

## The Weekly Log, 4/3/09

by Joe Mulder

I'm pleased to report that Uncle Ned Packers Fan is alive and well.

Let me explain... my goal is to get to the gym four times a week during my lunch break. There's a gym just two blocks away, and if I hustle I can be there and back in an hour. Once in a while, for stretches of several weeks at a time, I actually get there three or four times a week. Then will come the inevitable few weeks of slacking off, and the inevitable vow that I'm going to be good, eat better, go to the gym regularly, and try to get back down to around 185 pounds (although my likelihood of ever weighing 185 pounds is probably about the same as Mary-Kate Olsen's).

Anyway, there is a certain cast of characters I see literally every single time I'm at the gym; since my hours (and my attendance) tend to vary, I can only assume that these guys are there for a few hours, every single weekday. And since I never talk to them (my social anxieties are such that when I meet new people, I feel like a bit like a grad student studying some remote tribe and nervously trying to imitate their customs), I don't know who they are. But since my brain has to call them something, it gives them names.

So it comes to be that whenever I'm at the gym I see Six-Foot Kim Jong Il (self-explanatory), Gay Hispanic Denny Douma (who may well be neither gay nor Hispanic, and who doesn't really look all that much like my friend Greg Douma's dad Denny), Dr. Jew (look, I never said these names were clever or inoffensive. Don't blame me; I don't come up with them. My brain does), Old Sack (a saggy 6'5" guy who must be in his mid-80s and is always ranting about politics), Crazy UCLA Hat (a crazy guy who always wears a UCLA hat, although sometimes I see him in a hat with the Superman crest), Mr. Lipman (an easy one; he's the actor who played Elaine's boss Mr. Lipman on "Seinfeld"), Uncle Ned Packers Fan (he always wore a Green Bay Packers hat and he had a Green Bay Packers tattoo, and while he may not have looked a ton like my Uncle Ned, he probably would have finished second behind me in a gym-wide Uncle Ned lookalike contest), and so on.

A number of months ago, however, I noticed that I wasn't seeing Uncle Ned Packers Fan around anymore. I have to admit: I was curious. What happened to Uncle Ned Packers Fan? Did he move away? Did he abruptly decide, after two or three years (perhaps more, for all I knew), to stop coming to the gym? God forbid, was he injured or killed (I mean, I know he's a Packers fan, but that would still be sad. He was a relatively young man)?

Well, good news. I turned out of our building's driveway after work just a few days ago and, as I was sitting at a stoplight, I happened to glance into the window of the gym that's directly across the street from the office. It's one of

those really nice gyms with exercise equipment right next to the windows, so you can see all of the people working out (presumably so you say to yourself, "look at them, working out and getting healthy while I sit here... driving. I need to join a gym. Moreover, I need to join *this* gym!"). And who do I see through the window, going to town on an elliptical machine? None other than Uncle Ned Packers Fan, looking healthy, robust and not at all dead.

So not only is he fine, he's clearly doing well enough to afford the nicer of the two gyms in the immediate vicinity. Although it would seem to me, based on my knowledge of the area, that parking at the nicer gym would be an absolute bear. But hey; far be it from me to tell Uncle Ned Packers Fan where to work out.

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I recently heard a commercial on the radio, I forget what it was for, either cars or motor oil or a gas station chain or something, but the main focus of the commercial was on tough commutes. At the end of the commercial, the announcer said something to the effect of, "enter now and if you win, NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson could drive *you* to work."

I don't know Jimmie Johnson at all, I'm sure he's a fine man, but I couldn't help but think how that would go if I'd won.

[Jimmie Johnson pulls up my back driveway. I walk out there and get into the car with him]

JIMMIE: Hey, nice place you guys got here.

ME: Thanks. Thanks for doing this.

JIMMIE: So, you a big NASCAR fan?

ME: Um – I... sort of follow it, a little.

JIMMIE: Oh.

ME: Not very much, though.

[5 to 10 seconds of awkward silence]

ME: I've got little kids, so... it's hard to follow anything, like, really closely.

[a few seconds of silence]

ME: Do you have kids?

JIMMIE: Nope.

[more silence]

[Jimmie starts to drive]

## POOP READING

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[silence]

ME: If this street is bad, just turn up at that stoplight.

[a few more minutes of silence]

ME: So do people ever confuse you with Jimmy Johnson, the football coach?

JIMMIE: Uh, not really.

ME: Oh. Okay.

[10 to 12 minutes of awkward silence]

ME: Oh, when you get behind somebody slow here, at this part, go up a block and take a left, and try to beat them to the next street. Right here. No... back there – that's okay. Don't worry about it.

[several more minutes of silence]

[after a while, a car cuts us off on the freeway]

JIMMIE: Whoa, who's that guy think he is, Tony Stewart? Huh? Huh?

ME: Who's Tony Stewart? Is that another racecar driver?

[a thin slice of silence]

JIMMIE: Yeah.

[a prolonged period of silence]

ME: This is it, right here.

[Jimmie pulls into the driveway of my office plaza]

JIMMIE: Okay, take care.

ME: Thanks, you too.

Probably best that I didn't win this particular contest. I'm not really sure I'd have gotten quite as much out of it as a big NASCAR fan would.

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Finally, my TV recommendation for the week: *Castle*. ABC, Mondays, 10 (9 Central). It stars Nathan Fillion (if you're not familiar with him then that means you're not familiar with either "Firefly" or "Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog," in which case I feel too sorry for you to be mad) as Richard Castle, a popular mystery writer who tags along with a sexy New York City detective, researching his next series of novels and helping her solve murders along the way. The show is more interesting than the premise makes it sound (it's

apparently being called "Murder He Wrote" in some circles); the mysteries (so far, after only four episodes) are more complex than what you usually see on similar shows, and they've started to delve rather deeply into the character's lives and psychologies.

An episode about the murder of a prep school teen, for instance, showed the normally cool and unflappable Castle (who is the single father of a teenaged girl) to be quite flapped indeed by the nature of the case, and it led to a couple of emotional scenes between daddy and daughter. Maybe I'm a sucker for that sort of thing, being a daddy of daughters, but it seems as though each episode contains at least a scene (or two) that packs a similar punch.

And, you get to play "spot the Canadian accent" whenever gorgeous costar and Ontario native Stana Katic is onscreen, and if you know anything about me, you know that I love a good game of "spot the Canadian accent."

Plus, did I mention... Nathan Fillion?

Anyway, "Castle." If you're generally disposed to liking police procedurals, as I am, check it out.

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