

Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Screw you, Red Sox! I have your hex against the Halos right here, baby. That game three victory was for one-time Halo reliever Donnie Moore. And to heck with you, all of the incredibly biased national announcers who were blatantly rooting for the Chowds. Adios. Go home. Maybe the Bruins will win the Cup.

You never know where you might find a new contributor to *FP*, a new gal who might add her sporting expertise to one of the weekly columns. Had the fine fortune of meeting *Carli*, the *Curling Cutie*, recently when I was forced to stop for lunch by a local entrepreneur at an incredible MB eatery, direct from the fine city of Houston, I gather.

Carli mentioned something about hockey, which you know warms the cockles of my heart, and then noted to her attentive audience that she just doesn't "get" the way-under-publicized sport of curling. You know the sport, right? Some 90-year-old pushes a frozen biscuit-type-thing down the ice, and then some 80-year-old brushes the ice, guiding the biscuit into the scoring zone. Seems a lot like shuffleboard to me, but what the heck do I know?

But I did find out that the thing they propel down the ice is called the rock, or stone, and is slid (slud, slidded?) down the ice and brushed into the scoring zone, which is known as the "house." And that the house consists of four concentric circles! Wow, that was all of the info that I could take in one sitting.

I did get to thinking, there is a show on the tube called *House*. Wonder if it is a fast-paced offering devoted to the overlooked sport of curling? Or maybe a show about an a-hole doctor who happens to sometimes care about his patients?

Anyway, with the Winter Olys taking place in a few months, we now have a curling

expert to guide us through the upcoming tourney. And she just celebrated a birthday, heading down to the Magic Kingdom. Happy B-Day, girl! You can't get this info anywhere else, can you?

And another shout out to a Happy B-day girl. Samantha L., the soccer player and soon-to-be T-baller, will be turning five this weekend. And a great kiddo! She is the numero uno daughter of *Dodger Girl*. Who was oh-so-ecstatic when St. Louis Cardinal outfielder Matt Holliday let a two out in the ninth inning fly ball bounce off his privates last week, enabling the Dodgers to stay alive in game two. Lost it in the sun, lost it in the Dodger towels, lost it somewhere, not sure about any of that, but I will stand by my eyeball observation that Loney's fly ball hit the guy in the cupola. Dodgers win game two, and then win the series on Saturday! Just like I somewhat predicted. It ain't over till it is over, folks.

Here is one for the nutcase file. According to multiple sources clogging up and slowing down the www, some wacky employees of Alcor, the Arizona cryonics facility that houses the corpse of the very dead baseball Hall-of-Famer Ted Williams, badly mistreated the decapitated noggin of the deceased Boston icon.

One Larry Johnson, a former exec at Alcor, claims in his just-released book, that back in 2002, Williams was beheaded, with his head then being frozen. Just one big ice cube, I guess. Apparently, the deal with facilities like Alcor is that they suspend the dead folks in some kind of liquid nitrogen, just in case some really smart folks figure out, somewhere down the road, how to revive the dead-as-doornails stiff. Not sure how they would reattach the severed dome of Teddy Ballgame, but I am sure that the brilliant

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Ducks Primed for Playoff Run

By Duane Plank

Give a little equal space here to the puck fans of the best pro team in SoCal, the sometimes-Mighty Ducks of Anaheim. Yes, I know that they dropped the Mighty part of the team name a while back, and I also know that they have a much more successful recent history than my Kings.

In fact, the Ducks have participated in 10 playoff series since 2006, and, should you remember, picked up the Stanley Cup in '07. They fuddled around for a good part of the '08/09 season, but righted the ship in time to qualify for the playoffs, and then jettisoned the heavily-favored San Jose Sharks in round one of the postseason.

A second round, seven-game series loss to the always tough Detroit Red Wings ended the season, but the Ducks' mucky mucks as well as the guys playing on the frozen ponds in North America fully expect to again make the playoffs and take another shot at the Cup. They will have to do it without bruising defenseman Chris Pronger, who was traded to Philadelphia over the summer for forward Joffrey Lupul, blue-liner Luca Sbisa, and a couple of first round draft picks.

Lupul had been with the Ducks before moving on to Edmonton and Philadelphia. A right-winger, the 26-year-old forward is a 25-goal, 25-assist type of player. Sbisa has a big upside; the 19-year-old was a first round selection of the Flyers in '08 and was selected by Coach Randy Carlyle to suit up and play substantial minutes in the first few games at the beginning of the season.

In the midst of a six-game home stand, the Ducks will look to superstar-in-waiting Ryan Getzlaf, the behemoth center who scored 25 goals last season, to lead an offensive group that also features snipers Corey Perry (32

goals, 40 assists), Bobby Ryan (31 and 26), and old man Teemu Selanne who scored 27 goals in 65 games last season.

On the defensive side of the ice, veteran Scott Niedermayer will quarterback a unit that will definitely miss the experienced nastiness of the departed Pronger, but has added a nice blend of lunch pail veterans and youngsters with high upsides to the fold since GM Bob Murray began re-tooling the roster in February.

In goal, it certainly looks like the pride of Switzerland, one Jonas Hiller, has wrested the starting job away from Jean-Sebastien Giguere, who may end up on the trading block later in the season if he rarely gets off the bench in the early going.

In years past, the Ducks have slogged through difficult off-seasons, with players like Selanne and Niedermayer hemming and hawing before deciding to return to the team. Which can't be good for team morale or chemistry. No such problems this off-season. All hands were on board since the beginning of training camp in early September.

The Ducks should be able to make the playoffs this season, probably hovering around spots six to eight in the Western Conference. Guess that we will check back on that a bit down the road.

On to the NFL. Here we are approaching week six, and my Rams and your Raiders still suck. Some of the marquee match-ups this weekend include the Baltimore Ravens (3-2) visiting the undefeated (5-0) Minnehaha Vikings and Brett Favre, who despite what I wrote earlier, does *not* seem to be washed up. Far from it. My bad. How about the New York Football Giants, 5-0, traveling down to New Orleans (4-0) to take on the

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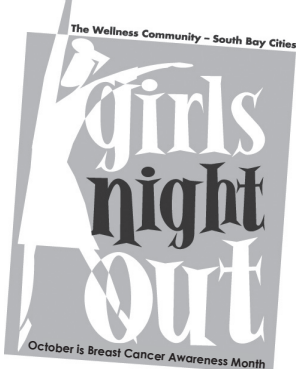
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00968-ROP01-0708