

# 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 warns 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 folks running the scam at Alcor have the

answer to that one.

So, according to this snippy snippet on the *New York Daily News* website: "Williams' head was (then) severed, and even used for batting practice by a technician trying to dislodge it from a tuna fish can." The tech apparently took some baseball-like swings at The Splendid Splinter's head with a monkey wrench. And someone is paying for this kind of treatment?

Here's what I'm thinking out loud... What had a better chance of happening: The Alcor folks figuring out how to revive the mutilated stiff who they are storing in their liquid nitrogen chambers, or the Angels beating the Red Sox in a playoff series? Just asking. Sorry, Ted.

Thanks to my "kinds sorda" editor, *BS*, for tipping me off to the creepy Williams story.

Here is an update on another column fave, *ESPN* hottie Erin Andrews. Seems that one Michael D. Barrett has been accused by the Feds of stalking Andrews as well as taking naughty photos of the reporter through a hotel room peephole, and then uploading said photos to the blasted Internet. Creeps, creepsand more creeps out there. And it ain't even Halloween yet, which happens to fall on a Saturday night in a little more than two weeks, and will probably include some foolish behavior by some sketchy folks. Amongst the folks to keep an eye on are... oh, hell, I might be on that list, so never mind.

All right, so both of the local MLB teams have advanced to their respective Championship Series. Just like predicted here. Kind of. Maybe I thought that the Cards' pitching would overwhelm the Dodgers, but I don't really remember. I believe that I wrote that I have good friends who bleed blue, like *DG*, and bandwagoners like *RJ the Golfer*. The Dodgers will have the home field advantage as they play host to the Phillies, and much more importantly, the Angels will be tussling with the way-too-rich N.Y. Yankees in a series that starts on Friday. In Nuevo York. First pitch from Lackey to Teixeira? Up and in, baby!

Start spreading the news, the Angels will be kicking some butt this weekend. Take one of the first two in the Bronx, and then... hell, who knows, that's why they play the games, right?

And after watching the D-fans, which I am one of, go crazy last week when Holliday let the ball bounce off of his privates, how can I *not* pick the Dodgers over the Phillies. Dodgers in six.

Gotta say that we in the City of the Angels (not called the City of Dodgers, did ya notice?) are blessed to have maybe the two best managers in the MLB plying their trade locally. Joe Torre seems to be a master motivator and communicator. Guys who don't get to play as much as they might like to don't seem to bitch and moan about it. Think the benched Orlando Hudson. And Mike Scioscia seems to keep the Halos on an even keel, always willing to "turn the page" when they suffer what seems like an end-of-the world loss.

As the locals enter their respective League Championship Series, couple things to keep in mind. Scioscia used to be a Dodger, both a player and coach. And Torre used to be an Angel, albeit as part of their broadcasting crew from 1985 to 1990.

And one more thing, fans. If I hear one more dunderhead say that the Angels aren't from Los Angeles, let me remind y'all again that the Angel franchise was born in L.A. as an American League expansion team, and that Los Dodgers carpet-bagged their way out here from Nuevo York in the late '50s. Just a reminder, for the sake of accuracy.

Angels in six. Let the fun begin!

# 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 prolific offense piloted by Drew Brees and the Saints? Or the Chicago Bears (3-1) venturing down to Atlanta to play the Falcons (3-1), who kicked the crapola out of my 49ers last Sunday.

Course you and I could waste some of our time watching the Philadelphia Eagles (3-1) land in Oakland's Black Hole to stomp on the pathetic 1-4 Raiders. Or my mighty St. Louis Lambs (0-5), who haven't won a game that counts in a full year, travel to Jacksonville to tangle with the resurgent Jaguars (2-3). Well, they were resurging until they lost 41-0 to *Amazing Amandas* Seahawks (2-3) last Sunday. And kudos to AA cuz she wanted to bet on the Hawks game, but demurred when I wasn't able to contact her until the Hawks were leading 20-0. What a sport she is! Bet that the Rams' game is a real hot ticket in Jacko'ville this weekend. Expect a "crowd" of about 20,000.

Fortunately, because of my weekend soccer duties (most popular sport in the world, folks) I have not had the misfortune of watching more than about 30 minutes of each of the Rams' five losses this season. And, luckily for me, the kid has two soccer matches on the pitch this Sunday, so I should be able to miss most of their next loss. Could DVR the game, I guess. Finally got hooked up and actually DVR'd a show, and was able to play it back at my convenience. Magic!

Any idiot can use the DVR dealie. And I just did.

Of course, I was too stupid to record the thrilling Angel come-from-behind victory over the BoSox last Sunday. Had to head out to Moorpark in the a.m. for another of the soccer victories, so I listened to the Angels' stunning ninth inning rally on el radio.

But back to the footballers. Another brilliant move that I made was signing up for the NFL football package from DirecTv. Cost me something in the neighborhood of \$300, I believe. Let's see, in five weeks I think that I have probably been home for about two hours worth of the Sunday games. And I don't know how much of the Giants' games my wife has perused, or if the kid has watched more than a few minutos of the Favre-less Packers.

Seems that whenever the opportunity arises, I head to a local research spot to take in the games on the multiple screens with the fans. Guess I could stay home and watch by my lonesome, but someone has got to get out and about and soak up the atmosphere, among other things, right?

And need to take a totally gratuitous shot at *LSU Randy*. Who probably won't be reading this cuz he doesn't get the paper in Redondo. How bout that JaMarcus Russell guy? Raiders looked good again last week, didn't they, mi amigo? •

