

# Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Hope y'all had a safe and sane Halloween traversing the local environs. I wandered down the street to the Halloween Frolic in the early evening and was treated to some fine looking costumes, and a bit of the musica. And lo and behold, had my non-pierced ears treated to some rock and roll music by the band playing on the corner right across from the pizza place, which was doing a bang-up business selling...well, pizza, and some beverages in the infamous red cups.

Toward the end of the final set, the mike was turned over to local legend *The Music Man*, who belted out a darn decent rendition of the *Ramones* 1978 ditty, "I Wanna Be Sedated." Great way to get the evening rolling. May have been the way that the evening ended for others. Who knows?

Recently got a call, for about the fourth time, from some telemarketer bozo who wanted to sell some cheesy deal to us in regards to the kid and the SAT test. You know--the test that kids take in high school. Mostly juniors and seniors, pretty big deal towards getting into a nice college. Think that I scored about 10, 000 when I took the test in the mid 70s. Sure I did. And then I used the push that my remarkable SAT scores gave me the right to take about *14 years* to finally get my college degree. Why look back, time to look forward, right?

Anyway, politely answered the call, tried to explain that the kid was not taking the SAT this year. Which may or may not be true, guess that I should find out about that.

Jerk on the other end of the line hung up on me. On *me*. Jerk was telemarketing me and he rudely hung up on me. This was about the fourth call from this group of SAT telemarketers, and none of them ended well. So consider my sad story, folks with high school-aged kids, if you get one of these rude, annoying, calls.

Wonder how ESPN and the clowns like Chris Berman and Stuart Scott covered the Steve Phillips embarrassment? You did hear that the ex-New York Met GM, who had been working for the sports cable outlet as a baseball analyst, was canned very recently because he had an affair with a 22-year-old female production assistant. Saw pictures of the lady, and I can't believe that Phillips would risk his great gig, let alone his marriage, for a little comfort from one Brooke Hundley. B-ugly.

This is the same Steve Phillips who got into trouble while a Met employee when he was working it in the Big Apple. Seems that the 46-year-old baller can't seem to abide by his wedding vows. His wife of 19 years shockingly filed for divorce a couple of months ago, so help me, Jamie McCourt!

One of the words that I can't seem to spell correctly is canceled. Never remember if there are one or two "ls" in the word. Now I think I can solve that dilemma. Canceled is spelled *The Wanda Sykes Show*. How does this lady keep getting her own show? They promoted the dickens out of it during the early rounds of the baseball playoffs ad nauseam. Guess it starts this Saturday night on FOX. Guaranteed that I won't be watching.

Quick jump back to the Frolic. Saw two people dressed up as Teletubbies, wandering the Main Street. Someone mentioned that one of the folks may have been Ms. Sykes, parading around with her significant other. That had to be misinformation, right?

And another commercial that seemed to pop up on the screen a lot while I was researching is the DirecTV promo featuring the living David Spade and the very dead Chris Farley. Love DirecTV, but they lost me on this one, using a guy who basically offed himself to try and sell their service. Bad taste, bad judgment, whatever. Does David Spade need the cash so badly that he signed off on this debatable use of his deceased friend?

Maybe if I really figure out this DVR thing

that we had installed a while back, I won't have to be bothered by the commercials?

Hadn't run into my vivacious neighbor *Shannon* until after her Colts kicked my Rams to the curb a week and a half ago. I think she may have said hello, trying to be somewhat neighborly, before smiling and mentioning some numbers, like 42-6. Which just happened to be the score of the Colts' pounding of my Lambs. If she weren't such a nice lady, I may have taken offense. But let's get real. How can I take offense at anything when the Rams hadn't not won a game in more than a year? Seventeen straight losses. One word. Dick Vermeil. Okay, that is two words. See how out of sorts that I am? They did beat the Lions last Sunday, though.

Forgot this peeve recently, getting so absorbed in the horrible calls made by the MLB umps in the playoffs. Did the World Series start yet?

Anyway, what the heck is the NFL doing? Each and every week, I gaze into one of the screens at the research spot, when I am not gazing at something else, and I can barely tell who is playing. Throwback unis are everywhere, and this old-time NFL fan thinks that the continued use of these godawful unis is tarnishing the NFL's image. When I turn on a game featuring the Raiders and the Jets, I don't want to see two teams dressed up in multi-colored, striped clown uniforms, trying to sell more gear to moronic fans who will somehow go out and buy a Marc Sanchez or JaMarcus Russell throwback jersey. Criminy, Sanchez is just a rookie hot dog, and anybody, everybody, would like to throw Russell back to the bayous in Louisiana.

So Jamie McCourt wants nearly 500k a month spousal support from Dodger owner and estranged hubby Frank. Or "only" \$321k per month if she somehow gets her CEO job back with Los Doyers. Frank claims that his lovely wife was diddling around with a Dodger employee, some cab driver or limo jockey. And that the limo jockey and Ms. McCourt vacationed in France over the summer, and sent the bill to the Dodgers? Maybe the ga-ga-eyed couple was scouring the French wine country, looking for a number one starting pitcher? Unfortunately, all the hard work, and I am sure it was hard, done by Ms. McCourt and the limo jockey went for naught, as the Dodgers never came up with a top-of-the-rotation starter and ended up flaming out in Philadelphia.

Speaking World Series here. Game six in this year's Fall Classic is scheduled to take place Thursday night in the Bronx. Wonder if Jamie and limo-jockey Jeff were planning on attending the festivities?

So much going on, so little time. Or space. But I always seem to find the time to watch this stuff, much to the occasional chagrin of my much-better half.

One of the biggest college football tilts of the season took place last Saturday, with the men of Troy traveling to Oregon and having their season basically ended by the resurgent Ducks, 47-20. The reeling Trojans face Arizona State Saturday at 5 p.m. Maybe they ought to retool their alleged defense a tad bit before leaving on the road trip?

And the Air Force Blue Bruins, who will not win another game this season under the tutelage of befuddled Coach Rick Neuheisel, play host Washington at the Rose Bowl Saturday afternoon.

On the pro slate for week nine, I'm looking at San Diego at the New York Giants, Dallas at Philadelphia on Sunday night, and the Monday night encounter, with the Denver Broncos playing host to the Super Bowl champs from Steeltown.

Dang, I have run way too long and I haven't even scratched the surface, to use a timeworn cliché. Guess we can catch up next week on little stuff like the World Series, Brett Favre, and the riveting MLS series between the Galaxy and the Chivas. Oh, and about that lady last week... •

# Lakers Kick Clips to the Curb, Again

By Duane Plank

We're 10 days into the interminable NBA regular season, the one that will conclude with the Lakers triumphantly entering the playoffs and the Clippers enduring a search for a new general manager and coach. Burning questions abound for the local pro hoopers. For the Lakers, really important questions like will big man Lamar Odom be able to focus on his game while enduring the media-driven idiocy and scrutiny following his alleged marriage to a publicity-seeking freeloader in the offseason? Will the at times troublesome Ron Artest meddle with the Lakers' team chemistry, which seemed to be pretty darn good during last season's championship run? And will Adam Morrison ever get into a game, and if he does surface on the hardwood, start making some outside shots?

Let's see, the crystal (basket) ball says... yes, yes, and yes. Odom, the 30-year-old forward, has had a heck of a lot more important things to deal with during his pro career than some publicity-seeking reality show chick trying to force him into a post-nup agreement that will strip him of 50 percent of his cashola when the inevitable divorce occurs. Remember that Odom's infant son died in 2006 from SIDS. So the annoyance of the presence of the way over-caffeinated paparazzi and "wife" Khloe Kardashian is pretty trivial in the scheme of things.

Artest should be on good behavior during his stay in LA. He probably feels fortunate to be given a golden opportunity to get an NBA ring, and has been nothing but cordial, if a bit spacey, during training camp.

As for Morrison, this is a make-or-break season for the ex-collegiate superstar. If he is able to make his way off the end of the bench and log some significant minutes, he better drill some 20-foot jumpers, or not only will he quickly be sent back to the pine, but could be jettisoned right off the Laker roster.

As for the sad sack Clips, both of their fans probably have questions that need to be addressed. Will the perennially out-of-shape guard Baron Davis, pride of the Westside's Crossroads High, actually show up and stay fitter than Raider QB JaMarcus Russell? Will seven-footer Chris Kaman, who stole a ton of owner Donald Sterling's money last season while sitting behind the bench nursing an injury, fulfill the terms of his outrageous contract and make an impact in the paint? And will GM/coach Mike Dunleavy figure out that he seems to be having a tough time multi-tasking, and relinquish one of his jobs to someone who may actually be competent?

Let's guess, no, maybe, and no. Davis has apparently decided to get into better shape this season. Which is really nice of him, being that the Clips have guaranteed him a ton of money. Showing up and staying in peak shape is the bare minimum an athlete owes his management and his teammates. Course the Clip hierarchy probably didn't expect a good portion of the dinero that they forked over would be spent at the local Hometown Buffet. They do have fruit at the buffet, Baron. I have seen the apples. Davis started off the season with a whimper, tallying an amazing two points on one for 10 shooting in the opening night loss to the Lakers.

In regards to Kaman, the big guy hit the NBA cash lottery prior to the 2008 season, inking a ridiculous multi-year, megabuck contract. Then injured his footsie and played in less than half of the contests in the Clips' pathetic 19-win season. Don't blame him

for sitting out as many games as possible last year, but do blame him this year if he doesn't bounce back big time.

And don't look for Dunleavy to can himself before the regular season concludes on April 14, when the Clips will close out against the defending champs down the hallway at Staples. Seems that Dunleavy lives a pretty charmed life when it comes to working in the NBA. The guy sports a 592-688 won-loss record in 16 seasons, and as a GM had the good fortune to follow the overmatched Elgin Baylor in that position. So the bar was set pretty darn low. Like about an inch above the hardwood.

Okay, so the Lakers are expected by most all in the alleged know to waltz through the regular season, win the Pacific Division, pick up the numero uno seeding in the Western Conference playoffs, and cruise through the first couple of rounds of said playoffs, barely breaking a sweat while dispatching some bottom-feeder playoff teams like the Phoenix Suns or the Denver Nuggets. All of which probably will happen, but first they will still have to slog through the 82-game schedule, and 41 home games in front of super-fan Jack Nicholson. Who hasn't been seen on the big-screen since the flick *Bucket List*. Maybe it's time to get back to work, Jack?

Short of catastrophic simultaneous injuries to Kobe Bryant, Pau Gasol, Odom and Andrew Bynum, the biggest challenge facing the Lakers as they attempt to defend their NBA crown is the inevitable complacency that will probably settle in. Like maybe during an eight-game road trip that is set to take place in mid-January, taking the Purple and Gold to Cleveland, Toronto and Memphis, among other garden spots. Could be a tad bit cold on the road in January, but I guess the fellas will probably have some decent heaters in their glamorous hotel suites. And if they get a little weary of life on the road, away from their families and significant others, the guys can always wander down to the local gentleman's club and partake in a little nocturnal off-court entertainment.

Back to the hardwood. Any rundown of the Lakers must include a snippet or two about The Franchise, Mr. Bryant. Suffice to say that the man is a marvel, having played all 82 regular season games last season, averaging more than 26 points, and then having enough in the tank to take the Lakes through four playoff rounds and lead the locals to the title as they stormed into and through Orlando.

Bryant is back and so is Gasol, who was heisted from Memphis a season and a half ago and provides a deft shooting touch, quick low-post moves, and a darn effective high-post passing game.

There will be other contributors to the Laker Western Conference victory tour, and those players like Derek Fisher and Jordan Farmar will get their share of ink. We have the next eight months or so to give them their props.

Lakers in 2009: 69-13.

As for your Clippers, it was announced on opening night, when the Lakers trounced their homies 99-92 that Blake Griffin, the number one selection in the summer's draft and considered by many to be the team's savior, would be out of the lineup for at least six weeks.

Seems Griffin suffered a busted kneecap at the tail end of the preseason. More bad luck for a team that has seen more than its share of black cats and open ladders.

Clippers in 2009: 13-69. •

