

Frankly Plank

By Duane Plank

Was fortunate enough to attend the opening day MLB hardball festivities at Chavez Ravine for the second straight year, thanks to the fine folks at Network Logistics. Headed out to the 1:15 game at around 10:45 a.m., but because of a delay or two (someone forgot their suntan lotion) and about 57,000 cars clogging up the freeways and surface streets, finally arrived at our seats in the top of the first inning, just in time to see the AAA Giants be retired by Dodger starter Chad Billingsley.

Pretty much missed the opening festivities, which included a flyover by some cool looking B2 bomber, the unfurling of a huge American Flag on the playing field, and the release of 300 doves into the skies above the manicured diamond.

Actually, the bomber flew over our ride as we were reaching the outskirts of the parking lot, trying to find a safe spot amongst the red-and-blue cup swilling tailgaters. And hopefully none of the doves flew too low over the parking lot revelers, who, I'll bet, would have taken a pop at the birds with their handy-dandy BB gun, were they so armed.

We had fantastic seats just to the right and a few rows back of the Giants dugout. Local media icon newsreader Paul Moyer was seated a couple of rows in front of us, as were some music dudes, the Jonas Brothers. Not too keen on my Jonas Bros. music, but it was apparently a big deal to a lot of people, including one of the guys in our group, who contemplated hopping the fence in front of us so that he could approach and fawn over the teen idols.

But that didn't happen, maybe because it would have been somewhat embarrassing for a 40-something-year-old guy to stand in line with a bunch of 11-year-old girls and ogle the lads. Or maybe it was the menacing look of officer Rubio, who was stationed

directly in front of us, behind the fence, glaring intimidatingly at us, attempting to keep the peace.

I wasn't paying much attention to the so-called celebrities attending the game; as a professional columnist, I was doing my darndest to follow the riveting action on the field, as well as strike up a conversation with a very nice lady sitting right in front of us with her grandfathers. Or maybe one of the dudes was her husband? How the heck were we to know? Whoever was paying for the seats had some scratch; those duckets weren't cheap. Thanks again, Network Logistics guys!

Anyway, never did get to speak to the woman, who was smart enough to ignore our group. Or ignore me. And as for the action on the field, Los Dodgers kicked the daylights out of the Giants, 11-1. Left-handed fossil Randy Johnson, a five-time Cy Young Award winner, started on the hill for the team from the City by the Bay, and he was dispatched to the dugout in the Dodger fourth as the hometown boys tallied six runs to basically put the game away.

New Dodger second baseman Orlando Hudson became the first Dodger since Wes Parker in 1970 to hit for the coveted cycle when he tripled in the bottom of the sixth. Know what the cycle is, fans? You hit for the cycle, folks, when you single, double, triple and homer in the same game. See what you can learn when you put down that cell phone and spend a few moments reading? And I think O-Dog notched his stupendous feat in four consecutive at-bats, which is also something of a rarity. I say think because I was returning to my seat from a refreshment break when Hudson smacked his triple. Had heard the Dodgers slashed the beer price for a Dixie cup-sized brew to \$6! Which is true! Lordy, lordy.

Last week was the third opening day I have been fortunate enough to attend at Chavez Ravine. I must be a good luck charm, cuz the Blue are 3-0 in those openers. Saw the magical Fernando Valenzuela, filling in for the injured Jerry Reuss, shut out the Houston Astros 2-0 in the 1981 opener. I was working at the tennis club in Torrance at the time, and my boss asked me to go at the last minute. I'm sure I was a last-ditch choice, just like Valenzuela was, but it worked out pretty well for both of us.

And speaking of Fernando, reminded me of my grandmother Faist, who long ago went to Blue Heaven. She was pretty much confined to a wheelchair during the final years of her glorious life, but one of her favorite things to do in her twilight years was plant the old chair in front of the TV, put on her Dodger cap, toss down a Cubre Libre or two, and root for her Fernando.

Sad sight last week watching the Angels lose a tough 3-2 game to the surprising Seattle Mariners. The loss wasn't that unexpected; the Angels are in a wheel-spinning funk at

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Lakers on the Way to Playoff Round Two?

By Duane Plank

By the time you get the pleasure of perusing this column, our Lakers should be well on their way to dispatching the thugs from Utah in round one of the NBA's Western Conference playoffs. Sunday's game one, played at Staples, resulted in a walkover for the homeboys.

Kobe tallied 24 in the Lakers 113-100 opening game victory. My man Trevor Ariza, who I was touting months ago as a big-time difference maker, added 21 points on 8-for-10 from the field shooting. Shannon Brown, who is now the first guard off the bench for coach Phil Jackson, was three-for-three from behind the arc. One hundred percent. Much like the U.S. Navy sharpshooters versus the pirates last Sunday.

The Jazz actually made somewhat of a game of it in the second half, outscoring the placid Lakers by nine points in the second half. Jackson wasn't overjoyed with the win, but he has been there, done that, many times. "I don't even know if we can say we prevailed after that second half effort," said the veteran coach, who used to look a lot like Colonel Sanders before he found his razor earlier this season. "It wasn't a coach's delight, that's for sure."

Game three is on tap tonight in Utah, with game four set for Saturday at 6 p.m. or so. It seems that the NBA office, which has been justly criticized for stringing out the playoff dates in prior seasons, is making the effort to play the series in a reasonable time frame. Game five is back at Staples on Monday, and if a game six is needed, it will be back to Utah on Thursday.

The Lakers, if they are able to navigate their way through the Western Conference side of the draw, may have seen the road to the NBA championship toughen a bit, with the news that Boston Celtic superstar Kevin Garnett, nursing a bum right knee, may miss the entire playoffs. At least that is what Celtic coach Doc Rivers said. "We are getting ready to move on without him," said Rivers, whose team, seeded second in the East, has drawn the Chicago Bulls in round one. And already lost game one in the series at home, to presumably make the Boston fans a bit uneasy.

Of course, Rivers could be sending a message to his team, the message being, "Don't expect or rely on Garnett." And the superstar center could return sooner than later, but who knows? But if Garnett stays on the sideline, will the defending champs have enough cojones to advance and put up a decent fight against King James and the Cleveland Cavaliers in the conference final? Part of the presumed advantage the Lakers would have over the Cavs, the theory goes, is that Cleveland would have to survive a bruising series with the Celts to advance to the

final. While the Lakers would waltz through their side of the draw and arrive at the final series fit, tan and rested. I guess we'll see how this plays out in the next few months.

Maybe Bostonians should turn their attention to their hockey team, which seems to be in the process of dispatching Montreal in round one of the chase for the Stanley Cup.

And in those puck playoffs, the underdog Ducks of Anaheim are tussling with the top-seeded San Jose Sharks. The Ducks captured the first two games of the series in San Jose, presumably shocking the hockey establishment. Game four is set for tonight in Anaheim. Tickets may still be available. Did you know this playoff series is only the second time that two California teams have squared off in pursuit of the Cup? The only other time two teams from the Golden Bankrupt State met in the playoffs, way back in 1969, the LA Kings beat up on the long-departed California Golden Seals. Imagine that, the Kings winning a playoff series.

Swimsuit model and part-time racer Danica Patrick and the rest of the IndyCar drivers were in Long Beach last weekend, competing in the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach. Patrick finished fourth. Mr. Ashley Judd was the winner. Bueno. Quick, can you name another IndyCar driver? Didn't think so.

Well, John Madden bashers, you won't have the old guy to kick around come next football season. The 73-year-old video game salesman hung up his microphone, retiring from the broadcasting booth after a 30-year career yelling "Smash, kaboom" and other inanities at a generally fawning public.

For the ex-Raider coach, it was time to move on to a slower-paced lifestyle. "You know at some point that you have to do this—I got to that point," said the much-lampooned broadcaster.

What will Madden miss when the NFL regular season kicks off in early September? Well, for one, he will miss talking about the pro debuts of the kids who are selected this Saturday when the NFL holds its annual draft.

The pitiful Detroit Lions, who proudly finished the 2008 season 0-16, are on the clock, and most draft "experts" tab Georgia quarterback Mathew Stafford to be the first pick. USC QB Mark Sanchez is rated by most prognosticators as the second signal caller to come off the board, with different mock drafts having the strong-armed 6-foot-3, 225-lb. righty going as early as pick number three to the Kansas City Chiefs, or as late as pick 17 to the New York Jets.

My St. Louis Rams, who were so pathetic last year that they are drafting second, seem to be looking for an offensive tackle, which could lead them to select one Eugene Monroe from Virginia. Or maybe Alabama's Andre Smith. Both dudes are mammoth offensive

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Tuesday		
5:30-6:45pm	Vin Yoga - All Level	Vin
7:00-8:15pm	Vinyasa Flow - Level 1	Leticia
Wednesday		
6:00-7:15pm	Vinyasa Flow - All Level	Betty
5:30-6:45pm	Hatha Basics - Level 1-11	Andy
7:00-8:15pm	Power - All Level	Theresa
Thursday		
5:30-6:45pm	Power - All Level	Theresa
7:00-8:15pm	Beginner Hatha	Andy
Friday		
6:00-7:15pm	Vinyasa Flow - All Level	Betty
6:45-7:30pm	Vinyasa Flow - All Level	Alex
Saturday		
9:30-10:45am	Hatha Basics - All Level	Andy
Sunday		
6:00-7:15pm	Hatha Basics - All Level	Cathy
9:30-10:45am	Power - All Level	Theresa
5:30-6:45pm	Beginner Hatha	Andy

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