I'm Going To Miss You Cheryl Bernard

The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics are drawing to an end and they've been way more enjoyable than I had imagined.

I'm averaging 2+ hours of viewing on most days and when stuck at home due to weather or kids being sick a couple times in the last week it was Curling and Olympic coverage that was on in the background.

I'm not gonna lie: The red-hair and green eyes of Canadian curler Cheryl Bernard didn't hurt those numbers.

I loved the drama and back stories of these games. And when I speak of drama I speak more of Joannie Rochette winning Bronze in Women's Figure Skating less than a week after her mother her arrived to watch her in the Games and died suddenly from a heart attack. Not the contrived crap from Lindsay Vonn who didn't miss an opportunity to talk about a bruised shin and later a

broken pinkie finger and who didn't miss the opportunity to schedule press conferences when necessary to keep reminding people of her injury status.

The NBC coverage and the Opening Ceremony deservedly took their public floggings but the competition night in and night out saved the day. From Snow Board Cross to Short Track Speed Skating to the American men winning gold in the 4-man Bobsled for the first time in my lifetime, it was all good.

After years of doping scandals and politics had turned me off the Olympics it was refreshing to see actual people and not lab rats competing in most events.

Perhaps no other event in the Games compelled this nation like the Men's Hockey event though. And as the Olympic governing bodies debate the merits of including NHL players in the Games going forward I have to ask: Why?

The hockey was tremendous. The NHL players, spread across the rosters of many countries, made the game better and the players brought it every night. They care about representing their country and they played with a passion that you just don't see in a December match up featuring Columbus and Nashville. The NHL can get no better publicity than allowing the players to play and the Olympics have already demolished the line between professionals and amateurs to the point you can never go back again anyway.

Keep the NHL players in the Games. Continue pushing the drug testing and making the events play out on an even playing field.

It's good stuff.

As to the gold medal hockey game itself?

Epic.

What a showcase for hockey. The intensity, the skill, the drama were off the charts. The Americans scored an empty net goal with just under 25 seconds remaining to send it into overtime and Sid Crosby further solidified his choke hold as Canada's favorite son with his OT winner to make the final 3-2 Canada. It was something to behold.

It was simply a tremendous end to a very compelling two weeks of competition.

Let's Call it Even

A week ago Cleveland was melting over the fact the Cavaliers had lost three straight games after the All-Star break. That was three straight losses after trading for Antawn Jamison, the guy who was supposed to step in and be that missing piece of a championship club. Never mind that the Cavaliers had built a sizeable lead over the Magic and Celtics in the first 55 games. People didn't care about the win equity that the Cavs had built and were now drawing upon.

Never mind that Jamison hadn't played or practiced for a single minute with any of the Cavaliers when he took the floor in Charlotte for his first game. Never mind he hadn't played a meaningful game in two seasons and hadn't played defense in probably more years than that.

Nope. Never mind, never mind. Three losses in a row will erode a lot of the good will rather quickly.

But order was restored this past week. The Cavs won three in a row. People went from melting down to reclaiming their spots on the parade route in the course of a week.

Never mind the Cavs beat the Chris Paul-less Hornets, the Paul Pierce-less Celtics and the Chris Bosh-less Raptors.

Seriously, never mind that.

Wins are wins right now while this team deals with Jamison still getting acclimated and now with the absence of any post presence since Shaquille O'Neal left the Celtics game with an injured thumb and Zydrunas Ilgauskas was sent to Washington for Jamison.

O'Neal's injury is huge if it goes beyond a week or two of downtime. Not that you're concerned about Shaq getting ready for the playoffs but he's been in a really nice flow and groove lately and has demonstrated to the Cavs and, most importantly, LBJ, that he can initiate offense from the block. That's a playoff staple and it's also a critical element to finding points without LeBron having to dominate every possession (though #23 clearly reserves the right to do so when he feels like it).

Despite an annoying number of people questioning Shaq's value to the team and utilizing a hockey stat (+/-) to do so, anyone who's actually watched a game or two with Shaq matching up with Dwight Howard or Andrew Bynum understands the value O'Neal has to the Cavaliers and their chance of winning a title this season.

The Cavs have a week or so to get Jamison more deeply educated in terms of their offensive sets and defensive philosophies before the schedule spikes in difficulty again. Over the next 9 days or so it's the Knicks, Nets, Pistons, Bucks and then the Spurs. The Bucks may be the toughest out on that list right now but the Cavs have given Milwaukee fits for the past few years.

The Cavs also benefit right now from a few days of practice time. That's where Jamison will truly get immersed in the Cavalier way of doing things. While Jamison and his mates are practicing Shaq will be at the National Hand Center in Baltimore seeing hand specialist Dr. Thomas Graham. Hopefully there's nothing more than a nasty sprain that comes out of the trip.

Shaq won't mind a couple weeks of rest and the Cavs can survive it and actually may be better off for it over the long haul. But do keep your fingers crossed in regard to a The Diesel's thumb.

Apathy Requires Too Much Effort

This Indians season depresses me and its weeks away from starting. I just can't work up the emotion to feel anything other than nothing about this team.

On paper the starting pitching is terrible and the bullpen is a question mark. The lineup is either full of young guys who are looking to step up (Luis Valbuena, Matt LaPorta, Michael Brantley, etc) or old guys who aren't likely to (Travis Hafner, Russell Branyan). There aren't enough mid-career productive guys on the roster and those who qualify, like Jhonny Peralta and Grady Sizemore, were mediocre last season (and Sizemore injured for much of it).

There just aren't many reasons for optimism other than playing in a crappy division. There's always hoping for a couple miracles but 43 years of playing that card has gotten me nowhere.

I'll watch because the game has captivated me for 40+ years and the team has been mine for the same amount of time. But with the team they're putting on the field this season I can envision a summer where the ballgame being on is the background music to everything else going on.

Not that there's anything wrong with that. If baseball is anything it's a good friend. It's there for you all the time and doesn't require much of you at all.

Tell me folks, what are you thinking in terms of wins and losses?

Let's hear from you please. Can anyone reason me (not wishes and ifs now) off my thoughts that we're looking at anywhere between 90 and 102 losses this summer?

Evan Turner is Getting Lazy

I checked the OSU-Michigan hoops box score on Saturday after the Buckeyes dispatched the Wolverines 66-55 to keep their Big10 title hopes alive.

I was stunned to see Evan Turner actually got some rest against Michigan. While Jon Diebler and William Buford played their customary 40 minutes (out of a possible...ummm…40 minutes) Turner was obviously given the star treatment as Head Coach Thad Matta starts to consider his minutes late in the season.

Matta held Turner to just 39 minutes in the Buckeyes win.

That should keep Turner fresh for Tuesday night's regular season finale against Illinois.

I hope Matta knows what he's doing with this five man 'rotation' that regularly sees just one sub spelling any of the Buckeyes starters. I know they're young kids and that they're in tremendous shape, but damn, that's as thin a roster as I can ever remember Matta employing.

What Will Friday Bring?

Interesting to see if the start of the NFL's official fiscal season brings a break-neck pace of signings and news or whether teams sit back and try and get the lay of the land before moving on a player or two.

Midnight on March 5th marks the kickoff of the free agent signing period and you've already got big names like LaDainian Tomlinson, Bryan Westbrook, Terrell Owens and Thomas Jones who are out there and will be available.

Does Mike Holmgren like any of the free agents out there? What's he going to do with DA and his big bonus that's due if he's still on the roster as of March 19th or so? Will he look at making a deal right quick for a QB he likes or does he wait until draft day and see what shakes out in the way of potential deals?

Personally I wouldn't be at all surprised to see the Browns right in the middle of the Julius Peppers derby along with Chicago and Philadelphia. Holmgren was the beneficiary of Reggie

White's free agency arrival 20 years in Green Bay and he'd be thrilled with Peppers too. That would make for a heck of a line with Peppers and Sean Rogers or it could free up Rogers for use in a deal later on.

Regardless, the NFL season unofficially starts at midnight Friday. There will be some teams going for broke in this uncapped season and others positioning themselves for seasons beyond this one. It should be an enjoyable time for the NFL-philes out there.