Oh, thank you, Chris.

**Chris Onthank:** I hope we get you back soon. And where are you next, Jill? Where are you off to next? What's the next big thing?

**Jill Rappaport:** I'm in production working very hard to get Rappaport to the Rescue back on the road. In talk with sponsors now and we have offers for the show and we're just really excited to get on the road. And again, my whole purpose is not a yearly annual event, mine is a daily minute-to-minute event. I need to educate and shine a light on the plight of the shelter world 24/7. We cannot just do it as an event as a onetime only or a yearly. We need to be out there drumming home the message to get into a shelter, to please open up your hearts and homes to these animals, and that's my goal. That's all I care about and think about it. You can't stop when you're the voice to the voiceless. There is no time to wait and hope that they're going to find a home. If we don't do it, they're not getting out. And I always

say, "If you don't go in, they can't get out." That's my motto.

**Chris Onthank:** Well, thanks, Jill. I love it. And thanks so much, Jill Rappaport, the voice to the voiceless.

Okay, next we're going to go to one of the rescue groups who has 12 puppies competing in the Puppy Bowl. We're going to get all the cute details.

My next guest is near and dear to my heart because she is the founder of the rescue group where I adopted my dog Dave. And everyone knows how much I love my dog Dave. Thanks to Laurie Johnson, founder of the Florida Little Dog Rescue, I have my Dave. And hey Laurie, welcome to the show.

**Laurie Johnson:** Thank you so much for having me this morning.

**Chris Onthank:** Laurie, this year, Little Florida Dog Rescue has 12 puppies in the Puppy Bowl. That is so cool.

**Laurie Johnson:** We do, and we were able to do that thanks to you, because no hotel in Manhattan's going to let us stay there with 12 dogs for filming.

**Chris Onthank:** Well, that's so true.

**Laurie Johnson:** You made all of that happen.

**Chris Onthank:** Well, that's a little inside note that we actually have had several of Laurie's puppies stay with us over the years and even help find them forever homes, and families. We adopt them out to our clients, which is awesome, and we've had such a great time doing it, having the puppies there. Our whole staff just loves it.

**Laurie Johnson:** Well, they're so great with them. We can't say and thank you enough for enough good things and your clients are wonderful. It definitely makes finding these pups that have come from not always the best situations, great forever homes where they won't know anything like that again. They'll only know love.

**Chris Onthank:** Yeah, it's great. It's true that all the players from your rescue were rescued from local animal shelters, right Laurie? They're part of some of the neglect cases, right?

**Laurie Johnson:** Yes. They all came from local sponsors or neglect cases. One of the pups that will play this year, Rickson, he was turned into a local vet's office after the kids in their home used him as a toy and broke his leg at six weeks old. He was surrendered to the vet's office when they didn't think he was worth spending the money on to get his leg fixed. The vet's office called Animal Control, Animal Control called us to avoid him going to the shelter. We fixed his leg and then he auditioned for Puppy Bowl and was cast. While he didn't come from the shelter directly, he came through those channels. All of our dogs come to us that way. And that's one of the great things about Puppy Bowl is they help show everyone that you can find these great, wonderful dogs of just about any breed that you're looking for in rescue.

**Chris Onthank:** Yeah, it's amazing. And a lot of the pup contenders, can you tell us... Take us kind of through the journey from that neglected puppy pound to the Puppy Bowl star. How does it all happen? You say that there's an interview. Can you take us through that process?

**Laurie Johnson:** Usually, a couple months before filming, casting sends out an email to rescues and shelters all over the country and says, "Hey, Puppy Bowl's coming. Do you have any great puppy athletes that would be good contenders?" And it's a several-step process. We submit pictures, we submit an audition video, we tell them about our puppy's personality and they work really hard to choose pups from all over the country, not just one area. And of all different breeds, looks, types because having 12 labs on the field would be cute and adorable, but there are people that that's just not their pup. And they want people all over the country to see that you can get different dogs from all over the country. It's a huge casting call and they get hundreds and hundreds of puppies submitted, and they cast usually about 80 puppies for the Puppy Bowl to go play.

And then the puppies play in groups according to their size. Our little three-pound Yorkie was not on the field at the same time as our 22-pound Great Dane puppy that went to play even though they were the same age. Animal Planet's really good about making sure that while the pups are playing, the puppies and their well being always comes first. If a puppy is not doing well with the lights, the cameras, the people, they are immediately pulled. And I can't say enough about how they handle the process because the pups come first and TV comes second.

**Chris Onthank:** One of the things that I want everybody to know is the dedication that Laurie and her family, her kids, her husband... What they do is for the last couple of years for Puppy Bowl, they all hop in their van with all these 12 puppies. They drive all the way up from Florida staying at hotels, I guess along the way. Or do you... I think you do it in one trip, don't you Laurie?

**Laurie Johnson:** Yeah, we actually usually leave in the evening sometime between six so that we're driving overnight when the pups are sleeping to make it as seamless as possible for them. And my husband just take turns and drive straight through. This year it was a little bit of an adventure because there was a bad storm that had just come through South Carolina and flooded the whole state. Literally, we drove through trees in the middle of the night, and then we make our way up to Connecticut and you guys at Dog Gone Smart help us. As soon as we get there, they're staff is ready and they get the puppies in, and the puppies can run and play and get settled in there. And usually we come up a few days before Puppy Bowl so that the puppies have some downtime and some breathing time, and you guys have playgroups for them and teach them to swim and make sure that they're getting all their pre-game training in before we go into the city for filming. And then, filming's usually one to three days in a studio in New York.

**Chris Onthank:** Well it's a huge, huge effort. Not only for Dog Gone Smart, but I will just tell you what an amazing effort it is for Laurie and her family, and the people that volunteer to help this all happen. We think of Dog Gone Smart as a Puppy Bowl training camp, and we love to have you stay with us. One of our favorites this year was Boris, who now comes daily to play with his friends here at Dog Gone Smart. He's kind of like our VIP, but he's treated like everybody else at Dog Gone Smart. But boy, he is such a cute dog and he reminds me a lot of Guess Who.



**Laurie Johnson:** Yes. And Boris, when you see him in the game, I think he'll really be able to show a little bit. But the whole adoption with his family was great because we were a little nervous at first because he was small and they have a big dog, but they brought their other dog Bella to meet Boris. And before we do all the adoptions, we can't always say, "Oh this dog's in Puppy Bowl," because that information isn't released by the network until they make sure that the dogs are okay, and that they played well and all of that. But it turned out that his family actually was huge Puppy Bowl fans and the daughter had actually said, "Oh, I hope the next puppy we get can do something cool like Puppy Bowl," or shows or whatever.

**Chris Onthank:** Oh my gosh.

**Laurie Johnson:** When they found out he was in Puppy Bowl, it was this whole meant-to-be sort of thing with them. And you'll see his sister whose name is Andy Cohen on the show, she will be on the Andy Cohen show next Wednesday and another Dog Gone Smart client, Stella, who has a whole Pup Close feature is actually going to go and help close the NASDAQ next Wednesday.

**Chris Onthank:** Oh my gosh.

**Laurie Johnson:** Big things for the pups that were there.

**Chris Onthank:** Well, it's amazing and I just love what you do, and I also hope that we get to continue to find these adorable little puppies some homes, and I hope we get to work together for some years to come because it's just so much fun for my whole staff and for myself. It's just great. And I really want to thank you, Laurie, for all that you do to really help animals and dogs and what your family does to, even down to your kids. Everybody, it's really a family event and you are just such a big person in animal rescue, and I want to thank you for that.

**Laurie Johnson:** Thank you guys, and thank you for always rolling with the punches. When I tell you, "Hey, we're bringing a tortoise too," Dog Gone Smart definitely works with us on all of our strange requests.

**Chris Onthank:** Well, thank you so much.

**Laurie Johnson:** As much as my family does, we couldn't do it without the support of families like yours that help us every step of the way.

**Chris Onthank:** Well, thanks Laurie. And Laurie, I'd love to have you back on the show sometime to talk a little bit more about rescue, and what Little Florida Dog Rescue is doing. Please check out Laurie's rescue site and find out more about these adorable puppies. Some are still up for adoption, are they not, Laurie?

**Laurie Johnson:** Yes. Lilo, Stitch, Countess, Mika and Rickson are still looking for their forever homes. We still have five of them available.

**Chris Onthank:** Go to [floridalittledogrescue.com](http://floridalittledogrescue.com) and get a preview of the pics of these Little Puppy Bowl stars. And thanks Laurie, for being on Canine Master, and for the great work that you do in dedicating your life to saving shelter dogs. Thank you so much, Laurie.

**Laurie Johnson:** Thank you so much for having us.

**Chris Onthank:** Okay, you take care.

Okay, that's it for today and thanks for listening. It's been so great to learn about the Puppy Bowl and get a sneak peek inside what really happens within the Puppy Bowl. And don't forget to watch the Puppy Bowl at Sunday, February 7th on Animal Planet from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. And you can find all the links to your starting lineup on our website, [caninemaster.com](http://caninemaster.com). I encourage you to promote rescue and adoption and your community. It's really important we get out there and we do this because there are a lot of dogs, as Jill Rappaport said, that need loving homes and there's still some puppies that are available. And these animals are really counting on us. Okay, goodbye for now and see you next time on Canine Master Radio, where I will continue to help you master the relationship with your dog.