

Lakers to Loosen Purse Strings?

By Duane Plank

Right off the top, gotta make amends for a couple of misstatements in recent columns. First off, I had penned that the opening game for the Williamsport-bound Gundo 12-year-old All-Star baseball team was to take place at a certain field in the MB at a certain time. Turns out I had the wrong field and the wrong time. I'll take the blame, but I was working off a schedule that had been forwarded to me by the powers that be. Sorry for the bad info, but I trust that those who cared found the right time and place.

The other correction involves *Toni*, the Music Man. Mentioned the Music Man a couple of weeks ago, but misspelled his name. Spelled it *Tony*, which is how most guys spell it, I'll bet. Heck, Tony is my middle name. But the Music Man spells it Toni, which is a bit odd but none of my business, really. Sorry!

Received an e-mail last week from *NASCAR Guy*: "So now that someone was shot at the Angels' game in the parking lot, are we even by ghetto standards? I guess crime moved from Chavez Ravine to the O.C., or wherever the Angels are from this week."

The bitter e-mailer was referring to the incident that occurred last Wednesday night, when an off-duty policeman became involved in an altercation with two apparent knuckleheads. The knuckleheads, allegedly were hassling the cop and his wife and two small kids. But they picked on the wrong guy, who happened to be packing some heat, and the off-duty law enforcement man shot the perps.

It is quite true that I have occasionally chided some Dodger fans for their somewhat unruly behavior. But this is at least the second troubling incident involving Angel "fans" this young season, so I guess stupid behavior isn't confined to the supporters of the soon-to-be National League West champion Dodgers.

Very disappointing that you can't attend a baseball game without looking over your shoulder as you leave the stadium and enter the parking lot to find your car. I used to feel that way when I attended a Raider game at the Coliseum back in the day, so I quit going. As did a lot of folks; the Raider attendance in their final years in L.A. had dwindled to a paltry 40,000 or so per contest.

Last week in this riveting column we looked at what was ahead for our Lakers as they try to keep their team intact and prepare for another championship run. Yup, the Orlando Magic were dispatched less than three weeks ago, and already the wheels are turning in the Laker front office, with GM Mitch Kupchak and the rest of the Purple and Gold execs making plans to hold on to free agents Trevor Ariza, Lamar Odom and Shannon Brown.

The NBA free agency window opened yesterday, and the Lakers added a little extra cash to their arsenal when they sold two of their draft picks in last week's draft. They dealt the picks to the New York Knicks and the Miami Heat, and netted \$4.5 million in the deals. They also saved another \$1.7 million that they won't have to pay to the guy who they initially drafted in the number 29 slot, guard Toney Douglas, who is now property of the Knicks.

So will the Lakers be able to afford Ariza, Odom and Brown? Competing teams that are looking to weaken the Lakers budding dynasty, like the Detroit Pistons and the Portland Trailblazers, should be active in the free agent market, so it's doubtful that the Lakes will be able to keep all three without going way over budget.

They have already committed 74 million smackeros to the eight players under contract for the 2009/10 campaign, and don't want to be hit with what could amount to a nearly \$20-million luxury tax whammy if they resign the trio.

Sure, Laker owner Jerry Buss seems to



have a license to print money, what with the phenomenal success of the franchise, but Buss is a businessman, and smart businessmen don't throw cash around willy nilly.

We shall see how this plays out. Oh, and lest I forget, congrats to Lucky Luc Robitaille and his election to the NHL Hall-of-Fame, and the U.S. men's soccer team, who would have won last week's Confederations Cup had they not gone into a defensive shell and turtled against Brazil after racing out to a 2-0 lead. Oh well, I'm sure that their mommies told them that they tried real hard, and gave them an orange slice or two after the game. •

Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

I'll get the fun stuff out of the way right away. Now that I am old, having reached the 50th birthday milestone a few months ago, there are certain medical/physical things going on. Like guys are supposed to get a colonoscopy test, which I guess is when they take a look at your large colon and parts of your small bowel with a camera. Looking for colon cancer or other not so good things.

How they get the pictures, I can't say, cuz I went through the procedure last week, and they gave me some drug or something of the like...and I don't remember the procedure, which only took 15 minutes or so. That's what they say. Cause I was asleep. Maybe dreaming about ESPN's Erin Andrews. Did you see her covering the just-completed College World Series, captured by the LSU Tigers?

Okay, I know how they get the picture, but(t) if you already know what happens, why bore you, and if you don't know what happens, good for you.

Anyway, went through the procedure, in which they found nothing too dire, I believe. A polyp thingee was removed and sent to the medical gurus to have them figure out whether it was a good polyp or bad polyp. I'm betting it was a "good" polyp, and I won't have to worry about having another colonoscopy for many, many years.

So it looks good.

They wouldn't let me drive back home after the procedure, so thanks to my driver back to the mansion, who not only went out of her way to pick up my sorry butt after the surgery, but showed up with a cup of Joe, and then bought me a breakfast burrito once we returned to Gundo. Thanks, *Girl*. Above and beyond.

Needed the cup of coffee and the loaded burrito cuz when you prep for this procedure, you can't eat anything the day before. That doesn't go over too well with a dude who subsists on fries and nachos. And you can't drink coffee, of which I have about five cups of a day. Or Miller Lite, which may have been one of the reasons that I had postponed this relatively simple procedure twice.

You can drink water and Gatorade, or eat a Popsicle or two. Which I couldn't find in any of the local stores. Just wanted an old-fashioned Popsicle. Not one covered in chocolate or multi-this or multi-that. Just a Popsicle. Struck out, so I went home and had a couple of cans of broth, which were on the "allowed" list. And also had expiration dates sometime in the '90s, but I swilled 'em down. Still living, so all is well.

Oh, and the day before, you have to drink a gallon of this mixture that cleanses

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