

Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Am I the only one out here who thinks it is a tad bit creepy that the marketeers who used to employ the deceased prolific pitchman Billy Mays are still running his infomercials on the tube? And aren't the recent revelations about Mays' alleged drug use a little overkill? RIP, Billy.

Quick shout out to the hard-working, always smiling *Jen*, who is returning to the great Northeast after a couple of years on the Left Coast. She is presumably returning to her home turf to reenergize her pursuit of Steeler QB Ben Roethlisberger. We'll miss you, girl! I believe the party starts Friday night and runs through the weekend.

You guys and girls heard of this Kevin Provencher guy? Writer for the *Manchester Union Leader* in the way-up-in-the-boonies corner state of New Hampshire. Somewhere near Iceland, I believe. Covered the Manchester Monarchs, minor-league hockey team that feeds non-goal scoring grinders to our L.A. Kings.

Seems that Provencher has been charged with "deriving income from prostitution in connection with an alleged sex ring," according to multiple media reports and many nefarious, semi-accurate bloggers. Provencher, 50, apparently used multiple Internet sites to help recruit his johns. Anything for a buck or two in this tough time for the folks in the newspaper industry, right?

But Provencher isn't some hack blogger sitting in his underwear in the basement, typing away about the Monarchs neutral-zone-trap defense. No, the dude has won four New Hampshire Sportswriter of the Year awards, so he must be pretty proficient at putting the pen to paper.

Course in this tough economy, even a talented sportswriter may need to take a second job to keep afloat. Provencher's bosses at the paper stood squarely behind their embattled scribe. "Mr. Provencher has been a valued employee for many years. He is "innocent until proven guilty," said a member of the Union-Leaders management, presumably with a straight face. "However, given the seriousness of the charges, he is suspended until further notice." Nice support. For a valued employee.

By the way, for those who feel the need to know, *Plank* does not file his prolific stories from the basement in his underwear. We don't have a basement in the mansion.

But I do need to get out in the sun a bit more, apparently. Was flexing my "guns" recently when somebody made a not-so-funny comment about being blinded by my whiteness. Geez! Have a decent tan on my face, from all the running around town that I do, but I guess my runner's tan ain't all that. You'd think that a Mexican/Italian would have a decent tan come August. Time to head down to the playa and unleash the Speedos.

Okay, I have avoided this media story for a couple of weeks, but it is time to report on the fact that column fave *Erin Andrews*, the siren who works it for *ESPN*, was apparently the victim of some sicko with a protruding lens who surreptitiously shot photos of the unsuspecting and non-clothes-wearing Andrews through a hotel room peephole.

The outrageous photos were initially posted, of course, on the blasted Internet, but have since been removed. In fact, voyeurs trying to

catch a peek of the pert blonde were directed to a website which advertised the titillating photos, but then not only didn't deliver the pics, but infected the looky-loos' computers with a virus. Ha, ha! No virus here, folks. Just an annoying cough. And for any of you smart alecks out there, I don't even know how to use a camera. With a telephoto lens.

Time to again date myself, but did you know that it has been more than 15 years since the incomparable Jim Healy passed away? "Is it true?" Yup, the guy who brought real sports fans so, so many laughs in the years that he perpetrated his radio show on us passed away in 1994, at age 70, from liver cancer.

Used to listen to Healy starting in the mid-70s, when his offbeat 15 minutes or so of sports BS dominated the airwaves. Healy ended up with a 30-minute radiocast on AM710, which at that time went by the call letters of KMPC.

Those who were faithful listeners, including the droll semi-decent tennis player *Will Ford*, will remember most if not all of Healy's smart aleck audio tapes, not the least of which was Tom Lasorda's profane response to a very simple question, lobbed at him by a local reporter.

Seems that baseball bomber Dave Kingman, playing for the Cubs at the time, had strafed Tommy and the Dodgers for three home runs. Asked about Kingman's Herculean performance, Mr. Dodger unleashed a profanity-laced tirade. Said Lasorda: "What the bleep do you think is my opinion of Kingman's performance!" Then Tommy repeated the question, tossing in a few more hyphenated words. Priceless!

Healy had a million zingers, but unless you heard 'em back in the day, you can't really connect. But trust me, a Google search will yield a ton of hilarious sound bytes. As Johnny Carson said on one of Healy's tapes, "I thought (he) was bleeping brilliant!"

Trying to cover the entire sporting world here at *FP*, not just the beisbol. Sure I am. Brother Chris asked me what the heck happened to the kid who was going to save soccer in America? Freddy Adu? Chris ain't the biggest soccer fan in the world. Likes to make fun of the "beautiful game." Probably cuz he couldn't play the futbol game. So I asked the kid Phillip, a club soccer player, what happened to Mr. Adu?

Said the kid, "Think he is playing in England somewhere." Not quite. Apparently, the allegedly 20-year-old Adu plays for a pro team in Portugal, which is somewhere near England, right?

And occasionally plays for some version of the U.S. National team. Maybe the under-40s? Anyway, maybe the bust will make the big boy U.S. team next year that may even win a game in the next version of the World Cup. Anyone out there wanting to help my pro soccer education, you can retort at franklyplank@gmail.com.

More good news. Finally hooked up a Twitter account. Course, I fat-fingered my username, which was supposed to be *franklyplank*, but instead came out *franklypalnk*. Trying to figure out a way to change it.

Bout an hour later, I had my first "follower." Someone under the name of valrangers898. She has a really nice photo on the site, and invited me to "look at her pics!" Not sure I want to do that. Happy tweeting, folks!

Anyway, back to the Dodger game

By Duane Plank

Got my Manny Ramirez posters! Woohoo! Made it to the Dodger game at the Ravine last week, courtesy of the good doctor. The Dodgers were playing the Milwaukee Brewers, who are mired in the middle of the NL's Central Division.

Game didn't turn out too well for the locals, who seem to be stuck in a win one, lose one funk. There is an old baseball saying, the "dog days of August," which has come to refer to the stretch of games, shockingly, played in the calendar's eighth month. The weather is hot, oppressively hot in some ballparks, the players are dragging, having played more than 100 of the 162-game marathon season, and sometimes tempers are short on the diamond. Not saying Los Dodgers are currently playing like canines, but...

Looked up the genesis of "dog days," which had something to do with Sirius, the Dog Star, and was apparently coined by the Greeks a zillion or so years ago. That's all I could figure out.

Anyway, back to the Dodger game. Fought the blasted traffic heading north on the 110. Took the kid and me about an hour to traverse the few miles to the stadium. Wasn't much of a problem. We had a freeloader parking pass that allowed us to park in the hoity-toity preferred section. Thanks, doc. Walked to the loge entrance, got through the security and ticket lines pretty quickly, and then nabbed our Ramirez posters.

The wife had mentioned that we should try to arrive very early to get one of the limited posters. I said no dice to that. We weren't going to get to the Ravine two hours early and sit there aimlessly twiddling our thumbs in the sultry heat just to get a couple of posters. But the doc said he wanted a poster, so if we returned without said poster, I would be in big trouble--maybe cut off from freebies from the doc. And the wife.

Foolishly disregarded the wife's advice, arrived about 20 minutes early, and still received two of the limited edition knick-knacks. I, in my all-knowing way, assumed that since Dodger Stadium holds more than 50,000 faithful, that they would hand out at least 50,000 posters. Wrong. They only had 20,000 freebies and those were gone before Jason Schmidt threw his first 85-mph fastball at 7:10 p.m. Schmidt was DL'd after the start, by the way.

And the doc wasn't kidding. He really wanted a poster. I thought it was curious that not only did the Dodgers not promote the giveaway, but they gave out only 20,000 posters. Didn't have anything to do with the newest revelations about Man-Ram's cheating, did it?

Saw *JS* the soccer coach at the game, and he and his entourage were denied posters when they arrived, a little after the kid and I got there. So we lucked out, I guess.

Settled down in our fine seats to watch the game, but were first treated to a stirring rendition of the National Anthem by a kid from New York, one Anthony G.-something, who is allegedly 10-years-old. Sure, and I just turned 21. Anyway, the kid had some great pipes and came back on the field during the seventh inning stretch to croon "God Bless America." Kid was great, although not sure about the age thing. Whatever.

Back to the dog days, and tempers a-flaring. The night before, Brewer fatty first baseman Prince Fielder had gone ballistic and attempted to enter the Dodger clubhouse after the game, presumably to confront some of our blue-wearing heroes. Seems the corpulent Fielder, who won this year's All-Star home-run hitting contest, had been intentionally nailed with a pitch by L.A. reliever Guillermo Mota in the top of the ninth inning. Mota's errant pitch, launched in a 17-4 Dodger landslide win, was thought to be in retaliation for a

Brewer pitch that nicked Man-Ram in an earlier inning.

So the rule in the unwritten baseball handbook calls for a tit-for-tat, and Mota tattered Fielder. The Prince never got into the clubhouse, which was probably a good thing for him. Maybe he wasn't going to confront the Dodger players over the bean ball...maybe he just wanted in on the home team's buffet?

Anyway, extra security was in evidence the next night at the stadium, but nothing frisky materialized. Dodger shortstop Rafael Furcal led off for the homies in the bottom of the first, turning on a pitch and depositing it in the stands down the right field line: 1-0, Trolley Dodgers. But the Dodgers couldn't get anything going the rest of the way. The only time the crowd really got into the fray was when Ramirez pinch hit in the bottom of the seventh with two runners on and L.A. trailing 4-1.

Ramirez grounded out weakly to second and that was that, as the Dodgers allowed the hated ones from up north to cut another game off of their somewhat dwindling division lead. Once I got home, I checked out the ton of bucks that I would stand to make by selling the poster on eBay. After all, the Manny Bobbleheads were allegedly fetching \$75 or so bucks on the Net during the game that they were handed out. But to my chagrin, the poster was only selling for \$18.50. Hardly worth the time. Generously gave the poster to *Dodger Girl*. What a guy, huh?

So the Dodgers lost the contest, but I gotta report that the game experience was a very pleasant one. No hassles in the parking lot, no troublemakers spotted, although a few too many of the Dodger fans seem to like to swear a little too much for my liking. Constantly tossing out swear words makes you look like an uneducated fool, folks. There are woman and children present. Geez, I am getting old and crotchety, aren't I?

Stuck to my prescribed baseball diet at the game. Took down three Dodger dogs, two cookies, and one \$12 adult beverage. Worry about my little cholesterol problem tomorrow.

Think this was Dodger game numero cu-atro that I have attended this season. Which is four more games than I have viewed at Anaheim Stadium. There is something very wrong with that picture, ain't there?



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