

# Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Happy Birthday, Regina Plank! Yup, my much younger bride of more than a few days is celebrating her latest birthday tonight, so if you see the lovely redhead out and about this weekend, wish her the best. She has had to put up with a lot--make that more than a lot--for the better part of the last 20 years.

By the by, I am feeling much better this week. Thanks for asking. But the kid got pretty sick recently after eating a whole lotta stuff, and the wife also came down with some type of the crud. Sure that they are thanking me for passing the sickness their way.

Mentioned a while back that one of the supermarket tabloids was predicting the imminent demise of one James Scott Bumgarner, a.k.a. James Garner, a.k.a. Jim Rockford. Well, thankfully the tabloids were a little premature on readying the obit for the 81-year-old actor, star of the *Rockford Files* television show, which aired on NBC in the '70s for six seasons.

I mentioned NBC because a column regular not named *Dodger Girl*, *NASCAR Guy*, or *Mr. Phil* lost a bet to me, thinking that the show was broadcast on CBS. Tsk, tsk.. Seems like I win most of my bets, doesn't it?

By the way, I hope the tabloids are just as off-base on their death knell predictions about actor Patrick Swayze, who is battling pancreatic cancer, as they were with Garner. But I'm not so sure about that one.

Alrightee, Laker fans, what did you think about the first three games of the NBA Championship Series? As you should know by now, the Lakes are seeking their 15th overall NBA title in their 30th appearance in the league championship series.

Game 1 in the series was a Laker rout, with the locals winning by 25, but Game 2 was a luck-sack Laker overtime victory, what with Orlando's Courtney Lee somehow

getting loose for a buzzer-beating lay-up at the end of regulation. Which Lee missed, sending the game into overtime.

The Lakers eventually prevailed 101-96 in overtime, sending the series to Orlando for probably the next three games. I say probably, because if the Lakes somehow beat the Magic on Tuesday, they could close out the series with a win tonight. Sticking with Lakers in six.

Also have to go out on the proverbial limb in the Stanley Cup puck series, which at this time on Monday morning (my deadline) stands at 3-2 Detroit. I am expecting a Pittsburgh win on Tuesday night, which will have sent the series back to Detroit for the deciding Game 7 on Friday night. And Pitt will shock the veteran Red Wings in the finale.

Did you watch the Belmont Stakes on Saturday? The third leg of horse racing's Triple Crown took place in the state of New York, but the fans' anticipation for the marathon mile-and-a-half contest was dulled by the fact that no horse running could win the Triple Crown.

And the horse that won the Preakness, leg two of the series, didn't run in the Belmont. The owners of the fantastic filly Rachel Alexandra didn't see the need to run their horse in the grueling Belmont.

So that left Kentucky Derby winner Mine That Bird as the "now" horse when the 10 horses entered the Belmont starting gate.

Again I was not able to get into a pool on the race, thwarted because I won the Derby pool, I still believe. But they ran the race even though I wasn't able to get a bet down, and surprise, surprise, a horse named *Bird*, as expected, won the race.

But the horsey who crossed the finish line first wasn't Mine That Bird, but rather longshot Summer Bird, who paid \$25 bucks

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# No Doubt About It, Dodgers are Numero Uno

By Duane Plank

The marathon MLB schedule has just passed the one-third point in the season, so it is time to take our first look at how the local boys are faring as the calendar shifts to summer.

I'd like to talk about my Angels first and note how they are playing exciting, winning baseball. Make mention of their comfortable AL West division lead and remind all of the naysayers that pretty much standing pat over the offseason was a wise move for GM Tony Reagins and the club.

Cuz after all, the Halos were coming off a 100-win regular season, even if they did get bounced, again, by the damn Boston Red Sox in the first round of the playoffs. Why tinker with success?

That's what I'd *like* to say. But I would be a liar and a fool, and I ain't no liar. So I'll start with the best team in L.A. (and you know how that admission pains me, don't you, *Dodger Girl*?), which just happens to be *my* Dodgers.

Did you read that, D. Stone, who claims that I am only a Dodger fan for one game a year, the home opener, which I have been fortunate enough to attend the past two seasons thanks to the largesse of D. Stone and his main man, Gabe?

Sure, the NL West is a weak division. And yes, the Dodgers' marquee player is a steroid cheater. But the facts are the facts. These guys are currently playing the best baseball in the game, with a seemingly insurmountable lead over the hated Giants, and are even further ahead of the over-achieving minor league San Diego Padres, who are already attempting to sell off anyone on their team who bears any resemblance to a major league player. Heck, they already

tried to unload their ace, Jake Peavy, in a trade to the Chicago White Sox, but Peavy decided to veto the deal.

By the way, occasionally delusional Dodger fan *RJ the Golfer* would love to see Peavy in Dodger Blue, but realizes it would be folly for the Pads to trade the right-hander to a team in their own division. But RJ also mentioned that Houston Astor hurler Roy Oswalt would be a nice acquisition for genius GM Ned Colletti. And for once, I concur.

Oswalt, according to totally unsubstantiated sources, has been "not so happy" with the way things are going down in Houston this season. Gee, what's not to like? A 24-30 record, last place in the Central Division. Sounds like fun, doesn't it?

And Oswalt must be on the trade block. Why, you say? Well *Sports Illustrated* writer Jon Heyman answered a Twitter tweet with his own tweet, saying he thought the righty would be dealt this summer. And, by God, if it is on Twitter, it must be gospel, right?

Anyway, Oswalt, who won 20 games in both 2004 and 2005, has amassed a whopping two wins this season. Gee, maybe his crappy year is a major reason that the Astros have floundered? Just asking.

The 31-year-old Oswalt is stealing money, working on the third year of a five-year, \$73 million dollar contract. But all kidding aside, if the Dodgers can figure out a way to pry Oswalt (no relation to Lee Harvey, by the way) out of Texas and bolster their suspect starting pitching staff, that would be a good thing, right *NASCAR Guy*?

See, I can shoot Los Dodgers a compliment. Even if it is back-handed.

So 60-plus games into the season, what's

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