

Bruins Can't Beat the Trojans, can They?

By Duane Plank

USC 31, UCLA 14. Get that out of the way at the top. Saturday night folks, tune in. Oh, and Happy Thanksgiving to ya.

Maybe it's me, maybe not, but it certainly seems that some folks, as they get a tad bit older in the tooth, get a little grumpier, a little less patient. Case in point. I went to a local nationwide retailer recently to trade in/recycle some pants. Never knew that there was a recycle value in 10-year-old Dockers, but apparently I was mistaken. The retailer said that if you gave 'em a pair of old, crummy duds, they would sell you some new threads for as little as \$19.99, which they claimed was a \$40 savings.

Anyway, times being what they are and my wardrobe being horrendous, I went to the store and approached the customer service young man to exchange my slacks. He didn't have a clue about the promotion, a promotion that had been ballyhooed on radio ads for at least three to four days. He told me he couldn't hook me up because my pants didn't have the right "tag" on them. What tag he was looking for, I had no clue cuz the pants were purchased during the first term of the Reagan administration. And probably not from the same retail outlet.

He shuffled me to another customer service desk, where a young lady informed me, very pleasantly, by the way, that I couldn't trade in my "Dockers" because the promotion was only for "Haggar" slacks. Which she pronounced incorrectly. And was completely inaccurate. Her co-worker intervened and said no worries, so I went to the rack, picked out a couple of new pairs of stylish pants, and was off. Looking good folks, ask a couple of mis amigas, by the by.

I forgot to finish the old lady being grumpy part, didn't I? When I was shuffled to the second customer service desk, I walked right up to the empty counter to ask my question about the old pants. Well, apparently there was a sign behind the desk, saying "the line forms here." Didn't see the sign, self-absorbed pinhead that I can sometimes be. But there was a line there. If one blue-haired lady can be considered a line. She grumbled something like, "Where does the line start?"

Okay, she *knew* where the line started because she was the only one *in* said line. And yes, I did jump in front of her, because

there was no one standing at the counter and I didn't see the sign. I apologized to her for my lack of manners, but all she could do was shoot me any icy glare.

Much like the old bitty in the candy store a couple of weeks ago. Remember that cheeky anecdote? No? Read the paper and remember, folks. And patronize the advertisers, please.

So, two incidents in less than a month. Is it them, folks, or is it me? Don't answer that. Not sure that my mom would be proud of her boy. On second thought, I think Lupe would be proud of her first-born.

Need to ad this bromide, folks. If someone aggrieves you and then apologizes for whatever offensive act that they perpetrated on you, how about actually accepting their apology and moving on? No need to let the situation fester, folks. Just a thought. Or you can continue to be a damn pain in the butt for everyone. Your choice, I guess.

Sports-time, folks, cuz that is why you peruse the columns, right? Or maybe not-so-true, cuz you already know who won the all-unimportant Laker game, right? I mean, one game out of 82, who really cares, right *RJ*? Wow, Lakers beat the Bulls. How can I contain my enthusiasm? Maybe I'll turn a couple of cars over outside the mansion.

Okay, on to the sports stuff. Start with my L.A. King hockey team, which had such a wonderful start to the season, but now appears to be in big-time trouble because of the "upper body" injury suffered by key offseason acquisition, forward Ryan Smyth. Smyth was hurt about 10 days ago and is supposed to be out for a month or so. Which may or not be true, what with the lying that goes on in the NHL regarding injuries. Kings lost two home games after the Smyth injury. Dude better come back soon or it could be another case of same-old, same-old for the Crownshirts. Time to suck it up, fellas.

The powers that be that run the Kings organization have been misleading the faithful for the past 10 years or so, claiming that they actually care about returning a winning hockey team to Los Angeles. Put up or shut up, AEG. But it was good to hear some of the King players were taking it to heart after a recent home-ice loss to the Calgary Flames.

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Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Someone recently said to me that I currently have a lot on my plate. Guess they were alluding to the fact that I have taken on a couple of new gigs recently. Or they could have been referring to the fact that my food plate is usually overflowing with French fries, nachos and breakfast burritos. I'll go with the first thought and continue to plot the return of my low-cholesterol diet, which I hope kicks in around January 3. Or maybe the fourth. The third is a Sunday, and I assume that I will have all-encompassing research and writing duties that day, which will force me to consume that beautiful breakfast burrito as I slog through another tedious day watching sports, interfacing with the proletariat, and dispensing my witty barbs to the assembled sports fans.

Nice, I am already thinking about what I will be scarfing down on January 3, and I haven't even feasted on the Thanksgiving turkey and trimmings yet.

Got some more kudos last weekend as I spent way too much time in the garden city of Chino, watching the kids AYSO team take part in some type of playoff thingee. Used to know all about this stuff when the kid was younger. Who they played, when they played, all of that stuff. Now I just show up at the games, root for the home team and go home. Getting old, aren't I?

Quick comment on the AYSO weekend. Our star defender, guess the kid plays sweeper, was tossed from Game One for "inappropriate language." AYSO ref canned him. Okay, maybe the kid said a bad word. We are talking about high school age kids, by the by. This is BU16, not the BU5 girls' league where you hand out orange slices after the girlies look for dandelions on the pitch. So he was red-carded, out for the rest of the game. Fair enough, I guess. But then he was banned from the next *three* games. Give me a break. Kid couldn't play for 3/1/2 games cuz he used a word that most of us use on a somewhat daily basis? After he was clipped from behind by a dastardly player on the opposing team? Seemed a tad bit harsh. Get over yourself, AYSO ref!

Almost happened that I was to be on the road at Thanksgiving time this year, driving a van back from the wilds of Texas. My pop-in-law said that he wanted to bestow his used van on the Planks, and the initial thought was that I and the kid would fly down to the Dallas area and drive the van back to Cali. But reality happened and the plans have been put off for a while. Maybe the trek will happen around spring break.

The kid wanted to go on the excursion cuz the assumption was that he would have helped with some of the driving. Think that he is getting his license in February. Can't wait. I could've used his help a couple of

years ago when we were driving through the middle of Pennsylvania searching for Williamsport and the Little League World Series. After a seven-hour, redeye flight from LAX to Philly, then an interminable drive back into the bowels of the Keystone State. Construction everywhere, think that I only drifted off to sleep once, for about three seconds, the kid said.

Driving back from Texas wouldn't have been as expensive as driving around our wonderful state, though. Was watching one of the episodes of the only show I religiously view, *Friday Night Lights*, which is airing on DirecTV channel 101 at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays. Coach Taylor pulled into a gas station as he was driving, ticked off, down the road. The guy paid \$2.37 for a gallon of regular petrol. Crud, what are we paying out here, \$3.11? Or \$2.93 if you drive around like an idiot, looking for a "cheaper" price. Which I sometimes do. Shoot-howdy!

Jonesing for the sports stuff? Riveting commentary by the *Plankmeister*? In about 15 seconds. But have to let you know that we may have a new family living in the front part of the mansion acreage. Picture the acreage that Ben Cartwright owned in my fave show *Bonanza*, and you may get the point. Anyway, someone moved out and it looks like a very interesting family may be moving in. More down the road...

Almost to the one-of-a kind sports commentary, but had to let the fine readers in on a disaster that occurred at the mansion late last week. Left the domicile to take the kid to one of his three teams' soccer practices, or maybe pick him up from said practice. Anywho, returned to mi casa, only to be mortified that the picture on the plasma in the living room seemed to be frozen. Yikes! No TV, what is a hard-working scribe to do--go down the street to watch all of the games that the people play? Leave the comforts of the mansion? Lordy, lordy.

Okay, that is a dumb question, and my loyal readers know the answer to that dilemma. So I called the folks at DirecTV, who actually speak to you after you get by their automated phone answering system. The voice on the other end of the line suggested that I unplug the unit, which I did, which *almost* solved the problem. Like 99 percent solved, but still no picture. Then she suggested that I hit the reset button, which again almost solved the problem, but no dice.

So then she suggested that we basically reboot the DVR receiver box, so I tried that remedy. The customer service rep said that it would take about two hours to see if that would work, so I followed her instructions and begrudgingly headed down the street

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