

## Sopranos Recap: Episode Three, Final Season

Written by {ga=mitch}

Monday, April 23 2007 7:00 PM -

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In this week's recap, Mitch points out that *Sopranos* executive producer David Chase has made a point of focusing on different supporting players each week, as if he

This may soon change, but for now David Chase has made a point of focusing on different supporting players each week, as if he's working hard to make sure every one of them get some level of acceptable closure for their characters. This week it was almost exclusively two story lines; one regarding Junior's continued demise, and the other dealing with another straining relationship with Tony...this time with Paulie.

### Recap

Like last week, the scenes jumped so often between the story of Junior and Carter, and the one with Tony and Paulie on their road trip that it makes a linear approach to recapping difficult to write, and more difficult to read. So I'll approach the recap in the same style as the last one, addressing each main story separately.

### The Decline and Fall of Junior Soprano

Junior appears to have found some better drugs, because when we first see him, he seems much more lucid than we recall from last year. Of course, late last year he made Crispin Glover seem coherent in comparison. He starts out pestering his old pals who are visiting to figure out a way to spring him. However, when they come up with the idea of slipping out with him if he were to go to a different outside dentist, he doesn't really seem that interested in it. He also

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asks about whether or not Tony will be coming to see him, and is still indignant, insisting Tony owes him an apology. Yeah, Junior, I'm sorry my body got in the way of your bullet. In the same line of thought, Art Modell is still waiting for an apology from all those Browns fans.

But Junior is getting back into the Mobster Life in some regard, running a weekly poker game for the inmates with the help of his new young friend Carter Chong, and the stereotypically corrupt orderly Jameel, who supplies him with soda and candy that he sells to the inmates. Jameel also gets his kickback by having Junior autograph pictures of himself, which Jameel sells on eBay as coming from "the guy who shot Tony Soprano." I'm sure there are probably sick sporks that would buy something like that...right next to the people that would desire an autograph from Mark David Chapman.

We find that Carter is just a teensy-tiny bit high strung, and has some serious daddy issues, along with a hair triggered temper. Sounds like he'd fit in perfectly with Tony's crew if he weren't locked up for being a wacko. But he's really latched onto Junior, even serving as his secretary when Junior writes a letter to Vice President Dick Cheney to appeal his incarceration. "Like yourself, I was involved in an unfortunate incident when a gun I was handling misfired"...bwhahahaha...that's just too perfect.

There must always be an adversary, and for Junior, it is Professor Lynch, another psyche patient that isn't at all impressed with Junior's reputation, or his current actions. They get into a bit of a verbal spat, and then all of a sudden we're ready for Pay Per View as Junior starts out with a crotch kick and then pummels the fallen man. Come to think of it; I'm not sure those two were much older than Vince McMahon and Donald Trump...but I might actually have forked over the \$50 PPV if I thought one or both of those jerks would end up getting kicked in the nads.

So it's back to Pharmacy Land for Junior, and Carter is irritated that the new meds have made Junior so docile, so he finds a way to distract the same stupid nurse and orderly at the same time every day with the same routine so that Junior can skip his meds (using a method that was right up there with Otter's "Greg, look at my thumb" line from "Animal House"). Soon Junior is back to his old, ornery self...telling dirty jokes and being the life of the party until the time that he looks down and sees that he has pissed all over himself. So now the choice is: Drugs or Depends?

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I have to be honest with you...if the results of the drugs were that I'd have no problem singing "Country Roads" at group time...size me up for the rubber pants right now. Evidently Carter is crushed that his former mentor has now embraced his inner dementia, and he responds in a way that epitomizes his new level of maturity...by beating the hell out of Junior.

As they fade out on Junior, we see him as a shell of himself, in a wheel chair absently stroking a cat. Hey, it's Dr. Evil's uncle. "That Carter makes me angry, and when Dr. Evil gets angry, Mr. Bigglesworth gets upset, and when Mr. Bigglesworth gets upset people DIE!"

### **Does the Man EVER Shut Up?**

And no, we aren't talking about me...thanks for asking.

Good morning, Tony...I'm not sure what would be worse...waking up with an F5 level hangover, or looking out the window and seeing Paulie coming up the driveway in his usual stylin' sweat suit. I'll probably let you know next week, as I get the feeling I may wake up Sunday morning after the Draft Bash with said F5 headpounder.

But there is a reason Paulie is there, and it's so Chase can find a way to get Tony and Paulie together for an entire episode. And the only way that could happen would be to find some reason to force them to be together for a long period of time, or else Tony would find some way to get the hell away from that annoying moron. In this case, Paulie breaks the news to Tony that the FBI has been digging up a spot where Tony and Paulie had dumped the body of the first person Tony ever whacked...a bookie shot on orders from Johnny Boy Soprano by a nervous Tony twenty-five years earlier.

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“Pack your toothbrush”, Tony tells Paulie, and the both of them are packing up for a road trip under assumed names just in case things get too hot, and they need to stay untouchable by the Feds until the charges are cleared up (or the witnesses executed). Carmela is verklept about the whole thing (“a gambling thing”, lies Tony). “THIS is what life is still like? At our age?” She’s also freaking out about her broken espresso machine and the new realtor for her spec house...a convenient way to get two future plot mechanisms out of the way in twenty seconds of air time.

Paulie packs for the trip by choosing four pairs of white shoes to go with his various sweat suits and wife beater t-shirts. How gauche! According to other conversations, they are into the NFL season, which means it is after Labor Day...so what the hell is he doing wearing white shoes? Spork the Feds, he needs to be on guard for the fashion police.

So “Mr. Spears” and his flunky take off in one fugly looking minivan, passing a sign in Jersey stating “Hitchhikers May Be Escaping Inmates”. I looked close on my second viewing and swore I saw the infamous Foreshadowing Fairy sitting on top of the sign. Tony makes the mistake of getting conversations started on “the old days”, and that’s all Paulie needs to send his mouth into overdrive. But it was a very interesting mix from the writers regarding the stories. Some were very revealing and pleased Tony a great deal, especially when they concerned his father and/or the early days for Tony. Other times, Tony looked like he wanted to cold cock Paulie in order to get him to shut his flap.

During one of those times, T gets on one of his cruel streaks, and brings back up the time Ralphie made a crude joke about the size of Ginny Sack, and “someone” then blabbed to Johnny Sack, almost starting a war. Paulie goes pale, but denies any involvement. (If you remember that story line from a few years ago, you’ll recall that it was more than just the joke that Paulie told Johnny...he was feeding him quite a bit of information at the time).

After a one night stop over in Virginia where Paulie’s mouth continues in perpetual motion, even chatting up strangers in the breakfast buffet line, they make it down to Miami and are hosted by Beansie...who Sopranos addicts will remember as the poor schlup who was put into a wheel chair after Richie Aprile beat him nearly to death as an “up yours” to Tony. Paulie

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makes a comment to Tony about Beansie's condition, "if I ever get that way, kill me now". Be careful what you wish for, Paulie.

I'm wondering how the three hookers "invited" to dinner felt when they realized they had dates with a fat balding man, a blabber mouthed old man, and an invalid. I'm also sure they loved having to deal with more and more stories from Beansie and Paulie about the old days. They (and 90% of the audience) aren't the only ones that were bored, as Tony had just about had enough, especially considering Paulie was giving out too much information regarding their "work". " 'Remember when' is the lowest form of conversation", he stated as he got up from his chair and headed to the dance floor with one of the chippies, glaring menacingly at Paulie.

Once in his room, Tony called up his accountant Hesh and asked to have \$200,000 freed up to cover some bad bets. Tony seemed to just think that he was going through a temporary lull, but there was no doubt at the time that I saw it that I knew this was in there as foreshadowing of bigger problems to come (a gut feel that was validated when the previews for next week show Tony possibly cashing out Carmela's spec house to cover his bad debts. So why don't my "gut feelings" turn out so well when I'm trying to guess draft picks?).

We've gone almost forty minutes without any naked booby shots, so we get that oversight out of the way as Tony has a quick romp with one of the hookers from dinner. Two things I noticed watching TV characters having sex over the years: Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker) never took her bra off to have sex in "Sex and the City" and Tony never has sex without having his T-shirt on. Yes, folks, this is the type of hard hitting, detailed analyses you won't find reading the recap on any other web site.

Fortunately for my tastes, the right person is without clothes in this scene, meaning I have to watch it a second time to make sure I caught everything that was said ("of course you did", says my wife...who then mutters the word 'pervert' loudly enough for me to catch). And what she said puts Tony into an even fouler mood about Paulie, as "the guy with the hair thingies" was even telling the hookers about how he "worked for Johnny Boy Soprano".

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Tony is bitching later on to Beansie about Paulie, and you can tell he's just about ready to blow. Beansie tries to calm him down, telling him that Paulie "doesn't have anyone else". But that just gets Tony thinking even more about how Paulie has "never been tested", and how he's slipping badly in providing income as the Barone construction bit is about to come to an end. Tony realizes that Paulie's normal motor mouth tendencies combined with pressure to produce income could make him susceptible to the Feds.

So after a call from Silvio telling Tony that the guy that tipped off the Feds about the long ago departed bookie has actually pinned the murder on the long departed Jackie Aprile, so Tony is in the clear to come back home. Tony tells Paulie that they need to celebrate, and recommends doing some deep sea fishing. In a boat they rent completely alone. Just like with horror movies, you're yelling to the screen "don't do it!" OK, you might have been, but I wasn't, because I was really hoping to see Paulie swimming with the fishes.

Now Paulie is a complete idiot, but he does have enough survival instincts to let him know that this is not a good thing. The fishing trip was probably the most tension filled scene from this show in a long time. You knew Tony WANTED to whack Paulie...and they emphasized the possibility by showing a readily available hatchet and knife. Paulie knew it as well, previously flashing back in his mind to the whacking at sea of Big Pussy. When Tony really started grilling Paulie regarding the Ginny Sack story, Paulie about lost it, repeatedly going into his nervous "heh-heh" laughs, which induced Tony into angrily accusing him of having Tourettes Syndrome. Tony goes to get Paulie a beer from the cooler right next to the knife and hatchet...and you can see in his face that while he wants to do it, and feels he needs to do it. But then he thinks for a second, sadly shakes his head, and just tosses him a beer.

Back home, Paulie dreams that he walks into his house, where he sees Big Pussy cooking a meal. "When it comes my time, will I stand up?" he asks himself before jolting awake. He then responds in a two prong attack, kissing up to Tony by sending Carmela a \$2,000 espresso machine, and hitting the weights to make sure he's physically ready for anything.

More problems to come. While the boys were away, Phil had a sit down with new boss Doc Santoro, who decides to flaunt his new position by taking a piece of food off from an obviously pissed off Phil's plate. "JOEY DON'T SHARE FOOD!" Phil thinks to himself, being the former huge fan of "Friends" that he was. But Philly will share bullets, and has henchmen Butch and

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his boys deliver copious amounts of them to Doc outside of a diner...one going right through Doc's eyeball. No problem...I'm never really happy with an episode unless I get at least one "OH, GROSS!" yell from my wife (and please resist the urge to make up other comments after that line).

"Looks like Phil's the main guinea over there now", Sil says to Tony as they watch the news coverage of the hit. But Tony can't hear it too clearly, as Paulie is busy bending Chris's ear with more tales from the past. Tony's look is transparent. "Why didn't I do it when I had the chance?"

**Best Line:** Junior's aforementioned dictated line to V.P. Cheney regarding the "unfortunate incident" with a gun. Classic.

**Best Scene:** The boat scene. I went back and forth the entire time trying to figure out if Tony was really going to go through with it or not. The fact that both of them knew the possibility was out there made the tension that much greater. Fantastic job.

**Latest Whacking Odds.** Buh-bye, Doc. That gets rid of Captain Obvious, so someone else needs to go to the top of the list.

1) Paulie (odds – 1:2) – I think this is now almost as much of a lead pipe cinch as was Doc.

2) Phil (odds – 2:1) – Once Chase gets these character driven final spotlights for other actors out of the way, it's going to turn to the inevitable NY/NJ war.

3) Uncle JuniorMummyHead (odds – 5:1) – I'm kind of doubting that he gets whacked now that he's a near vegetable, but the odds also include the possibility that he passes away of natural causes...or another Carter-type attack from another psycho.

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4) Chris: (odds – 6:1) – If Tony dies, I think Chris probably lives. But who knows? Chase may choose to pull a Marty Scorsese and “kill everyone”.

5) Bobby: (odds – 8:1) – I still think Bobby will be the secondary target of Phil’s wrath...and if he’s not able to get to Chris, Bobby will be the family member that Phil will seek in retaliation for his brother.

6) AJ (odds – 10:1) – Then again, maybe Phil does go after Tony’s son...but with him not in the business, I can’t see it. That doesn’t mean that A.J. won’t piss off someone else badly enough to get killed.

7) Silvio (odds – 15:1) – Consigliere’s normally aren’t considered that much at risk for whacking...but I don’t think any one member of Tony’s crew can truly escape this list.

8) Tony (odds – 20:1) – No change on the odds this week...but I think from what I’m seeing and hearing, they may start dropping for him soon.