

HB Arnett's

COUGAR SPORTSLINE

801 372 0819

hbarnett@fiber.net

1391 West 800 South – Orem, Utah 84058

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BYU ALMOST LEAVES HEART AND KNEES IN BAY AREA

It was not a typical Tony Bennett win for BYU last Thursday in San Francisco.

With a thrilling 85-84 win over the Dons of USF, BYU had multiple heart options. They could have left their heart in San Francisco after squandering a late game eight-point lead to trail by one with just seconds to go.

A loss would have left Dave Rose's Cougars with their hearts ripped out.

Instead they opted for option No. 2 and showed some heart by making one more play than USF to secure the win.

Option No. 3 for hearts was left for BYU fans. Most are still trying to extricate their own hearts from their throats after the thrilling finish.

For Matt Carlino, the BYU freshman guard, the game against San Francisco was an anatomical anomaly. His heart was fine but his left hand was on fire. As in a 30 point hot hand.

He saved BYU early and late. Early, he had 20 points with just 10 minutes gone in the first half. He saved the game with just 20 seconds remaining in the game by answering the bell after USF took their first lead with under a minute to go.

It was Carlino who went coast to coast to hit a five-foot floater for the go ahead score and win.

Heart Stopper

Two days later at Santa Clara, the game wasn't a heart stopper, but more of a knee knocker.

BYU cruised late to defeat the Broncos 82-67, but saw Noah Hartsock go down with what looked like a season-ending knee injury.

Turns out he returned to action, but coupled with Matt Carlino playing with a knee brace because of a knee sprain suffered against San Francisco, it was a distinct possibility that the Cougars could have been kneaded or kneed into a loss to the cellar dwelling Broncos.

BYU, like all good bread, BYU rose to occasion. It was Hartsock and Brandon Davies that lead the uprising. Hartsock had 21 points and 5 rebounds while Davies, playing just 26 minutes because of foul problems, tossed in 20 points.

Speaking of knees, they haven't been good to BYU this season. While Hartsock's and Carlino's knees are hopefully just minor nuisances, BYU has been hit hard this year by the knee injuries to Chris Collinsworth and Steven Rogers.

While optimism still abounds that Rogers can play in post season action, Collinsworth basically has been done for two years now.

There is a optimism that he will make a full recovery in time for next season, and even a little optimism that the NCAA will restore this season of eligibility to him. It is a long shot, but he has a case.

As a true freshman, he played 557 minutes. After returning from an LDS mission to Australia, last year he played just 147 minutes in the first 9 games of the year before missing the rest of the season because of knee surgery.

This year, he returned to action before being derailed by that same knee. This season, he saw just 12 minutes of play in the first two games.

If somehow Collinsworth can make it back and be healthy, he will make BYU a much stronger team next year on the front line.

At 6-9, he would join 6-9 Brandon Davies, 6-11, Nate Austin, 6-11 Ian Harward and 6-8 Steven Rogers. There likely wouldn't be a bigger front court in the country.

HOW DO YOU LIKE US NOW?

If we were the WCC, that is the question we would be asking BYU fans right about now.

As BYU is finding out, the competition and intensity level is pretty good in this new league and will get even more intense in Las Vegas in a few days during the post season tournament.

There are some dogs in the league, but there are dogs in the MWC.

Home court is home court, and there certainly is a home court advantage in the WCC.

It is our observation that coaches' wives and BYU administrators suddenly find the need to travel with the team because of the WCC affiliation.

It makes sense. There certainly is more to do in San Francisco than Albuquerque. Laramie has sand, but you find it at the truck stop to use for keeping roads sanded and plowed. San Diego and Malibu have sand. You find it at the beach.

We could go on and on, but you get the point.

We have never bought the idea that small gyms would make the WCC an inferior league. Basketball has become a studio and television game. You may know that the gym of San Francisco only seats 5000 plus, but the guy watching in New Jersey doesn't. It may bother you that you see empty seats, but the average basketball fan doesn't notice.

All they see is that the game is on one of the ESPN networks and there is intensity and competition.

You may think that the WCC isn't a great league, but it is our league now and we like it just fine.

Did we mention that the team in the WCC without any league wins beat the current MWC leader this year? That's right. Santa Clara beat New Mexico early this season.

The Big Ten and ACC have preseason games that they play against each other early in the year. They rotate home and home sites.

In our opinion, we think a similar series between the WCC and MWC would have been very interesting.

Forget Sagarin ratings and national rankings, put New Mexico, SDSU or UNLV in any band box gym of the WCC and see what happens.

Wait, we do know what would happen. The nationally ranked Aztecs got band boxed Saturday at Air Force.

It's not the size of the gym that matters. It's the home court that counts.

BYU found out that there is no difference playing at Albuquerque, Las Vegas, or San Diego than there is at Spokane, Moraga or San Francisco.

You get beat by good teams. Home court advantage is manufactured by noise, not the number seats in the building.

The noise and intensity of the WCC is good enough, thank you.

BYU will find that out again this coming week when they face Gonzaga in Spokane on Thursday. Did we mention that home court advantage increases with the importance of the game, regardless of the size of the gymnasium?

This is a very important game.

The current league standings and tie breaker formula for post season league tournament seeding tells why.

West Coast Standings

TEAM CONF OVERALL

Saint Mary's	12-2	23-5
Gonzaga	11-3	21-5
Brigham Young	11-3	23-6

Loyola Marymount	10-4	18-10
San Francisco	8-7	18-11
San Diego	6-8	11-15
Portland	3-10	6-20
Pepperdine	2-12	8-18
Santa Clara	0-14	8-19
Expanded Standings		

Here is the current WCC formula for Determination of Seeds/Tie-Breaker found in Section 3 of the WCC Handbook.

(a) All conference teams will be seeded based on the order of the final regular season conference standings.

(b) If there is a tie in the standings, regardless of the number teams involved, the following factors will be used, in this order, until all ties are broken:

(1) Head-to-head competition.

(2) Won-Loss record versus each league member (or the cumulative record of teams tied in a position) based on descending order of finish in the final conference standings.

(3) This comparison on a descending basis will continue until seeding is complete. If a tie still exists, the final deciding factor will be the team's placement in the most recent Collegiate Basketball News Company RPI published by Jim Sukup.

Translation: The chances of BYU beating Gonzaga in Spokane this Thursday are 1 in 4 at best and 1 in 10 at worst.

We expect the Cougars to come out with a loss. A gimme win in Provo on Saturday against Portland will give BYU a 12-4 league record

There are many scenarios that can still happen in this final week, but assuming a 12-4 record; we see it all unfolding this way.

BYU will finish in a tie for third place in the league with Loyola Marymount and enter the league tournament as the fourth seed. LMU gets the third seed because they split with St. Mary's and BYU was swept by the Gaels.

That means that the Cougars more than likely will face either San Diego or Portland in the quarterfinals on Friday, March 2.

FOOTBALL IN NOVEMBER WAS ALMOST BETTER THIS YEAR...WILL BE BETTER NEXT YEAR

BYU finally announced their 2012 football schedule last week.

It took a while because they thought they had a chance to move Notre Dame to a late season date. It didn't happen, but the Irish and BYU will tentatively be meeting on November 16 in South Bend in 2013.

Texas is set for an appearance in Provo on September 7, 2013.

Meanwhile, bac back to 2012. Here is BYU's schedule.

Sep 1 - Washington State at Provo - we expect this game to be moved to Friday, August 31 to allow ESPN to broadcast the game and feature Mike Leach's return to coaching.

Sep 8 - Weber State at Provo - A likely BYUtv game.

Sep 15 - Utah at Salt Lake City - The Pac 12 is hell bent on expanding their footprint to the Pacific Rim. This game might be on Fox Singapore.

Sep 22 - Boise State at Boise - Depending on whether Boise State can go West Virginia and start playing in the Big East this year, this game will be picked up by CBS or new NBC all sports network now affiliated with the MWC.

Sep 29 - Hawaii at Provo - Should be televised somewhere on ESPN platform.

Oct 5 - Utah State at Provo - Like last year, ESPN

Oct 13 - Oregon State at Provo -On ESPN platform

Oct 20 - Notre Dame at South Bend - NBC

Oct 27 - Georgia Tech at Atlanta - ESPN holds ACC tv rights

Nov 3 - bye

Nov 10 - Idaho at Provo - Likely BYUtv

Nov 17 - San Jose State at San Jose - ESPN holds WAC TV rights

Nov 21 - New Mexico State at Las Cruces - ESPN holds WAC TV rights

On paper, November looks very similar to last year with cupcakes culminating the season. Before we groan too loudly, however, here is something to keep in mind that we learned from Boise State.

If BYU is undefeated heading into November,, the slate of Idaho, SJSU and NMSU will be as exciting as playing Alabama, USC or Ohio State. That's because it will mean that BYU is playing for a BCS berth.

If something is really on the line for the Cougars in November, BYU fans will be ecstatic to be facing the Vandals, Spartans and Aggies again for the second year in a row.

A cupcake is a cupcake, regardless of where they fall during the season and on the calendar.

BYU gets theirs in November. Texas gets theirs in September. The Horns open the season at home against Wyoming and New Mexico.

When it comes to the 2013 season, here are games and dates that we are aware of. They could all change, but here is the latest.

Sep 7 - Texas at Provo
Sep 14 - Most likely spot for a Div I-AA team at Provo
Sep 21 - Boise State at Provo
Sep 28 - Hawaii at Honolulu
Oct 4 - Utah State at Logan
Oct 12 - Georgia Tech at Provo
Oct 19 - Houston at Houston
Nov 16 - Notre Dame at South Bend

FLUFF AND STUFF

Spring football will start for Bronco Mendenhall and his team Monday, March 5.

Like all spring drills, several players will miss action because of injury, surgery or just as a precaution against both.

The biggest name missing will be linebacker Kyle Van Noy. He had shoulder surgery last week, but will be ready for fall camp.

According to published reports, others missing from spring will be kicker Justin Sorensen, Braden Brown, OL; Preston Hadley, DB; Jason Munns, QB; David Foote, RB; Teu Kautai, LB; Russell Tialavea, DL; Dallin Tollestrup, DB; Austin Holt, TE; Devin Mahina, TE; Richard Wilson, TE and Jordan Richardson, DE.

In basketball, we can't remember if we mentioned before that Damarcus Harrison is probably 50-50 on whether to serve an LDS mission. His brother is currently serving a mission in Chicago and reports having him enrolling at BYU after his mission and walking on to the basketball team.

With tickets now scarce or even non-existent for the upcoming WCC tournament in Las Vegas, it will be interesting to see if our tried and true method of getting tickets during the MWC tourney will still be effective at the WCC tournament.

Our little golf group never pre bought tickets. We just simply played golf in the mornings then went to the Thomas and Mack arena and hung out at the exits for the conclusion of the early games featuring the lower seeds. We always could buy tickets from the fans of the losing teams.

They had no use for watching any more basketball and tickets were always plentiful.

BYU is currently guaranteed to play no earlier than Friday, and if all goes well in Spokane this week, there is still a chance that their first game wouldn't be until Saturday.

If this method hold form as it did in the MWC, there is still a pretty good chance that you could get yourself into the Orleans arena to watch the Cougars.

Remember, this is no guarantee. So if you try and come up empty, please don't sue.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Santa Clara (women)

Thursday, Feb 23 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Gonzaga

Thursday, Feb 23 at Spokane

Tipoff: 9:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: ESPN2

BYU vs. UC Santa Barbara (men's volleyball)

Friday, Feb 24 at Provo

Start: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Portland

Saturday, Feb 25 at Provo

Tipoff: 4:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv