

ZOMBIE TRASH

Because it has been confirmed that the Zombie Apocalypse is upon us, the task of taking out this weekend's trash has been pushed onto me as the least senior (and most expendable) of the Emptywheel blogging team. Well, maybe it's not just the zombies. It turns out that bmaz gave himself quite a scare last weekend bragging so much on Dallas, only for his beloved Arizona State Forkers to nearly lose their super regional [at home!] to Mr. EW's new crush the Louisiana Lafayette Ragin Cajuns. Now he wants to avoid a new jinx this weekend. Anyway, the 2009 video above shows that we've been onto this zombie thing for a long time here in Gainesville. Why yes, I do know those guys. The lead singer is a respected Professor of Chemistry during the day and the keyboardist is one of the first people I met here in Gainesville. He was my primary attorney during most of the time I was a "businessman" here. Oh, and the blond guitar player is a bar owner/music promoter.

The zombies of last year's incredibly bad umpiring returned to the Women's College World Series (you can catch up on the current situation here) last night. I had the Forkers and Ducks on in the background while doing a few other things and smiled as the Ducks put up a run in the top of the first. But when I looked up a bit later, it was in the third inning and the Forkers were ahead 1-0. WTF? I rewound the action on my DVR only to find that the umpires have decided they have to help the Forkers again this year and they took away Oregon's first run on a very shaky call that the Duck left third base too soon on a sacrifice fly. Earlier in the day, Oklahoma looked very formidable against South Florida, who is subbing for Florida after their lockerroom brawl just before the first regional game here resulted in three starters being ejected from the program. The locals here in Gainesville seem to be supporting Tim Walton for "taking control of the situation" but I have

serious doubts about his abilities if he allowed things to get to such a sorry state at such a critical time in the season. I'm also a bit biased and think that women should be head coaches on women's teams.

My prediction is that this year's series will come down to Alabama and the Forkers, with a chance that the home crowd could help the Sooners to be in the mix, too. I jumped on the "A train" as soon as Florida was eliminated, backing Bama and their star pitcher Jackie Traina. I found out last night that my wife says she just can't do that because Traina looks too much like Escobedo. Yes, we dislike Dallas Escobedo and her gifts from the umpires that much in this household. [Please, nobody tell my wife that Vols pitcher Ivy Renfroe reminds me a lot of a taller version of who I was dating just before I met her...]

The NCAA men are two weeks behind the women, meaning that today is "opening day" for the field of 64. The top eight seeds are guaranteed of hosting super regionals if they win the regionals they are hosting. That list is topped at number one by...The Florida Gators!

There was a bit of squawking here in Gainesville when the brackets were announced, because even though the Gators are the number one seed, their regional is paired with the regional hosted by North Carolina State and the Wolfpack were one of the last contenders eliminated for the number 8 national seed that eventually went to defending two-time champion (oh, how it hurts to say that) South Carolina. As you can see, the NCAA's RPI has NC State at number 10, but their road record is atrocious, at 10-11, so they shouldn't pose much threat if they survive Vanderbilt in their regional. But that is the other reason for the squawking here. Vandy is one of the hottest teams in the SEC right now, handing the Gators both of their losses in the SEC tournament last week. In the second loss, in Saturday's semifinal game, Gator closer Austin Maddox became a zombie incapable of turning his

head to look at runners on base. He gave up seven (yes, 7!) stolen bases in the inning, including an incredibly rare triple steal, when Vandy sent all three runners with the bases loaded, including the steal of home. Gator catcher Mike Zunino, who is expected to be drafted as high as number three overall in next week's MLB draft, did manage to throw out one runner at second during an attempted double steal of second and third during that inning or Maddox would have given up eight steals.

I do wonder though, since neither Gator Coach Kevin O'Sullivan or Zunino ever went out to the mound to calm Maddox during this meltdown, and neither of them even sent a signal for Maddox to throw the ball to a base (he didn't make a single throw to hold a runner as far as I can remember), if maybe the Gators had decided they had accomplished enough in the tourney and wanted Sunday off.

Should both Florida and South Carolina advance to Omaha, the bracket says they would face off in their first games there. Other teams to watch are LSU and an incredibly hot Mississippi State team. [Edit: This post was written before the early games of the day were played. I'm now back from the early Gainesville game and see that Mississippi State lost to a very good Samford team in the early game in Tallahassee. MSU is a very tough team who can play well with their backs to the wall, so I still say watch out for them.] Outside the SEC, I guess UCLA and Stanford bear watching. I'm not at all convinced that Baylor is worthy of their high ranking and high seed and also wonder a bit about Oregon's high status. Florida State is stumbling into the big dance, having gone 0-3 in the ACC tournament. That 0-3 mark also matches their record against the Gators this year. If Austin Maddox emerges from zombie mode and Karston Whitson regains a bit of his best pitching from last year, look for the Gators to go far. Word is they haven't played their best ball yet and they are determined to do that now.

I understand that the guys who get paid for basketball are moving along in their playoffs. I actually caught a good portion of the Thunder opening a big can of whoopass on the Spurs last night. With the series now at 2-1 in favor of San Antonio, that series will be quite entertaining to watch. On the other side though, we have the geriatric Celtics facing off with the dysfunctional Miami Heat. My attitude is "anybody but Miami" in the NBA, but I hold out little hope the Celts can keep them out of the finals. However, both the Spurs and Thunder show flashes of brilliant team play, so either would make for a very fun final to watch.

Okay, unleash the real Zombies:

[youtube]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5IRI4oH>
KNU[/youtube]