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Getting Gonzaga Good For Image

From Teflon Coated Titanium to Tungsten, Rose's Mettle May Be Finally Proven

How do you like me now?

That's a question Dave Rose should be asking all his critics, including me, who at times have considered him a titanium light weight coach covered in Teflon.

Despite some questionable game management decisions, a seeming disregard for defense and some strange x's and o's coaching moves over his ten year tenure, nothing negative has ever stuck to Rose.

Probably because he is just so darn likeable. Plus he isn't a bad recruiter either considering the parameters under which he has to work. Rose doesn't need an image makeover. He is charming, personable, engaging and without a doubt the most popular coach with fans and the press among all other BYU coaches on the payroll.

He has had signature players in Jimmer Fredette and Tyler Haws. All he has lacked is a signature win and season, in my opinion.

BYU's 73-70 win over the Zags in Spokane last Saturday, just may be that win and this just may be the season that puts Rose over the top from just being personable to actually being perceived as a x's and o's coach. Remember perception is reality.

I have called this BYU basketball team flawed. I did so as recently as last week. Others have called it soft and at times a glorified version of Ward Ball.

What Rose has resurrected and revived in the last month is remarkable. He has taken a team that couldn't defend and rebound and taken down the top dog in the West Coast Conference on the road.

Stiffs

It's not like he did it with stiffs. He has BYU's leading all-time scorer in Tyler Haws, who had a sub-par game against the Zags with just 10 points. But make no mistake, Haws is a player. Rose also has a player whom I consider the MVP of the West Coast Conference in Kyle Collinsworth. He won't get that accolade, but he should. All the junior guard did was score 20 points, pull down 8 rebounds and put the Cougars on his back.

What Rose has done is take guys in the post that looked like stiffs early on and made them serviceable. He has also given us all hope that Corbin Kaufusi and Ryan Andrus can actually be credible performers down the road.

Speaking of stiffs, that is what I thought Andrus and Skyler Halford were at the beginning of this season. I thought Andrus was a wasted scholarship. I was wrong. Apparently so was Rose by not playing the true freshman earlier. A stiff doesn't step to the line and ice the game with two big time free throws.

It will be nice to have Eric Mika back from a mission and the hype surrounding Peyton Dastrup is truly *teflonian*, but getting Andrus back from a mission in two years now appears to be something to look forward to.

While my vote for WCC MVP goes to Collinsworth, I think a serious case for MVP of this BYU team during the recent six game run could go to Halford. In my book he has gone from irksome to awesome. I define awesome as 14 points against Gonzaga in just 27 minutes.

Dynamic Dave

Rose has made personnel changes and rotation changes that really don't look that dramatic, but they certainly have been dynamic and done wonders for this team as the season winds down.

If Rose can find a way to land the Cougars with a berth in the upcoming NCAA Tournament, his coaching perception will definitely go from titanium light weight to a tough tungsten steel type coach.

This could be his year. But as a longtime BYU basketball fan, I have not melted down all my Teflon coated titanium to make a Dave Rose shrine and grotto just yet. I'll start that fire when BYU beats LMU, St Mary's and Gonzaga again. That, in my opinion, is the table the Cougars will have to run to insure an NCAA bid and a legend making season for Dave Rose.

Basketball Bits and Bites

Tyler Haws breaking the all-time BYU basketball scoring record last week against Portland in an 82-69 win over the Pilots was certainly not just a small bit of history. It was a huge bite out BYU Basketball's legend and lore.

Haws now holds a place in history atop a list of all-time great Cougar basketball players. Also atop a list of great coaches goes Eric Reveno, the Portland head guy. Reportedly, after the game and after the mandatory congratulations and handshakes, Reveno went to the scorer's table and secured the actual game ball that was used in the contest and presented it to the Haws family as acknowledgement of just how special Haw's accomplishment was.

When will we see another 6-6 point guard for BYU once Kyle Collinsworth is gone? It might be right away. Zac Zeljaas, led his Bountiful Braves to the 4A state title last week. It was back to back trophies for Bountiful. Zeljaas doesn't rebound or defend like Collinsworth, but he has a decent handle for a 6-7 guy and he can shoot it lights out from distance.

It remains to be seen how Dave Rose will use him, but this kid will be a matchup nightmare for opponents. The word now is that he plans on playing a season next year for BYU and then will depart for an LDS mission.

Football Fluff and Stuff

BYU will start Spring Football Drills today. In other news, I will be planting my peas in the garden this week.

BYU hasn't announced if any drills or practices will be open to the public, but I am announcing that my garden will be open for observation six days a week. I am also announcing that watching my peas germinate and sprout and start to grow, is probably going to be more exciting than watching BYU practice without any quarterbacks that will be relevant next season.

Taysom Hill will make a couple of cameo appearances, but look for him to be off limits to the press, public and any contact work.

The next best quarterback on the roster will still be in Antofagasta Chile until June. That will be Tanner Mangum. His return will coincide with the harvest of my pea crop.

There will be some interesting battles and developments this spring, but it will be with positions that most fans don't want to watch. That will include work on the line of scrimmage with the offensive and defensive lines. Also interesting will be to see how the defensive secondary shakes out under Bronco Mendenhall, who has his attention focused on the defense this spring and coming season.

It's never too early to start the hype and hope for the coming season, but that hype and hope certainly needs to be tempered when your two best quarterbacks will be coming back off a broken leg and the other coming back from a two-year hiatus from throwing a football.

In the upcoming NFL draft in April, it looks like BYU's only legitimate shot at having a player drafted will rest with Alani Fua. He was the only Cougar invited to the NFL Combine last month.

Here is an analysis of Fua by NFL.com after his combine workouts.

Strengths

Extremely versatile and often moved around the field in a single game. Rushed passer from the slot, A- gap and outside linebacker spot. Fluid in space. Frequently covered slot receivers. Good awareness in zone coverage. Zeroes in on target and tackles with consistency. Long rusher with burst off snap and acceleration to close. Takes a tight track to quarterback as rusher, playing with lean and leverage to squeeze the pocket. Can slip blocks, but generally leveraged his gap against run.

Weaknesses

Hybrid player lacking NFL-caliber edge-setting size and strength. Doesn't have enough explosive power behind his pads to convert speed to power as pass rusher. Primarily a run-and-rip rusher who must develop his hands and a counter move. Appears to study the play rather than being a reactive, instinctive player. Had a bad habit of coming under some blocks, losing outside contain.

Bottom Line

Angular outside linebacker prospect with impressive burst off the snap. He's in need of more bulk before he can be counted on to take on NFL run blockers. Fua could post impressive numbers at the NFL Scouting Combine, and he is a wild card who can be

moved around the field by a creative defensive coordinator, but he still needs time to grow into his tall frame and become a more polished pass rusher.

BYU Baseball Opens at Home

Home is where the heart is. Here's hoping home is also where BYU baseball can find some wins. The Cougars are currently 2-10 on the year. They will open in Provo this week facing Hartford in games set for Thursday, Friday and Saturday, March 5, 6 and 7. Friday will be a double header.

In softball, the Lady Cougars actually had a nice week playing in Mexico. They picked up wins against Nevada, Southern Illinois (2 games) and Northern Colorado. The Cougars are now at 13-6 on the season.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

WCC Men and Women's 2015 Basketball Tournament with TV availability. All times are Pacific Time.

Women's First Round & Quarterfinals Thursday, March 5		
12:00 PM	Game 1: #8 Loyola Marymount vs. #9 Pepperdine	BYUtv
2:00 PM	Game 2: #7 Santa Clara vs. #10 Portland	BYUtv
6:00 PM	Quarterfinal 1: #3 Pacific vs. #6 San Francisco	BYUtv
8:00 PM	Quarterfinal 2: #4 Saint Mary's vs. #5 BYU	BYUtv
Women's Quarterfinals/Men's First Round Friday, March 6		
12:00 PM	Women's - Quarterfinal 3: #1 Gonzaga vs. #8/9	BYUtv
2:00 PM	Women's - Quarterfinal 4: #2 San Diego vs. #7/10	BYUtv

6:00 PM	Men's - Game 1: #8 San Francisco vs. #9 Pacific	BYUtv	
8:00 PM	Men's - Game 2: #7 Santa Clara vs. #10 Loyola Marymount	BYUtv	
Men's Quarterfinals Saturday, March 7			
12:00 PM	Quarterfinal 1: #3 Saint Mary's vs. #6 Portland	TWC SN, CSN CA, ROOT NW, BYUtv	
2:00 PM	Quarterfinal 2: #4 Pepperdine vs. #5 San Diego	TWC SN, CSN CA, ROOT NW, BYUtv	
6:00 PM	Quarterfinal 3: #1 Gonzaga vs. #8/9	ESPN2	
8:00 PM	Quarterfinal 4: #2 BYU vs. #7/10	ESPN2	
Women's & Men's Semifinals Monday, March 9			
12:00 PM	Women's Semifinal 1: #1/8/9 vs. #4/5	BYUtv	
2:00 PM	Women's Semifinal 2: #2/7/10 vs. #3/6	BYUtv	
6:00 PM	Men's Semifinal 1**: #1/8/9 vs. #4/5	ESPN	
8:30 PM	Men's Semifinal 2**: #2/7/10 vs. #3/6	ESPN2	
Women's & Men's Finals Tuesday, March 10			
1:00 PM	Women's Final: #1/4/5/8/9 vs. #2/3/6/7/10	ESPNU	

6:00 PM	Men's Final: #1/4/5/8/9 vs. #2/3/6/7/10	ESPN	
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