

Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Great. Got so busy with who knows what that we missed the Wienerdog races a couple of weeks ago at Los Alamitos Race Track. Didn't have a dog to enter in the deal, what with our dachshunds being the very unathletic types, but it is always fun to head to the little racetrack down the 605 Freeway and watch the festivities. Maybe next year. Where does the time go?

Speaking of the ponies, week two of the Del Mar meet kicked off Wednesday. Those of you who know Del Mar know the good times that can be had down south. Sunshine, track perched on the ocean, very pretty women all over the digs. Planning my trip, hopefully heading down in a few weeks.

Last add on the horsies... Shout out to local Little League baseball coach CS, who hooked me up for a nice deal at Hollywood Park a few weeks ago. And is a staunch backer of the two-year-old runner *Seeuat Sticknstein*, who I am sure will be running soon at the track where the turf meets the surf. Seeuat, trained by David La Croix, won a maiden claimer on closing day at the Track of the Lakes and Flowers, rewarding her backers with \$8 for the win.

But the baseball season has been nothing but good people, good times. It isn't all about the final score on the scoreboard, is it? At least that is what we say when we come out on the short end of the stick. It is about the experience, about living in the moment. Shoot, I think I am almost quoting the Zen-master, Phil Jackson. Not a bad guy to quote, though. I believe he has said it's not all about the result, but it's about the journey. Guy's pretty smart. And pretty damn successful, too. And still has avoided signing the paperwork with the lovely Jeanie Buss. That a plus or minus?

Any of the legions of FP fans seen the movie *Gran Torino*? Finally saw the flick a Saturday ago, after telling the wife I would watch it with her a few times over. Which wasn't a lie, but may have been stretching credulity, cuz I am not really a movie guy. I think that the last time I actually went to the movies and paid the ransom that they charge now, I saw *The Dark Knight*. Which was very entertaining. But I haven't returned to the cinema since then. Must be coming up on a year now.

Loved *Gran Torino*. And not just because back in the day I owned a light blue GT. Yup, I tooted around the South Bay in a very stylish ride back then, until the car (and nearly I) was totaled when some idiot chick ran a red light and crashed into me as I was making a very legal left-hand turn. The idiot chica was actually about 100 feet or so from the intersection when the light turned red, but she accelerated and knocked the crap

out of my pretty blue GT. Happened over in Torrance, corner of Anza and Spencer. I was just trying to get to work at the West End Club, pulling my shift as a top-notch bartender at a highly lucrative wedding reception. Anyway, she crashed into the passenger door of my vehicle, spinning my car in a 180-degree circle. Or maybe it was a 360? Not good with those math things--was a wiz at adding and subtracting, but when the teacher started talking about planes intersecting in space, I remember my eyes glazing over. Trigonometry, I believe they called it.

So my GT was demolished but I survived the ordeal, except that the seatbelt left a wicked indentation on my fat-ass stomach. And my neck was pretty darn sore. Being the trooper that I was, I walked across the street to work the wedding. Sometimes you have to play hurt, right? And all of you bartenders out there, and I know that there is at least one who faithfully reads my diatribes each Thursday with his young daughter, you know the benefits of working a free-flowing wedding right?

Went to work, probably had a medicinal shot or two, and then was told to go home by the bar manager. Who was only looking out for my best interests, I assume. Or maybe she wanted to grip my tips. Happened before. She had called my soon-to-be wife Regina, who raced over to the club and coerced me to go home.

To do what, I don't remember. She tried to get me to go to the hospital, but being a guy, I demurred.

So the car was totaled, I lost out on a nice payday and I was pretty sore. Then, in a couple of days, I get something in the mail, saying that I was the party at fault. And that I was gonna be sued. By the chick who rammed into my car, disabling the beautiful GT and leaving me without a ride. Caramba!

Lawyered up, found out that what the other side had done was pretty much standard operating procedure. Course my lawyer got a cut of the payout. Which was a couple of thousand bucks, if I recall. And the damn GT had to be worth a ton, right? Least it was in the Eastwood movie. •



Sizzling Dodgers, Angels Considering Halladay Trip?

By Duane Plank

Talking points for the sports week that was...

*Dodgers continue to roll; Manny shines on his bobblehead night.

*Angels racking up the wins; virtually unnoticed except in the OC.

*Will Toronto ace Roy Halladay stay in the Great White North?

*Buehrle tosses a gem.

*Favre...

*Tour de What?

Can't seem to get away from the Manny-mania, can we? Even when things look a little sketchy for the power-hitting outfielder, events conspire to elevate the drug-cheater's popularity to even greater heights.

Like last week, when the sometimes malingering Ramirez decided he wasn't ready to be put in the starting line-up against the woeful Cincinnati Reds. No big deal, right? The Reds are pathetic, the Dodgers own them at Chavez Ravine; heck, Plank could even start for Los Dodgers in left field against the Redlegs and the Dodgers would probably come out on the winning side. And Plank can't hit the curveball!

Any of you old enough to remember when the Big Red Machine, with Johnny Bench, Joe Morgan, Tony Perez, etc. used to travel to La La Land and tussle with the Blue Crew? Now *that* was a ball team that Cincinnati could be proud of.

Anyway, Man-Ram begs out of the starting line-up on Manny Ramirez Bobblehead Night, but the situation arises in the bottom of the sixth inning where Manager Joe Torre needs a pinch-hitter. Bases loaded, tie game. So who gets summoned? The mercurial Ramirez, who was presumably sitting at the end of the bench, playing with his bobblehead doll.

And walla! Ramirez launches the first pitch he sees into the Mannywood section of the stands, plating four runs for the Dodgers in a game that they go on to win 6-2. The guy is amazing, and apparently is doing it all without renewing his prescription for the women's fertility drug that helped earn the slugger a two-month unpaid vacation earlier this season.

So the Dodgers continue to roll, lengthening their lead over the Rockies and the hated Giants. Could be leading by as many as 10 games by the time you get around to reading this fine column. Discerning readers may remember that I predicted a Blue collapse in a recent column.

But can a team without a true number one on the hill make it through a couple of playoff rounds, and find a spot in the World Series against my LA Angels? Sure, Chad Billingsley has emerged as the staff ace, and with Koufax Kershaw maturing and Hiroki Kuroda returning from injury, the Dodgers have proven that they have enough starting pitching to dominate the NL West. But those three guys won't be enough to get the Blue to the World Series.

Trying to remember the last time the Blue advanced to the Fall Classic. Probably before I was born. Anyway, with the trading deadline set for Friday, GM Ned Colletti has been doing his due diligence, trying to set the wheels in motion to acquire a stud arm.

The top three starters who are probably available are Toronto's Roy Halladay, Cleve-

land's Cliff Lee and Seattle's Jarrod Washburn. Halladay is considered by many to be the best starter in the game, Lee has won a Cy Young trophy, and the ex-Angel Washburn has very quietly compiled an 8-6 record and 2.71 ERA with the Seattle Mariners.

It will take a boatload of talent to acquire Halladay, and lesser amounts of prospects and/or suspects to get Lee or Washburn into a Blue uni for the balance of the summer and postseason run. Speaking with *Dodger Girl's* hubby Gregg the other day, he seems to favor a move for Halladay. Guess we will see which way the wind blows on that one.

Remember, folks, in the playoffs you don't need five starters. So a guy like Jason Schmidt, who finally made a couple of recent starts, won't see the field. You need one shutdown stud who you can throw out there on day one of the playoffs, and every fourth day as you progress through the postseason. And then you need super-solid number two and three starters.

If the Dodgers don't acquire Halladay, they gotta be hoping that he doesn't go to Philadelphia or St. Louis, two division leaders who figure to still be playing in early October. Cuz it ain't about beating the Rockies in July--it's all about facing the Angels in October. And speaking of my boys, Los Halos continue to pile up win after win, even with arguably their best player, Torii Hunter, sitting in the dugout, biding his time on the disabled list.

The Angels recently took three of four from the Minnehaha, playing small ball, big ball, and first-to-third ball to perfection. Almost seems that Mike Scioscia's team performs better without a big-bopper in the line-up. They hit the ball in the gaps, run the bases with abandon, and compile innings like the one against the Twinkies, where the locals scored nine runs on 10 hits in the bottom of the fourth.

Chone Figgins started the frame with a home run, and then added a single to left later in the inning. The inning went like this: Homer, double, single, double, single, double play, single, single, single, homer, single, fly-out. Game basically over.

Now do the Angels have enough to get to a Freeway Series with the Dodgers? Do they need to add an ace like Halladay? Couldn't hurt adding a power-pitching ace to the rotation, but most reports have the Angels being a bit player in the Halladay sweepstakes. But the price tag to pick up the ex-Angel Washburn wouldn't be too hefty, although the Mariners may not want to deal the lefty to a divisional rival.

Congrats to White Sox lefty Mark Buehrle, who tossed a perfecto last week. First perfect game in the Bigs since Randy Johnson notched one back in '04. Hope you saw the incredible catch made by ChiSox centerfielder DeWayne Wise, saving the gem in the ninth inning?

Gee, it looks like QB Brett Favre is coming back to play ball with the Minnesota Vikings. Or he is not coming back. Or he is. Or??

If the old guy does come back, and I think he will, it immediately elevates the Vikes to the front of the pack in the NFC. And can anyone tell me when the Tour de France starts? Some kinda bicycle race, right? •

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