



PREMIUM PODCASTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

BLEAV Sports with Fred and the Fantastics IS THERE A CLOUD OVER THE DODGER CLUBHOUSE?



Hey everybody, it's that time again, Fred and the Fantastics, BLEAV and on PodClips, anything and everything in sports, with 128-year-old Art Sorce, with attorney Laura Snoke, and with Paul Skenes' PR Director, our one and only Mark Mancini. You can email us, sportsfred@aol.com, sportsfred@aol.com. All right, I want to talk about the Dodgers; I'll tell you why. Folks, we're taping this at 1 o'clock on Friday afternoon, local time, in Southern California. In a few hours, the Dodgers will face the Detroit Tigers at 3:40 Pacific Time in Detroit. The problem is, Skubal is pitching. Why is that a problem? Well, he's not going on his usual five days of rest, or six days of rest. He pitched on Monday, which indicates to me the Dodgers have problems. They've lost three in a row. Laura, what do you think about your Dodgers?

Well, I was all set to gloat with Mark over the sweep of the Pirates, which was predicted in the opposite direction, as I recall, by Mr. Mancini, but then the Dodgers proceeded to lose three in a row to the Braves. I'm just wondering if this whole debacle with the sale of the Lakers and the Walter financial concerns if that's not affecting the team. These guys are people, right? They're not just automatons out there playing baseball. It just seems like the team is really kind of dispirited and not kind of all clicking on all cylinders, and maybe that's part of the problem, that there's a lot of this uncertainty as to who the owner is. And a couple of the players, including Shohei Ohtani and Freddie Freeman, I think, have clauses in their contracts that allow them to opt out if Walter's not the owner.

Right.

I think, I mean, you comment on that, Art, because you were a professional player. But it seems like that would be affecting the morale of the team.

Here's what happened in my situation. My freshman year at USC, we won our first eight games. We were number one in the nation. We went to Cal, Strawberry Canyon, to play the Joe Roth, Chuck Bonsey, Mike White, Cal team. And before the Saturday game on Thursday, John McKay announced he was leaving. He was going to Tampa Bay, taking the money, and all the assistant coaches were looking for jobs. All the players were trying to figure out who the next coach was going to be, what was going on. And we wound up losing four consecutive games at the end of

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the year there, before winning the Bicentennial Liberty Bowl. But I noticed exactly what you said, Laura. People started to lose confidence, they started to figure out what their, you know, what the future was going to look like, and, you know, when they asked McKay about it many years later, he said it was the stupidest thing he ever did, because it was one of his best teams, and he felt like he let the guys down. But he wanted everybody to have time to be able to go out and get jobs, which I understand. But when you're 19, 20 years old, and you see things like that happen, even if you're 25, 27 years old, like a Freddie Freeman, or a Shohei Otani, or a Yamamoto, and you see things that were really smooth start to kind of come apart, I think it has to impact your psyche, and I think that's a valid point that you made there, Laura.

Mark, you're not a Dodger fan, so your comments from the outside - what's wrong with it?

Well, I think the big thing is, is we've seen this play out numerous times, and they've got away with a couple of World Series, but the Achilles heel has always been the bullpen, and they've never addressed it. You got to go back to Kenley Jansen, maybe Eric Gagne when they had closers; you can't count on Edwin Diaz. Tanner Scott is a different guy than he was in Miami and San Diego. I don't know, maybe the bright lights in the big city have got to him, but it's a team that built a big lead in the division, and now is worried as hell. That if they fall in the third seed, they're going to get a hot team in that first round. And I don't think these teams that are playing for their playoff lives are too worried about coming to Dodger Stadium and taking two out of three.

You know, I agree with you about the bullpen; I think at this point it's horrible. But even more than that, I think it's lack of speed, lack of ability to steal a base, and lack of stopping the opponent from stealing a base.

The stats you mentioned earlier on Sports Overnight America, Fred, the stats about double plays, about moving runners along, all those kinds of things - those are amazing stats that you brought up.

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You want to know the one thing, and you know, I think the one guy they're losing there that was instrumental in the clubhouse, and we don't even know when he's coming back, he kind of kept them together, like the glue, is Will Smith. And I think that's the key right there.

But even with Will Smith behind the plate, you take a look at the percentage of throwing out base runners; it's very, very low, and I think that goes to the coaching staff. I think I could steal on Glasnow; that's number A. B, I think I could also steal on Snell, possibly. I think Laura could steal on Snell, but I know I could steal on Glasnow. I think that goes back to the coaching staff. Laura, I mean, Art, if everybody can run on every pitch that the Dodgers have, doesn't that seem it goes to the top?

Yeah, it does. It really does. And you know, maybe we've got to talk to Mark Pryor about working with these guys, holding runners on. I'm not infatuated with the rule that says if you throw twice over the first base, you know, that to me, I can understand, okay, sometimes it gets really, really slow, but you know, you've got to be able to play defense in that. What did they say originally about baseball? Defense, speed, defense up the middle. Right now, you know, they're lacking a catcher. Pages being out, that doesn't help them at all.

And here's the other thing,

You know, Mookie's having a really bad year. That's not helping them.

You know, when an American League pitcher comes to the National League, there's a big adjustment. We're starting to see that with Skubal a lot. His ERA before that Pirate Series was well over four. You look at a guy like Sonny Gray that went from St. Louis to Boston. Total domination, because the National League game is a lot different than the American League game.

And the National League, you can't win on a fastball alone. These guys are fastball hitters. For years, the American League was known as the Breaking Ball League, Shanker League. When you go from the American League to the National League and you're a fastball pitcher, unless you're

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PREMIUM PODCASTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Sandy Koufax or Bob Gibson, or Oral Hershiser, one of the elite pitchers, Misorowski, you know, it's a tough, that's a tough road to hoe. So I think Skubal has got to get his stuff together, got to get used to it.

And he's going on short days off, so I don't quite understand it. Obviously, there's problems as far as the Dodgers right now, but I think it does go back to the wall.

I think they have too many starters. I think they have too many starters. I looked at the list. Skubal, Yamamoto, Snell, Ohtani, Glasnow, Wroblewski, Sasaki, Sheehan, and Lauer. The last time I checked, that's nine guys. Can't one of those guys be a closer?

Right now, Sheehan's in Oklahoma City, Wroblewski's not getting anybody out, Lauer's basically just a middle guy. You know, you know, he's not going to overpower anybody. And now the finger problem with Shishai; so the bottom line is, Sasaki. So it's like, they don't have that.

The guy that was closing there, that thing that happened to him, and I feel bad, was Vesia. Vesia just hasn't been quite the same, and rightfully so. I mean, you lose a kid that's stillborn and stuff like that. But you know, he's just having a tough go of it. If anybody needs an excuse, it would be him.

Well, I think, you know, they're just not, they're not executing. I mean, to leave, I think they left guys that got the bases loaded with no outs, and they had the bases loaded with one out. And they didn't score a run. I mean, and the only run they did score was through, because of a walk. So they're just not, they're just not playing good baseball. And they're not playing like a championship team, for sure. I think they've got enough talent; they can pull it out. I mean, all those nine pitchers, some of those guys can come out of the bullpen, for sure. I mean, Sasaki came out of the bullpen last year in the World Series, too.

He saved the World Series.

And he played great, pitched great.

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PREMIUM PODCASTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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I think we got to get there, though, right?

Let me throw this around. Third base, Muncy, very slow. Shortstop, Mookie, no longer fast. Edmonds average at second base. Freeman can't run a lick. Hernandez should not be playing in left field. I honestly, guys, the only two guys on this team who can run is Ohtani, they're not going to run him.

Well, I think so,

And Alex Thomas, who they picked up. I play against right-handed pitchers. I honestly would play Alex Thomas. Take Hernandez out, put Pages back, gives them a little bit additional speed. Right now, they might be the slowest team in baseball, and I think that matters.

You know what, Fred? Real fast. It used to be, in order to beat the Dodgers, if you had them down, you've got to put your foot firmly on their throat. Teams like the Pirates and some of these other teams just haven't been able to put them out because they know they can come back on them. But the two series in the last month that have shown me how to beat the Dodgers is what the Brewers threw at them and what Atlanta just did to them. They just went right after them and didn't let up. And especially the Brewers.

Well, I'm,

Let's take a break right here on Fred and the Fantastics, on BLEAV and on PodClips.

Hey, everybody, back on Fred and the Fantastics. With Art, with Laura, and with Mark. Let's talk some collegiate stuff. I'm sick and tired of my basketball coach at UCLA. Art, how long are we going to be stuck with Mick Cronin? Seriously, as kids transfer, and transfer, and transfer more?

I don't know. I'm all excited about the new football coach at UCLA, Bob Chesney, and the fact that football season,

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PREMIUM PODCASTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Who?

College football, finally starts tomorrow. Bob Chesney, from Old Dominion, had a great record, followed Frank Cignetti. He's the new coach at UCLA. They're saying wonderful things about him. But, you know, to go back to your guy, Mook, or whatever you call him, Mick Cronin,

Mook, Mook.

He's to me, he's the wrong guy. Yeah, Mook, he's the wrong guy at the wrong time, at the wrong school. He should be at Cincinnati or Xavier, somewhere in the Midwest, where he can yell at guys and do his thing, and take no accountability. That was our word of the day, right, Mark? Accountability?

Yeah.

This guy takes no accountability. But, you know, I just, again, they're paying the guy almost nine, ten million dollars. Martin Jarmond, I'm not a big fan of his. We've always discussed that, or Guerrero before him. But, you know, being an old UCLA fan as a kid, I want to see their basketball program always do well. I want to see their football program do well. I've always rooted for all the L.A. teams. But, you know, I just don't see it happening with Cronin. In X's and O's, they say, the experts say he's a good coach. I just don't like the way he deals with the kids.

Laura, you're a UCLA fan. What do you think about Mick Cronin's coaching talent and the ability to shut his mouth and not scream at the kids?

Well, he doesn't have a lot of coaching talent, and he should shut his mouth. He's a terrible motivator. And he never takes any responsibility for anything, even when his decisions caused the team to lose the game. And they just lost a couple of really good players to the transfer portal.

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They're starting guards.

Yeah. And then he got an extension. So I don't know. You asked earlier how long we have to put up with him. I think he got a five-year extension or a three-year extension.

May 2025, he got a five-year extension.

Yeah, I mean, it's just outrageous and disappointing.

Can I ask a question? Are they filling Pauley Pavilion?

No.

How's their attendance at Pauley Pavilion home games?

Not 100%.

That says a lot to me.

Well, here's the problem.

I remember when that was the hardest ticket to get. That was a harder ticket to get to the Lakers. Go ahead, Mark.

They're not filling the Rose Bowl either. And, you know, a big school with a lot of tradition behind it, I'm very surprised UCLA goes after these kind of middle-of-the-pack type of coaches. When they had a chance to get a guy like Christobal out of Miami when he was in Oregon. I mean, get a guy like that to turn your program. Why are we getting these, I don't want to say C-rated kind of coaches? But you brought up this guy coming in from Old Dominion. Half the country doesn't even know where Old Dominion is, Artie.

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Well, I'll tell you what. Curt Cignetti put Old Dominion on the map, and he did pretty good in three years at the University of Indiana. They had never even sniffed the Big Ten.

What I'm trying to say is,

Mark my words, Mark Mancini. Mark my words. Bob Chesney will turn this program around. I'm not saying they're going to beat Ohio State. Not saying they're going to beat Michigan. But they're going to be an 8-9 win team again. In college football, this guy's for real.

Art, before we go, what about Patterson's defense at USC?

I'm excited. You know, he hasn't coached in a few years. He seems to be really, really gung-ho. He loves the guys and the guys love him. He's got them running to the ball, Fred, which is all defense. Defense comes down to effort. If you can get your team to run to the ball, four, five, six, seven guys in on tackles and play hard, good football coupled with Lincoln Riley's offense, you know, USC could surprise. They've got a tough schedule, though. You've got to play Ohio State. You know, you've got to play Indiana. You've got to play at Penn State in the whiteout game. Well, that's a real fun thing in the newspapers around here, with all the kids at Penn State getting in trouble for shenanigans off the campus. But, you know, a whiteout game. I thought that was pretty funny, actually, but we'll let it go.

Fred, I'm going to throw it here on the big national stage. He's got the UCLA coach. I say John Harbaugh wins more games than the guy at UCLA, John Harbaugh with the Giants. I'll buy you lunch.

Oh, really? With a quarterback like Dart? Come on. They should have won nine games last year. They blew them at the end. They won six games. They blew five games. The Giants are gonna be just fine, or you wouldn't have taken that job.

Laura, how's your weekend of sports? Talk about it.

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PREMIUM PODCASTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Well, I'm looking forward to watching college football. Although, as we know from the recent statistics coming out with CTE, it's kind of, you know, a little bit bittersweet. But, yeah, I'm looking forward to watching college football.

It's really scary, Laura.

Yeah, it's scary. I think that, you know, the NFL has tried, and I think the college game, they've tried to make things safer. But I was just talking to one of the – we're doing construction on our house, and I was just talking to one of the contractors about it, and he said, you know, we like it. It's blood lust. It's in our DNA. So, you know, maybe that's true. I don't know. I love football, so I'm not afraid to admit it, although I have some moral ambiguity about it.

One thing that intrigues me, you guys, one thing that intrigues me about the CTE issue is, you know, you have to be dead for them to find out what happened in your brain. There isn't any other way of checking, you know, with all the modern-day science.

Yeah, apparently there's some research that they're trying to establish a test that will be able to evaluate it before the person dies. But it's not quite yet ready for primetime.

But I will make this case. I will make this case - before he dies, you ready? RFK Jr. has CTE. All right. For Art. For Laura. For Mark.

I think it's the worm.

For Mario. Thank you guys and gals for listening to Fred and the Fantastics on BLEAV and PodClips. Bye, everybody.

If that's all he has, he's going to be fine.

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