

# Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Been fighting off some kind of illness for the past three weeks. Started with a hacking cough that kept the wife up at night. Soon, nights weats were added, and then the sucker spread to my head, severely hampering my hearing. Oh, and I was spitting up some ugly green stuff... phlegm, they call it. Aren't you glad that you asked?

Went to the doctor after a couple of weeks, and after pocketing my co-pay, the doc said I had a cold. Brilliant observation! Now I realize why I wait till the last second to visit the doc's office. He told me to keep doing what I had been doing, which was drinking any and all of the NyQuil and DayQuil that I could find, and living on Halls Mentho-Lyptus lozenges. Problem was, the meds weren't seeming to do a darn thing. He did prescribe some allergy medicine, but didn't give me any antibiotics, which I was shooting for.

By the time this column hits the old newsstand, hopefully I will have recovered, and can return to being my pain-in-the-butt self. Or maybe I'll be quarantined?

On the home front, we have added a third hound to the kennel that we seem to be running at the Plank mansion. We welcomed a puppy, a Dachshund/Chihuahua into the family. Was initially going to call the little tyke "Daisy," but the mini-dog looks more like a "Tiny," so that's the moniker that we are sticking with.

Unfortunately, because the doggie is part Chihuahua, "Tiny" can't be entered in the all-important Weiner dog races at Los Alamitos race track this summer. So we will probably sit the races out again this year, still feeling the shame of Carmel's pathetic performance two years ago when the hound walked out of the starting gate and then flat-out stopped. I may push for a fourth dog so that we can be competitive in the darn race!

Perfect segue into another story involving dogs. Disgraced ex-NFL quarterback Michael Vick, who was convicted of running a murderous dog-fighting ring, has been released from federal prison and will be spending the final two months of his sentence incarcerated at his home in Virginia until his release from federal custody on July 20.

Vick, who turns 29 in June, had played QB, somewhat erratically, for the Atlanta Falcons until his nefarious activities involving canines surfaced in the spring of 2007. At the time, it appeared that if Vick were actually found guilty of his crimes and sent to the hoosegow, that the Falcons would have to fold their franchise and the NFL would be severely crippled.

Right! Proving again that the game is bigger than the individual no matter what the blowhards at ESPN scream at us. Vick went to the can, the Falcons regrouped and had a fantastic season in '08, and the NFL continues to be numero uno in America.

So if Vick toes the line, will he get a shot

in the NFL? Should he get an opportunity to again chuck passes erratically over the gridiron and tuck the ball and run when he should hang out in the pocket and pass?

The answers should be yes, and yes. Dude paid his dues to society. Some argue that unless Vick is truly remorseful for the heinous acts that he took part in, he shouldn't be allowed back in the league. Well, only Vick will truly know if he is repentant for his crimes. That's between him and a higher power.

If Vick looks for football work this summer, where might he land? According to reports, my St. Louis Rams, the Seattle Seahawks, the San Francisco 49ers and the always lurking New England Patriots are possible training camp destinations. Gotta say that if Vick surfaces in Ram camp, I hope he makes the team. I can't take another pigskin season watching incumbent QB Marc Tinman Bulger backpedal his way through a wasted year, collecting his enormous paychecks.

And speaking of the Rams and Vick, did you know that St. Louis has a defensive end on their roster, one Leonard Little, who was guilty of involuntary manslaughter back in 1998 when Little killed Susan Gutweiler in a drunk driving crash? If you can find a spot on the roster for Little, who also paid his dues to society, doesn't Vick deserve a shot?

Tried to hide this toward the bottom of the column, but I gotta report that the Mighty Mariners were knocked off in round one of the local Little League playoffs. Dropped the opener of the double-elimination tourney 5-3 to the Dodgers. Who outplayed us, and, dare I say, outcoached us.

I did a miserable job as the offensive/third base coach. Didn't do a darn thing to help the kids. Least that was what I was told by *RJ the Golfer*, who along with *New York Johnny*, attended the contest to add their support to the Mariner bandwagon. We played last night in a loser's bracket game, and if all went well, will continue in the tourney Saturday at 2 p.m. at the old ballyard.

The first edition of this year's Freeway Series concluded last Sunday with the rubber game in the three-game series between my Angels and *Dodger Girl's* Blue Crew. The Halos outlasted the Dodgers in the marathon third game of the series, finally prevailing 10-7. Won a small side bet from *Dodger Girl*, which is a good thing, I think.

Halo centerfielder Torii Hunter had a great series, walloping a three-run dinger ON Saturday night, and patrolling the pristine Dodger outfield grass with his usual zeal. Second baseman Howie Kendrick continues to befuddle *Plank*, what with his asleep at the switch play covering (or not covering) second base in the eighth inning of Saturday evening's Angel bullpen meltdown. And can someone, anyone, teach shortstop Erick Aybar the age-old art of bunting?

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# Ryan Makuta, Jeff Allison and Kelsey Cummings are Masters

By George Harris, Jr.

Sophomores Kelsey Cummings, Ryan Makuta and Jeffrey Allison each turned in masterful performances at Long Beach Belmont Plaza Pool last Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at the annual CIF-SS Masters Swim Meet.

Cummings opened the meet with a bronze performance in the 200-Free while classmate Ryan Makuta followed with a solid 12<sup>th</sup> place finish in the male version of the same event.

Makuta came back 90 minutes later to nab a sixth place in his 2009 specialty, the 100-Free. Cummings returned to take her second bronze in the 500-Free, lowering her best time by over 10 seconds. Finally Allison earned a solid tenth place in the 100-Back as he cracked a second off his personal best.

Congratulations Kelsey, Ryan and Jeff on your outstanding season's. Remember, the best is yet to come!•

## Baseball

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Ben Doucette hits a home run. Photo by Marcy Dugan marcyduganphoto.com

singled and Brice Savage brought Erickson home with a squeeze bunt for a base hit and a 4-0 lead.

In the fifth inning with El Segundo leading 5-0 and seemingly in control, Don Lugo got their first two hits of the game off Eagle starter Nootbaar and scored their only run to make it 5-1. In the bottom half of the inning, Doucette hammered his team-leading fourth home run of the season. The three-run shot that scored Jimmy Quiñones and Brice Savage gave the Eagles an 8-1 lead.

In the sixth inning, Mike Bundy made his first appearance of the year by hitting a sharp single to centerfield. Bundy, who had surgery on his knee after the football season, looks to be back at just the right time and is swinging the bat great. Eric Batty got his first varsity hit with a two-run single and the Eagles went on to win 11-1.

Though Nootbaar had a two-hitter going, he gave way to Joey Schaffhauser who threw the final three innings. Schaffhauser struck out three and gave up just one hit in facing the minimum nine batters during his outing. Nootbaar improved to 8-3 on the year and could be counted on at anytime during the playoffs.

The Eagles traveled to Palm Desert (22-5) Tuesday for a second round game of the playoffs. The Aztecs, who are ranked fifth, are

the first place team from the Desert Valley League and boast a lineup of hitters batting a collective .388. Should the Eagles win that game, they'll move on to the quarterfinals Friday at 3:15 p.m. at a site to be announced against the winner of the San Dimas/Sonora (La Habra) game. The semifinals are slated for Tuesday while the finals are next Saturday June 6 at 10 a.m. at Angel Stadium.

### Eagles News and Notes

Former Eagles' pitcher Billy Traber (1996) is doing well for Pawtucket the Red Sox Triple-A affiliate. Traber's ERA is 3.79 in the 15 games he has pitched in and he is 2-2 on the year.

Robbie Estrada (2006) is starting for the Bowling Green Hot Rods (Tampa Bay Rays) of the South Atlantic League and was 5-for-7 against Savannah in a doubleheader the teams split. The Hot Rods are just a half game behind Savannah and a game back of league leading Rome. Estrada is hitting .280 on the year and is building continued confidence within the organization.

On the college front, Jeff Miera (2007) had another solid year at El Camino hitting .336 for the Warriors and playing flawlessly at shortstop. Miera is weighing his options for next year to decide at which school would like to play. Also, Derrek Duarte (2004) played in 32 games and hit .300 for the Cal State Dominguez Hills Toros. •



Justin McCullough blocks the plate for an out. Photo by Marcy Dugan marcyduganphoto.com

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