

Lakers Bask in the Glory; Pick Six Circles the Drain

By Duane Plank

Was going to lead with the Lakers and their outlook for the 2009/10 season, which kicks off in about four months. Not a lot of rest for the champs, but look at it this way: Would you rather be a member of the sad-sack Clippers and have a six-month summer vacation eating donuts like tubby, cash-stealing guard Baron Davis is presumably doing, or be a member of the NBA champs and endure the accolades of the masses for your somewhat shortened summer vacation?

Will get to the Lakers a little bit down the page, but I gotta mention my involvement in a Pick Six ticket last Friday night at Hollywood Park. For the uninitiated, most horse tracks have a gimmick bet covering the last six races on the card. If you can somehow pick the winners of all six of the races, you will either win the entire pot or share in the pool. Which can get up there. Friday night's Pick Six pool, thanks to a two-day carryover, topped out at \$1.7 million and change.

So I was out researching Thursday night, and someone, could have been *NASCAR Guy*, was trying to round up contributors, at \$100 a pop, to get into a P6 pool the following night. There was apparently a guy or guys involved who were allegedly pretty adept at picking the ponies. We would form a small syndicate of bettors, the sharpies would pick the winners, and we would all celebrate late Friday night.

No problem. Except it is damn near impossible to hit the P6. Being a \$2 bettor, I wussed out and didn't want any part of the deal, even though a friend took the plunge, for \$50 bucks. She offered me half of her action, so I could have bought in for a whole \$25. But I said no, chicken bleep that I am.

But then I got to thinking early the next day that maybe I should get in the game, get off the sidelines. Heck, it would only take a maximum of \$50 to get in. And what if the sucker somehow hit? I had what I termed *horse remorse*. So I went back down the street to the research spot, and luckily found out that I could still invest my cashola. Woo-hoo, big bucks, here we come!

As race three, the start of the P6, approached, I asked which horses were ours. *NASCAR Guy* said he didn't know, but he would try to find out. So I bet my \$50 and

didn't even know who I was supporting. Idiot. Got a text a bit later, after the second race in the sequence, noting our selections. But by then, we had already lost one race and were pretty much dead in the water. Lesson learned? Maybe. Prefer to look on the bright side. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. By the way, there were three winning tickets that night, each worth about \$500k.

Hello, Laker supporters, fans, frontrunners and flag-wavers! Congrats to you and yours. I hope the fellas' 15th franchise championship somehow made a difference in your day-to-day life.

Now that the debris has been mostly picked up in downtown L.A. after last Wednesday's victory parade, and most of the detainees have been released back into the streets, it's time to look forward and propagate or deflate all of the talk of "two-in-a-row," or of a dynasty.

Just like every team that wins a championship must endure, the Lakers face the very real possibility of undergoing a drastic facelift before the Purple and Gold take to the hardwood next fall in Gundo.

Foremost on the agenda: Will Coach Phil Jackson return? Coach Colonel Sanders Jackson notched his 10th championship as the head guy when his charges bounced Orlando last week. That puts him one championship ahead of Celtic coach Red Auerbach, who guided the Bill Russell-led Celts to nine titles in 11 years in the '50s and '60s.

A quick note on Auerbach, who passed away in 2006. While Jackson may be the greatest coach in NBA history, check out Red's overall record: Nine championships as coach, and seven more as team president and general manager. Sixteen titles in 27 years. And when Auerbach ran the Celts from the floor, he was also doubling as GM. And as his own assistant coaching staff, cuz back in the day no NBA teams had a posse of assistant coaches. Maybe one guy helping out and holding the clipboard.

The Lakers list six assistant coaches on their roster. So in essence, the old cigar-chomping, sarcastic, bombastic Auerbach was actually doing the work of eight guys. Food for thought.

See Lakers, page 17

Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Did you get a chance to keep tabs on the final rounds of the U.S. Open golf tourney? Because of wet weather, the tourney didn't finish up until Monday, but the wait was worth it for golf aficionados.

Tiger was in the hunt, though he couldn't make any big putts down the stretch. Lefty made a great run, only to fire and fall back. My dark horse shot, Retief Goosen, was on the first page of the leader board when the final round started on Sunday night, but never got it going in the fourth round, carding a 74 on Monday.

And of course you are all familiar with the winner, one Lucas Glover, who stayed the course as surprising third round leader Ricky Barnes wilted under the pressure of Bethpage Black.

Wonder how many idiots in Pittsburgh lit stuff on fire and overturned cars, and looted local businesses after the Penguins captured the Stanley Cup? What'ya think, folks? More or less civic mayhem in Pittsburgh, or in Los Angeles after Los Lakers captured their 15th NBA title?

Did you attend the parade in downtown L.A.? I attended the Lakers parade after the first Magic Johnson-led championship, nearly 30 years ago. Just remember it being pretty damn hot, and pretty damn crowded downtown. But I was glad that I attended the soiree; it got me out of work that day.

Took the kid to the Angels' victory parade after their World Series victory in 2002. Took Phillip to my workplace in Anaheim, where he hung out for a few hours until we walked down Katella Avenue to Anaheim Stadium, where the parade took place. Again, I don't remember any pyro-type activities, or starting a ruckus. Just one straitlaced due, I am.

But seriously, folks, why do the less than one percent of jackasses who inhabit the Sanctuary City of L.A. get to define our town during these sports "celebrations?" Throw 'em in jail, deport the ones who don't belong here, or, or, I don't know. Just don't let them represent the good folks of L.A. to the rest of the country.

Maybe it is better that a majority of the Laker fans who attend the games seem more interested in ogling Jack Nicholson, snapping pictures of themselves, and texting than in actually watching the contest on the hardwood.

Speaking of the parade, it was a good thing that the local taxpayers didn't have to foot the bill for the celebration. Realize that winning a sports championship is a great thing for the city, civic pride and all that. But, c'mon now, do the taxpayers really need to subsidize a parade for rich guys?

But I will say this. When the Sol, the women's soccer team that plays in virtual anonymity at the Home Depot playground in Carson, wins their first whatever-Cup championship, I promise to attend that gig and report back to both of their fans.

By the way, *Coach JS*, you didn't attend the Sparks' championship parade after they won the coveted WNBA title in their

historic 2002 season, did ya? Cuz you are still the only guy who admits to attending a Sparks game.

Seems like the column last week castigating my Angels came at just the right time, as the Halos proceeded to reel off seven wins in a row and close the gap on the Texas Rangers.

The Angels hosted the Trolley Dodgers in a three-game series last weekend in Anaheim, and after winning the Friday night contest, dropped the final two games.

Before the series started, *Dodger Girl* graciously paid off her losing side of the bet from the first edition of the Freeway series, which the Angles took two games to one. I was treated to a jalapeno dog at a local eatery by *DG*. I believe that I am on the hook this time.

Keeping with the baseball theme, I wanted to make a correction to an item I posted a few weeks ago. Remember when I was giving kudos to the Gundo Little League A's, who captured the Major League championship with a 70-10 pasting of the Mets? Or something like that? Well, I congratulated the young A's and their 11-man coaching staff, but manager *CN* set me straight. He said the A's only had a nine-man staff in the dugout for the final game. My mistake. Course, I believe that LL rules limit the number of coaches to three or four, but who am I to quibble? Just another coach on a losing team, I guess.

But I am still getting to get some baseball coaching in. I was tabbed to help out with the Gundo 11-and-12 year old All-Star team, so I have been throwing some batting practice and hitting some ground balls to the kids in preparation for our first game this Sunday against the kids from Silver Spur.

Probably be coaching third base, wheeling the kids around the old diamond, getting someone thrown out at home. Our first game takes place in Manhattan Beach at the Premier Little League Field at 12:30. I expect to see many, many *FP* supporters sitting in the stands or hiding outside the outfield fences. Red cups optional.

This weekend saw the finale of the Battlin' Beavers' Babe Ruth season. We do love the Beavers. The kids finished the lightning-quick 18-game schedule in second or third place. Not sure which, cuz if you don't win the championship, does it really matter? The kid played center for most of the campaign, and I gotta tell ya, really enjoyed his three-year Babe Ruth career. Except when he was hurt last year and only able to get a handful of at-bats.

And a belated birthday wish to my nephew, Cameron. Seems I missed his birthday a while back. Sorry, kid. I'll make it up to you. Buy you off with something. But heck, in these busy times of Twitter, Facebook, Fantasy Baseball, spam e-mails and the like, who can keep track of relatives' birthdays? Heck, someone I know almost forgot her mom's b'day. *Almost*, I said.

Keep on keepin' on!

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