

The Weekly Log, 3/27/09

by Joe Mulder

For years I've been warning anyone who will listen (and that's an increasingly smaller group, to be sure) about the dangers of ugly sports uniforms. They laughed at me. They said I was crazy. "Who cares about ugly sports uniforms, Joe?" they all would shout. And then they'd laugh at me.

Well, who's laughing now?

Last week, an Illinois high school basketball team was assessed a technical foul before a state tournament game. The reason? Illegal uniforms. The opposing team made one of two free throws, and North Lawndale College Prep began the game trailing 1-0. They lost 66-65.

Now obviously if the technical foul hadn't been called the entire game would have unfolded differently, in an "a butterfly farts in Brazil, setting off a chain of events that causes a major traffic accident in London" sort of way. Therefore, we can't really infer that North Lawndale lost the game solely because of the point they gave up before the opening tip. Still, there's a certain poetic justice to the final score, no?

What was the issue? Apparently, the National Federation of State High School Associations has rules governing uniforms, which are obviously necessary. One rule states that he torso of a basketball jersey "must be a solid color and that side stripes must center vertically below the armpit and be no more than four inches wide" (that wording is from an article I read on the game, and may not reflect the exact wording of the actual rule). North Lawndale's jerseys had a stupid wide stripe that started at the front of the armpit and ran down and back; basically, if you were looking at a profile of a North Lawndale player who had his hands raised, the stripe would look like a very wide version of the fifth, diagonal tick mark you see in a group of five when somebody's keeping track of something. You know, how you make four vertical lines, and then for "five" you make a diagonal mark through the four? Like what you'd see a disheveled, bearded guy carving into a stone prison wall in a *New Yorker* cartoon? Like that.

"So, you don't like those jerseys, Joe, but other people might," you might say.

"Yes, little kids and stupid people," I'd reply.

"Okay, fair enough. That's indisputably true," you'd say. "But where's the harm? What are the consequences?"

Well, until last week, my only answer would be that the consequences were a) the potential alienation of smarter fans, who are also likelier (present company excluded, unfortunately) to be richer fans, who would buy more of your stuff if it wasn't so ugly, b) a massive waste of time and resources spent designing and marketing a new uniform look

that will clearly have to be scrapped once everyone realizes how silly they all look and design trends revert back to the more traditional, which they always do without exception, and c) the simple shame of having had to go around looking like Charles Barkley in that mid-'90s Philadelphia 76ers "star dazzle" outfit, or looking like anyone who played for the Islanders during the mid-'90s, and knowing that you once looked like that, and that no matter how much you wish you could, you can't go back and "un-wear" that uniform.

I mean, really, every time we see highlights of John Elway winning a Super Bowl, we have to look at those horrible Broncos uniforms with huge orange parenthesis on the sides of them (the ones the Broncos are still wearing, incidentally; the ridiculous uniform trend is holding out longer in the NFL that it usually does in most leagues). There's nothing we can do about that. That's how John Elway will look winning the Super Bowl... forever.

But so what, right? Those consequences are bearable, aren't they?

Well, now somebody has paid a real-world price for embracing stupid uniforms. North Lawndale College Prep willingly chose uniforms that were not only ugly but so ugly as to be against the regulations of the sport, and as a result they gave up a point in a state semifinal game they would up losing by one.

An overreaction? Well, not according to Illinois High School Association assistant executive director over boys basketball Kurt Gibson, who I say should immediately be installed as President, Vice President, Treasury Secretary and commissioner of all college and professional sports. He says he warned North Lawndale about their uniforms several times, and finally chose to enforce the rule at the state tournament because the IHSA has more direct jurisdiction over the event. It sounds like this guy had a bug up his ass about uniform minutiae and, in a classic power trip move, waited until an important moment to blindside a team that had little reason to suspect such a penalty would ever be assessed. Good for him!

Maybe now people will listen. You hear me, Tennessee Titans? Buffalo Bills? You hear me?

Good.

I've always thought that the one "American Idol" contestant who would have won any season she'd been on was Fantasia Barrino; I'm not sure how much success she's had post-"Idol," but she was the best contestant they ever had.

Well, the bar has been raised. Adam Lambert might be the best person at anything, ever. Clearly afraid of him, "American Idol" has been trying to throw him off with their

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various "theme" weeks; last week was Grand Ol' Opry, and this week was Motown, while Adam Lambert's ideal theme week would be Gay European Feel-Good Death Metal. Still, he wasn't deterred; he did an Indian-themed version of Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire" that you were sure for the entire 90 seconds was going to stop being outrageously good and start being dreadful only it never did, and then this week he came out looking like a 25-year-old Kurt Russell dressed as a 1950s game show host and completely tore Smokey Robinson's "Tracks Of My Tears" a new asshole, in a good way. This guy cannot be stopped; I strongly advise you to check him out on "Idol" while you still can, before the show ends and he never does anything else you'd ever want to hear (which is my experience as someone who's watched "American Idol" since midway through the first season).

Good news: you can start watching "Dollhouse." I didn't say anything before, because it's a Joss Whedon show and I owe him more than I could ever repay (my two-year-old sings along to the Dr. Horrible music, for heaven's sake!), so I wasn't going to write about how it was bad. So I didn't write about it for a while.

But evidently Joss Whedon and "Dollhouse" star Eliza Dushku told everyone who would listen that last Friday's episode was when the show finally got good, and they were right. It may never quite approach "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," "Angel" or "Firefly" (then again, it might), but I was ready to give up on "Dollhouse" before "Man On the Street," and now I'm in. At least for the rest of Season 1. I still think the entire premise of the show is shaky, but I'm more than willing to believe that such thoughts will be proven wrong, because they have a plan.

At least I'll be sticking around long enough to see.
