

Philequity Corner (October 3, 2011)

By ARSamson

At a moment in my life when the sky is blue

The last game of the season for the Blue Eagles is not just about one game. It is the culmination of all the past games and the lessons learned from those, the heartbreak of a drubbing and the missed sweep being stopped in the last elimination game chalking the record at 13-1 and the fire that disappointment lit in the belly of the team in what Coach Norman calls a blessing in disguise and then the just accomplished and much sweeter mini-sweep of the best-of-three finals, 2-0. The record of wins and losses thus ended at 16-1, including the win over UST. The buzzer sounded on the final score of 82-69 and then it was suddenly the end of the journey, the success of the quest, the beckoning of the bonfire, the answered prayer, a birthday gift, the singing of the school hymn (now all is still, where Loyola's colors fly), the screaming euphoria of the blue multitude for once not shouting in rhythm, the dénouement, the conclusion, the rolling of the credits, the end of the movie, the confetti, the announcement of the thanksgiving mass at the Gesu, and of course, yes...the fourth championship or that indefinable concoction of a word: four-peat, which rhymes with oh-yes-this-is-it in what is called an imperfect rhyme, also known as bad or verse.

The conversations at the start of the game after the brewed coffee with Friend S, included when the third game, if necessary, would be scheduled as if people wanted to clear their calendars for the supposed tiebreaker, whether Monday or is it Tuesday? I already declared to all and sundry, including an incredulous Friend A that I wasn't going to watch a Game 3, since it won't happen and is as impossible as finding a stray unicorn in La Mesa Dam after the game-postponing Pedring. He seemed to take out his trusty mental diary to record my words and looked at his watch to check the time I said this (twenty six minutes before game time with the Ateneo team mysteriously still in the dugout as the Tamaraws were already warming up in full force) holding my feet to the fire with--are you serious? I said that just to be sure I keep that promise, I have made unbreakable appointments for Monday already like Ulysses tying himself to the mast to keep from throwing himself to the sea when he heard the sirens, or a dieter that clears the cupboard of junk food to make sure he is not tempted. Anyway, that issue was now academic. I must confess that I probably would have relented and bought some potato chips at the convenience store. But who's to know? There was to be no game 3. But yes, I would have really skipped the mythical Game 3...I think.

The two games on the finals had an identical ending score for the Blue Eagles at 82. Both games seemed to have come from one template. Again as in many other games, it was the third quarter that seemed to wake up the testosterone of the Alpha male, and signal an earnest desire to crush the adversary recalling the order of Maximus to his Roman troops in "Gladiator"--upon my signal, unleash hell. The 22-9 scoring in favor of the Blue Eagles showed a frenzied offensive which recorded a 68% shooting clip as well as a stingy defense which would have allowed only 7 points if the last second foul on the Tams was let go.

Still, this game had a different complexion from the first one.

The bench points totaled 24 out of the 82 points lowering the ratio of starters to bench points from 7:1 in game one to 2.4:1. This production was in critical periods when the game seemed to be still hoping for a Monday or Tuesday schedule. Juami sizzled with 11 points in a dazzling 5 out of 7 shooting performance, as if assuring the blue faithful that the next season is still in good hands and...ok let's just enjoy this 74th season for a bit.

While the first-half score ended almost in a tie as in the first game (33-33), this second one had the Tams slightly ahead at 35-36. They were the ones that rallied from a 10-point deficit to close the gap and then lead slightly. As forebodings went, the half-time break was quiet with the jinx brigade seeing a pattern here. Here's how the logic went. If the Tams were the ones that took the second quarter with a scoring of 18-12, would they not then go on to win the game as the Blue Crew did in game 1 when they had a 19-14 second quarter? The answer is the same as the one about whether there is life in Mars, "no". Well, maybe they will eventually find life Martians doing a break dance, but so what?

The eponymous line (I hope by now you don't have to run to the dictionary to check what that adjective means) is from the 1969 song in a movie musical, "Goodbye, Mister Chips". In the movie, the song "Fill the World with Love" is sung by a boy's choir with Petula Clark playing the role of the professor's wife in a convocation and who also made the song "Downtown" famous, taking the dominant vocals. The movie is about a devoted professor whose late wife is a showgirl played by Petula. The song is supposed to be the school hymn. It's not one that is performed much in karaoke bars but the lines are quite moving. "and the blessing I shall ask will remain unchanging, to be brave and strong and true, and to fill the world with love my whole life through". The Richard Harris version is the one I recommend if you must check the You Tube for this quirky trivia. For the younger set who did not see the now departed Richard Harris in "A Man Called Horse", he was the same actor who played the role Dumbledore in the early Potter movies. What does a school song featured in a 1969 musical movie also with Peter O'Toole showing a lifelong devotion to a school and its traditions and songs have to do with the Blue Eagles winning its fourth championship? Everything.

Let's not forget the honors given to the Blue Eagles. Rookie of the Year to Kiefer, mythical five center to Greg who got an unmentioned second place on the MVP statistical race and ceded that honor to another player in another team that did not make it to the Final 4 and who liked to improve his numbers by making many of his points in lost games when the crowd was thinning and heading for the exits but hey we respect statistics, they're supposed to tell a story although it's also true that not everything that can be counted really counts, and of course the finals MVP to Nico. Okay, that kind of MVP lives up to its name of valuable, translated as helping your team win the championship. We also bid goodbye with hearts full of gratitude and affection to the graduating trio of Kirk, Bacon, and Eman.

So, it's the bonfire then. It's this coming Saturday. It's hard to break routine. We're not trying too hard in that department. It's fourth of habit.

Loyola's colors fly again and the sky is cerulean.

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