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### ***One Sick Puppy***

## **Madison Square Garden...Home of the Westminster Dog Show and now BYU Basketball**

The prestigious Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show was held February 15-16 at Madison Square garden. I missed it.

I also miss Iggy (short for Ignoramus) and Queenie, two family dogs that have gone on to the Big Dog Show in the sky. Toby, however, our current dog, is still here and reminds us of his presence in the back yard on a daily basis.

That said, I have no use whatsoever for a Shihtz**U** or Alaskan Malam**UTE**. I'm reminded of their presence every time I go to Salt Lake City, watch KUTV or walk on the west concourse of Rice Eccles Stadium.

All of which brings me to Kyle Collinsworth. He is BYU's alpha dog, but he was one sick puppy in last night's 88-82 win over Creighton. He was literally sick, as in, ill, feverish and not feeling well. I'm not a doctor, but I can read a stat sheet. Collinsworth played just 20 minutes and didn't start the game. His replacement in the starting lineup, Zac Seljaas, led all BYU scorers with 19 points.

If it was a dog show last night, Seljaas would have earned best of breed and best of BYU. All he did was lead the team in scoring with 19 points on 5-6 shooting from the field. Did

I mention that all of those attempts were from beyond the arc? Oh yeah, he also was 4-4 from the charity stripe.

He saved Dave Rose's bacon and Nick Emery's and Chase Fischer's butts. All they did was go 2-8 and 1-5 from distance.

Kyle Davis has spent a lot of time in BYU fan's dog house because of his inconsistent post presence. Nothing inconsistent about Davis' numbers last night. He was 7-9 from the field and 4-6 from the line. He ended with 18 points and was instrumental in notching this needed win.

Speaking of points, here is the one I'm trying to make about Collinsworth. It is obvious that BYU is a better overall basketball team when the senior point guard is on the floor than when he is not. It would have been a shame if he had to end his career as a Cougar when he wasn't at his best physically.

That won't happen now. BYU and Collinsworth will be at Madison Square Garden this coming Tuesday, March 29 in the NIT semifinals against Valparaiso.

The Garden is where the big dogs bark athletically and as best of breed. This year Collinsworth is the best of BYU basketball. He was selected as Player of the Year by league coaches in the WCC. Now he has a chance to show just how he earned that honor in front of a NYC audience and press.

The Valparaiso – BYU game is one of the NIT semifinals. The other two teams will be decided tonight when Florida hosts George Washington and San Diego State hosts Georgia Tech.

Just because you can't spell V-A-L-P-A-R-A-I-S-O and don't know where they are located, doesn't mean that they are not a very good basketball team. I did look them up. They are located in, you guessed it, Valparaiso, Indiana. They are currently 29-6 on the year and finished 16-2 in the Horizon League.

They pushed Oregon, winner of the Pac 12 in a 73-67 loss in Eugene, but beat Oregon State 63-57 in Corvallis. Both of those teams made the NCAA tournament. In common opponents, both BYU and Valpo faced Belmont on their respective home courts. Both teams beat Belmont. BYU 95 Belmont 81 and Valpo 61 Belmont 57.

## **Spring Football Names and Games**

Let's start with games. There won't be any, as in spring game. This Saturday's annual spring gathering for football fans will be a scrimmage not a game. There just aren't enough healthy offensive lineman to stage a contest.

The game/scrimmage is set for Saturday, March 26, at 2 p.m. MDT in LaVell Edwards Stadium. Gates open at 1 p.m. and admission is free.

Now to some names. Here are two that should validate the claim that BYU is short on offensive linemen. They are [Keyan Norman](#) and [Andrew Eide](#). Both are offensive linemen from Southern Utah University that will be enrolling in school in Provo and can do so because both will have already graduated from SUU.

Norman is 6-3, 290 and prepped at Lone Peak HS in Alpine. Eide is 6-5, 285 and prepped at Timpanogas HS in Orem. Both are returned LDS missionaries and both come with Ed Lamb's recommendation. The fact that BYU is taking these two guys is a good indication of what coaches think and what I think about the prospect for BYU's offensive line.

It will not be the strength of the team.

That's too bad because the strength of team will need some protection this coming season. That would be Taysom Hill and Tanner Mangum. If you want to know who will start at quarterback next season, don't look at Ty Detmer, Hill and Mangum.

Find Tejan Koroma and Kyle Johnson. If Koroma doesn't get back in school and if Johnson doesn't return from injury, then it is a no brainer that Hill will be the starting quarterback if healthy. That is because he has the elusiveness and running ability to avoid a pass rush more than Mangum does.

The way the offensive line looks now, elusiveness will be an essential part of the quarterback's duty this fall.

Another element that coaches are looking for this spring is athleticism. They want to match it up with needs on the team. The perfect example of that would be [Akile Davis](#). He had his freshman season wasted when he was inserted into the Wagner game. Current coaches, in particular Kalani Sitake and Ed Lamb, see Davis as the prototypical lock down corner that BYU hasn't had in ages.

He has size, speed, long arms and can tackle. He is also still getting a few reps at wide receiver, a spot he played last season, but you don't have to be smart, just observant to see that he will be a corner for the Cougars next season. He would be the hands down pleasant surprise of the spring.

Just a side note here. One of the reasons Kyle Whittingham didn't take the BYU job a 11 years ago was because he knew he would have trouble getting corners that could play with the big boys.

A decade plus later, maybe it is now possible. Throw in Troy Warner with Davis, and maybe BYU may have actually turned the "corner".

The official announcement of the surprise of the spring, however, was more low key when Sitake said this when asked about it. "Biggest surprise so far this spring: The buy-in level from the players this spring has been awesome. They trust what we're

trying to accomplish. Academics, things that we're demanding from them on the field, and in the weight room especially reflect that they are all in. That's what is special about BYU. You get guys that are in line with what you ask them to do."

Here's my take on biggest surprise of spring: Position Mastery was overrated. Based on what Sitake and his staff has shown this spring, it is about athleticism and ability. If you have those two traits, you are going to play and play often. The new staff's philosophy when it comes to position, is that if you have enough athleticism and ability, the coaches will get you in the right position.

From my observation, defense is where most of those athletes are right now. I like this defense. I think I will love it in the fall, especially if there are corners that can come through.

On offense, there are athletes, but not as many. Fortunately, those with ability are at the quarterback spot. That will compensate for a lot. Wide receivers have some experience, but quite frankly when it comes to athleticism and ability, they could use some help.

It is obvious with the move from tailback to fullback for Algie Brown and the move from tailback to linebacker for Francis Bernard that this offense is looking for game breakers, not bruisers when it comes to running back. Trey Dye has been moved to rb and he has gained a few raised eyebrows from coaches. He doesn't have the prototypical size, but he has the other two ingredients this staff wants, athleticism and ability. We shall see. Jamaal Williams is back but still being reined in by coaches to make sure he will be healthy in the fall.

If you want a glimpse of some differences in programs are, listen to these players. Keep in mind, that political correctness does count when comparing the old and new programs.

[Mitchell Juergens](#)

[Trey Dye](#)

[Sae Tautu](#)

[Algie Brown](#)

[Nick Kurtz](#)

## **Other differences**

It has nothing to do with spring football, but it is glaringly obvious that the new staffs' approach to recruiting is a complete 180 degrees from the previous crew. In the past, it was almost mandatory that a prospect attend a BYU summer football camp to enable the previous staff a chance to see them play up close and personal.

Not so with the new staff. Camp is way down the list apparently. Volume in offers and athleticism and ability is way up on the scale.

Extending early offers seems to be a priority now.

Here are some recent offers made by BYU:

**Class of 2017...**Jay Tufele, DL, Bingham HS, UT; Chaz Ah You, DB, Timpview HS, UT; Marlon Tuipulotu, DL, Central HS, OR; Noah Ellis, DL, Valor Christian HS, CO; Tayler Katoa, Ath, Layton HS, UT; Phil Paea, DL, Berrien Springs HS, MI; Alden Tofa, DL, West Jordan HS, UT; Ariel Ngata, LB, Folsom HS, CA; Isaac Rex, TE, San Clemente HS, CA (committed).

**Class of 2018...**Merlin Robertson, LB, Serra HS, CA; Samson Reed, DL, Kahuku HS, HI; Kamakani Crosby, DL, St Bonaventure HS, CA; Campbell Barrington, OL, University HS, WA; Talanoa Hufanga, Ath, Crescent Valley HS, OR; Aaron Maldonado, OL, Bishop Amat HS, CA; Malone Mataele, RB, Luthern HS, CA; Kenyon Oblad, QB, Liberty HS, NV; Salua Madina, DL, Brighton HS, UT.

**Class of 2019...**Chuck Alatini (committed), DL, Orem HS, UT; Puka Nacua, WR, Orem HS, UT; Isaiah Foskey, TE, De La Salle HS, CA; Tausili Fiatoa (committed), LB, Orem HS, UT; JT Daniels, QB, Mater Dei HS, CA.

## Television Timetable

### **BYU vs. LMU (Baseball)**

Thursday, March 24 at Provo

First Pitch: 6 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

Radio: ESPN 960 - Provo

### **BYU vs. LMU (Baseball)**

Friday, March 25 at Provo

First Pitch: 6 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

Radio: ESPN 960 - Provo

### **BYU vs. LMU (Baseball)**

Saturday, March 26 at Provo

First Pitch: 1pm MDT

TV: none

Radio: ESPN 960 - Provo