

Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Wow, how far have the not-so-mighty fallen? If any of you happened to be cruising by the back acreage of the mansion early last Friday, you may have seen a somewhat amusing sight. Some idiot was trying to jump into the dumpster. And let me tell you, fans, that is not an easy thing to do without the added boost of a chair.

Guess who the idiot was? Yup, it was *Plank*, who was looking for a kid’s birth certificate. Which I had lost.

I may have mentioned that I am the team mom for my kids’ club soccer team. So I end up with players’ birth certs and need to take them to the registrar up in the PV to sign the kids up. Well, the lovely *Soccer Mom* was kind enough to make the trip up to PV to sign up our final kid, but she wanted no part of the birth cert. Afraid that she might lose it. So she made a copy of the paperwork, gave me back the original, which I immediately lost.

Thought that I had thrown it out. So I went “dumpster diving” early Friday morning. Didn’t find it. Looked and looked. Ready to give up cuz I had to go to a very important appointment. But, as I was ready to quit, which is what I normally would do, I decided to jump back in the stinking dumpster, and actually methodically look for the cert. And guess what, I found the sucker! Points for persistence, right? Another proud moment for *Plank*.

Is there anyone out there who watched the much ballyhooed but ultimately failed TV show *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*? It was billed as a behind-the-scenes peek at a weekly late-night sketch show. Think *Saturday Night Live*. The show was beamed down to earth on the NBC network, starting in the fall of 2006. Starred, among others, Mathew Perry and Bradley Whitford. Was the creation of *West Wing* mastermind Aaron Sorkin.

Anyway, the show never got traction with the fickle viewers out there, who, then as now, seemed to rather watch alleged stars sing and dance, or make out on a desert island. No accounting for taste out there, is there? The show was canceled in year one. Don’t remember if they even broadcast all 22 of the shows that they had in the can.

They must have done something right, because the show was nominated for multiple trinkets in the award season of 2007. I reference the show not because I was one of the few who watched it and apparently “got” the clever writing, but because I still remember the harried persona of Perry’s character.

He played head writer Matt Albie, who was the guy in charge of making sure that his writers wrote enough hilarious stuff to fill the 90-minute show. Each and every week. Think that’s easy?

Albie had a big countdown clock in his office that, shockingly, counted down the hours, minutes and seconds until air time.

So as the days passed, the clock ticked down towards the Saturday night show time. Seems like a tad bit of pressure. Tick-tock, tick-tock. Gotta write something funny.

So here’s the deal, and why it relates to *Plank*. Once the show for the week was over, and the cast and crew headed down the road to celebrate, the clock just rolled over and started ticking down the hours until the next show. Tick-tock, tick-tock. Congrats for a job well done; now back to work. Not that anyone says that overtly. It is more of a self-imposed thing.

That’s kinda how I feel some Monday mornings. I am pleased as punch to have filed my columns, but then the clock starts again, ticking off the minutes towards the next deadline. Tick-tock-tick-tock...As I await an athlete or a column regular to do something that I can make fun of in next week’s paper.

Just thought that I would share that with you. My pleasure.

Referenced my friend *Steve W.*, a couple of weeks ago, figuring that he wouldn’t see the shot I took at him because he said the paper is not delivered to him. Like he couldn’t go to the newspaper rack and pick one up, right? But I ran into *SW* while I was researching, and actually handed him a copy of the paper. Steve and his golfing buddies have started crashing my research spot, creating a bit of very noisy havoc, presumably lying about their golf scores, carrying on like they just birdied the 18th hole at Augusta National. When all they probably did was give themselves a four-foot putt for a bogey on the ninth hole at the beautiful nine-hole course down the road.

I still didn’t think he would peruse the column, but lo and behold, he *did* read the column, and laughed at his inclusion. Which I appreciate. Don’t want to torque anyone off. His lady friend also read the jab, and wondered why I mentioned that I “dunder-headedly” included the dude in my wedding oh so many years ago. Someday I may tell her, if I ever get to meet her. *SW* also rambled on about a couple of issues that took place, oh, eons ago, one involving being cut from the frosh/soph baseball team at Mira Costa. Give it a rest, my friend. It happened about 35 years ago and you probably deserved to be cut. If I remember correctly, you then took up pole vaulting and were cut from the track team, too?

Soldiering on, Soulja Boy. See how hip I am? Are the kids still listening to that tune. Yo?

Came across an amusing story, in a potty humor sort of way, while I was scanning the www. the other day. Seems that ex-USC QB Sean Salisbury, who had made a second career in the media after hanging around in the NFL for a decent number of years, was canned from his current gig talking on el radio in Dallas. Or, according to the ex-QB, it was an amicable parting of the ways. Heck, I gotta pay a little better attention to the talent on ESPN other than Erin Andrews and Suzy Kolber, because I thought that Salisbury was still working for the sports giant--that maybe he had been on an extended vacation.

Turns out that ESPN had let the talking head go a long time ago, and one of the reasons may have been that the ex-SCer allegedly flashed some very private, below-the-waist cell phone pictures of himself to somewhat bemused (bored?) folks at an after-hours ESPN gathering.

Salisbury denies the scurrilous allegations and is threatening to write a tell-all book about his years working for the folks in Bristol, Connecticut. Wonder if he will include any of his alleged private photos, or photos of his privates? Thanks for tuning in... •

Mustangs Throw Gauchos for Loss



Mustangs take the field before the start of the their game against Narbonne

By Gregg McMullin

Oh what a football season this is going to be for the Mira Costa Mustangs. Of the Mustangs’ first three games of 2009, two have come down to the fourth quarter and one of those games went down to the final possession of the game. The Mustangs ended up losing both. So when City power Narbonne was near Mira Costa’s goal line with time running out, the Mustangs were seeing deja vu all over again. But this time the results would be different when on fourth and goal, Narbonne’s pass attempt fell incomplete and the Mustangs held on for a 31-26 non-league win at Waller Stadium.

The Mustangs have had their troubles in the fourth quarter this year. They played poorly against Loyola in the first game and let a big lead slip away against Esperanza to see the Aztecs win the game virtually on the last play of the game. It has become common for the Mustang offense to score first in games, and against Narbonne that trend continued. The two teams traded possessions, but the Mustangs took advantage of good field position to set up J.R. Tavai’s five-yard touchdown run to grab a 7-0 lead.

Narbonne tied the game in an unlikely scenario when freshman quarterback Troy Williams came in for starter Chad Nashaw, who was knocked out of the game briefly. Williams connected with Everton Thaxtor on a 55-yard touchdown pass; it was Williams’ first varsity touchdown pass. On the play, the Mustangs put great pressure on the young quarterback like they’ve been doing all year long, but Thaxtor made a great grab and outran the defenders to tie the game at 7-7.

Later in the quarter, Mustang quarterback Kyle Demarco showed his athleticism and quickness against a very quick and athletic Narbonne defense. Demarco time and time again throughout the game used the quarterback draw to confuse the Gauchos. One of Demarco’s two touchdown runs came in the second quarter on a six-yard scamper to give the Mustangs the lead. But Narbonne tied the game before halftime on a 15-yard pass play.

In the first half, the Mustangs used the strategy of keeping the ball away from Narbonne by using a ground game led by Demarco to keep their drives alive. With running back Kellen Lockwood nursing an injury, Demarco was called upon to run the option more often, and it worked. The senior quarterback gave the credit to his lineman though, especially Kevin Hopp. Hopp, the 6’04” senior tackle, was filling in for All-Bay League standout Andrew Brenner who was injured during the Esperanza game. “The line did a great job and Kevin was outstanding,” Demarco said.

Narbonne, the reigning co-City Champions, have speed on offense but could not stop the Mustangs on defense, so Mira Costa

took advantage of using up the clock in the third quarter. Mira Costa built a 24-14 lead on the strength of Alex Noroce’s 20-yard field goal after the Mustangs’ drive stalled deep in Gaucho territory. Later on in the quarter, Demarco hooked up with tight end Mike Miller on an eight-yard touchdown pass. Though the touchdown pass was a key play to the drive, it was the way the Mustangs kept the ball out of the hands of Narbonne’s explosive offense that made the biggest difference. “We knew they could put up some points with their offense, so we needed to play keep away from them,” said Demarco.

Narbonne kept the game close early in the fourth quarter on a one-yard plunge by Melvin Davis to cut the lead to 24-21. Once again the Mustangs answered with a score of their own, and again it was Demarco who finalized the series with a time-consuming drive and his one-yard touchdown dive. Demarco’s score with under two minutes in the game gave the Mustangs a 31-21 lead. “After the loss to Esperanza in the final minute of the game, we were focused on stopping them,” Demarco said.

But the Gauchos made a valiant comeback that looked very similar to the Esperanza game. Narbonne made good use of its great field position on the ensuing kickoff and scored just three plays after the Mustangs’ touchdown with a TD of its own to make it 31-26. Then Narbonne recovered the onside kick in Mustang territory.

The Gauchos’ offense quickly moved the ball down the field on quick passes from Dashnaw to receivers Cornell Wiley and Thaxtor to the Mustang two-yard line. On third and goal, Mustang junior defensive back Deon Morris came up with the play of the game. Thaxtor was open over the middle in the end zone and was about to catch the would-be go-ahead touchdown when Morris put a great hit on Thaxtor and the ball fell incomplete.

Still, Narbonne’s hopes hinged on the last play of the game. The Gauchos hadn’t had much success running the ball, but Dashnaw had been pretty effective passing on the night after he returned from the first quarter injury. “We’d been in this position before, but I’ll admit I thought we were done,” said Demarco.

The Narbonne quarterback scrambled on the last play and was getting pressure from the Mustangs. Dashnaw’s pass sailed over his intended receiver and the Mustangs had come away with thrilling win over one of the top City Section teams. “I don’t know whether you ever get used to these types of endings, but the guys worked hard and they deserve this [celebration],” said Mustang coach Don Morrow.

The Mustangs (2-2) have this week off and have the opportunity to get their banged up players healthy for a showdown on the road with Newport Harbor (3-0) on October 9. •

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