

Frank Burlison: LBSU's 'Jewels' to offer plenty upon which to bid

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Long Beach State's 15th Jewels of the Night fundraising event, Saturday evening in the Walter Pyramid, offers an overflowing treasure chest of goodies to bid for while supporting 49er athletics in the process.

Some of the more enticing items include: a six-night package for two to Australia and New Zealand; a seven-night Mexican Rivera luxury for two (all right, cue the swine flu jokes, folks!); and two tickets to the 2010 Bowl Championship Series title game at the Rose Bowl (Texas vs. Florida sounds about right).

And there will be opportunities to bid for "on-field experiences" with former LBSU baseball standouts, Evan Longoria (Tampa Bay), Jered Weaver (Angels) and Troy Tulowitzki (Colorado).

Those "experiences," I'm assuming, would include tickets to a game at Dodger or Angel Stadium, and the chance to hang out, pose for pictures and the such with one of the players before a game.

By the way ... do you think an opportunity for an "on-field experience with Eva Longoria" would command a hefty bid?

Back to reality ...

Call (562) 985-4662 to make reservations. Tickets are \$100, with plenty of opportunity to eat, drink, make merriment and come away with some cool stuff.

The Lakers have perplexed their fan base and the print and electronic media with their lack of consistently impressive performances so far in the playoffs.

If you read or listen to some of the post-game commentary, you would have thought some among the South California-based media took the Rockets' thumping of the Lakers in Houston on Mother's Day as an affront to their mothers or something.

C'mon, people, relax.

The Lakers are what they are.

And what they are is a team with the second best player in the world and, more likely than not, more skilled players surrounding Kobe Bryant than the Cleveland Cavaliers have supporting the best player in the world, LeBron James.

They're also a team that doesn't consistently play high-quality defense.

And when you don't play good defense, from game to game, it's tough to win championships - no matter how much "talent" you may possess and regardless of the level of basketball you're playing on.

As for what also appears to be the Lakers' failure to be focused, game-in and game-out ... at \$12 million a year, that's for Phil Jackson to remedy.

Aaron Brooks' torching of the Lakers Sunday afternoon was just another illustration of the type of quality basketball players the city of Seattle and surrounding areas have produced over the last decade or so.

Other Seattle-area products in the NBA are Brandon Roy (Portland), Nate Robinson (New York), Jason Terry (Dallas), Spencer Hawes (Sacramento), Jamal Crawford (Golden State), Brian Scalabrine (Boston) and Marcus Williams (San Antonio).

Jon Brockman (Washington) and Terrence Williams (Louisville) will make the size of that club grow next season as likely first-round selections next month.

LBSU head softball coach Kim Sowder and pitching coach Stephanie Swenson have a couple of pretty good starting pitcher options for the 49ers' NCAA Tournament Friday afternoon against the host UCLA Bruins.

Do they start sophomore Brooke Turner (17-11 with a 2.34 earned run average), who threw seven innings when the 49ers knocked off the Bruins, 2-1, on March 8 at Mayfair Park?

Or do they opt for freshman Taylor Petty (15-4, 1.41 ERA), who earned the Big West Conference's Pitcher of the Week honor Monday after picking up a pair of victories in Stockton over the weekend?

"I think we're going to wait a while (before making that decision public)," Sowder said Monday afternoon before practice. "I want to watch both of them throw, talk to Stephanie and both pitchers before I say for sure. But both will be available to throw Friday, if we need them."

The Big West is expected to announce its all-conference softball selections this afternoon.

One player who figures to pick her share of all-Big West honors is Cal Poly sophomore Anna Cahn, a 2007 graduate of Los Alamitos High, who was a second-team all-conference selection as a designated player as a freshman.

The 6-foot-1 left-hander is 27-5 (with a 1.71 ERA) in the circle and is hitting .338, with 40 runs batted in, for the Mustangs, who will face Nevada in the regional hosted by Stanford on Friday.

The J-Town Boys Basketball Spring League opens its 2009 season at Jordan High this afternoon at 3:30.

Games will be played on Tuesdays and Thursdays through June 11.

Today's schedule: Dominguez vs. Compton at 3:30; Mayfair vs. Panthers at 4:30; Los Alamitos vs. St. John Bosco at 5:30; Poly vs. Gahr at 6:30; Lynwood vs. Centennial at 7:30 and Fremont vs. Lakewood at 8:30.

Teams use only current juniors, sophomores and freshmen enrolled at their schools.

If both squads are intact, the 6:30 clash tonight will be a matchup of teams capable of winning CIF Southern Section titles next March.

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