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Just a reminder that we are now sending the newsletter via two separate email accounts to help solve distribution issues that many subscribers experienced last year. That means you may receive two identical letters. If that is the case, please just discard the extra.

Tulsa On Tap

UCLA BEATS THE BCS OUT OF BYU 27-17

Any hopes BYU had of being considered for a BCS bowl have now been rescheduled for next year. The UCLA Bruins made sure of that with a 27-17 win over BYU last Saturday afternoon in the Rose Bowl.

The Cougars had their chances, but they also had their turnovers. Three to be exact. You aren't going to beat BCS conference teams on the road with that many fumbles and interceptions.

The key turnover occurred in the first quarter when Max Hall was picked off by UCLA's Trey Brown. He returned the interception 56 yards for a score.

BYU eventually could never overcome that gift score.

Despite some shaky play by the BYU offense, they found a groove in their passing game late in the second quarter and kept it going into the third period.

BYU finally found the scoreboard in the closing seconds of the first half.

Mitch Payne hit a 27-yard field goal to cut the UCLA halftime lead to 20-3.

BYU came out on fire in the third quarter and scored two touchdowns to cut the margin to 20-17.

Completions

Both scores were Max Hall to Austin Collie completions.

Hall had a nice offensive outing. He completed 30-52 passes for 391 yards and the two touchdowns. He also had the one lamentable interception.

Austin Collie led all BYU receivers with 7 receptions for 79 yards. The BYU rushing game was a non factor. The Cougars could only manage 44 yards on 25 carries.

The Cougar defense basically bottled up the Bruins except for the last game-saving drive late in the final quarter.

UCLA had 236 yards of total offense to BYU's 425.

Despite the loss, there were some glimpses of hope for the rest of the season.

The fact that BYU was able to adapt and adjust to the defensive pressure that UCLA applied and move the ball and score, was very encouraging.

The defense played solidly, but the bottom line for BYU was that they couldn't overcome UCLA on the road with three costly turnovers and 11 penalties.

BYU will stay on the road for another contest against Tulsa this coming Saturday.

Two Weeks

The Golden Hurricane are coming off a bye and will have had two weeks to get ready for the Cougars.

Tulsa opened the season on the road with a 35-17 win over Louisiana-Monroe.

Overcoming a 14-17 halftime deficit, Tulsa put up 21 unanswered points in the final two quarters for the win.

Their offense looked good in doing it.

Three-year starting quarterback Paul Smith completed 22-31 passes for 307 yards and three touchdowns as the Hurricane put up 523 yards of total offense.

Tulsa is operating with a new head coach in Todd Graham, who moved over from Rice after Steve Kragthorpe opted to leave Tulsa for Louisville.

BYU should be able to throw the ball for some yardage, but they won't win unless they can find a way to run the ball.

The running game will be the key for BYU the rest of the way during this season.

They have to have some threat in that area and the ability to control the clock and grind out a few wins.

We like BYU in this spot, but it will be a closer game than most anticipate.

It is still on the road and this BYU team, despite some nice numbers, hasn't proven that they can win on the road.

The early line on the game has the Cougars favored by 7.5 points.

The game will be televised live on CSTV with kickoff set for 7 pm Mountain time.

We call it BYU 28 Tulsa 24.

WILL BRONCO EVER GET A BREAK?

Will Bronco Mendenhall ever get a break with officials?

He is now in his third season as the head coach of BYU football and so far, in each of his three years, he has lost a game that involved a controversial ruling of officials.

His first controversial call was against TCU in Provo. That was when officials ruled that a TCU running back didn't fumble until after he had crossed the goal line in overtime.

A year later against Arizona in Tucson, there was the controversial offensive pass interference call against Matt Allen that took a touchdown away from the Cougars. BYU could have used those seven points based on the final score of Arizona 16 BYU 13.

This past Saturday, Mendenhall's record of being on the short end of controversial calls again came to pass.

There were three debatable calls against the Cougars in the fourth quarter alone.

The first was when Pac 10 officials ruled that Max Hall's arm was not going forward and a fumble, instead of an incomplete pass, was the result. Hall had the Cougars on the UCLA 13 yard line and driving for a go-ahead touchdown.

The second came on UCLA's drive later in the quarter in which they scored and put the game away.

The first was an incidental face mask penalty called on David Nixon that gave the Bruins a first down and kept the crucial drive alive instead of forcing a punt.

If you saw the game live or on replay on Versus, you could read Bronco's lips when the flag was thrown. "You don't call that," is what Mendenhall was saying into his headset.

The play was over and the inadvertent and glancing face mask touch occurred in the pile with the play already over and with no impact whatsoever in the action.

The third interesting call was on that same drive. Chris Bolden was flagged for pass interference, a call that again kept the Bruins from punting the ball back to BYU.

That call was actually legit. But if you go back and watch, you will notice that the play clock had expired before UCLA got that play underway. That was not called by the game officials.

Earlier in the game, there were two other calls that were questionable enough to warrant review from the officials in the booth.

Vic So'oto's fumble and Brian Kehl's deflection of a Ben Olson pass which had Shawn Doman grabbing the deflection and headed for a sure score, were both reviewed. Both were also deemed inconclusive enough to reverse.

Gamblers soon learn in Las Vegas that the odds are stacked against them with the built in house advantage. Bronco Mendenhall and BYU may be thinking the same thing about the home field advantage in the Pac 10.

We are realistic enough to know that officials miss some calls and are part of the game.

We also are well aware of the fact that BYU lost this game because they turned the ball over three times.

The biggest turnover was the Max Hall pick in the first quarter that resulted in 7 free points. The fumble by Vic So'oto stopped a scoring drive, but even that call could have gone either way.

The dagger was when Hall was credited with a fumble instead of an incomplete pass.

That kept the sophomore signal caller from redeeming himself from the pick.

If you believe in the law of averages when it comes to being on the right side of controversial calls, then Bronco Mendenhall certainly should have some calls coming his way soon.

We aren't sure we want to align ourselves with those who think Pac 10 officiating is biased when it comes to games BYU plays against that particular conference.

Most of the time, in the matchups of BYU versus teams from the Pac 10, those teams were simply better than the Cougars.

While we are hesitant to question the officiating of the Pac 10 against BYU, we will simply let you make your own decisions.

In the last several years, here are the penalty statistics of BYU against all of the teams they have played on the road against teams from conferences other than the MWC or WAC when BYU was a member of that league.

1995...Arizona State: 6-60, BYU: 10-109

1996...Washington: 10-98, BYU: 15-119

Tulsa: 6-39, BYU: 11-127

Utah State: 13-101, BYU: 8-119

1997...Arizona State: 7-86, BYU: 7-47

1998...Alabama: 11-109, BYU 9-91

Washington: 4-35, BYU: 11-96

1999...Utah State: 11-116, BYU: 9-85

2000...Florida State: 10-90, BYU: 11-93
Virginia: 2-15, BYU: 6-45
Syracuse: 8-42, BYU: 8-61
2001...California: 9-105, BYU: 10-98
Mississippi State: 10-127, BYU: 9-70
Hawaii: 15-168, BYU: 12-110
2002...Nevada: 9-82, BYU: 13-140
Georgia Tech: 6-49, BYU 7-31
Utah State: 5-42, BYU 10-71
2003...USC: 7-69, BYU: 10-91
Notre Dame: 3-30, BYU: 5-40
2004...Stanford: 7-64, BYU: 14-125
Boise State: 7-39, BYU: 5-45
2005...Notre Dame: 11-77, BYU: 9-80
2006...Arizona: 8-61, BYU: 10-76
Boston College: 2-10, 10-67
2007...UCLA: 4-30, BYU 11-84

FOOTBALL FLUFF AND STUFF

This game played out the way we expected. The team that could rush the ball more effectively would be the winner. UCLA had 110 yards on 37 carries while the Cougars could only manage a measly 44 yards on 25 tries.

BYU tried to run and maintain some balance in their offense, but gave up on the run, and with good reason, late in the first half.

They put the game into the hands of Max Hall and he almost came up with the win.

The question we had in watching the struggle of BYU to run the ball against the Bruins was why was Fui Vakapuna getting so many carries?

You don't have to be summa cum scrimmage or magna cum Mendenhall to know that you only have one true tailback and it isn't Vakapuna or Manase Tonga.

These two guys are fullbacks who can block and inspire others with their effort, but they are not going to rush the ball effectively against good defenses. They have size, but they don't have the necessary skills that good tailbacks do.

Help us with the math on this one. Against Arizona, Harvey Unga rushes 67 yards on 15 carries. More importantly, he catches the ball 9 times against the Wildcats for 127 yards.

Against UCLA, he had just one carry in the first half. He finished the game with 5 carries for 28 yards and 3 catches for 43 more.

Vakapuna had 9 carries for 23 yards and Tonga 5 carries for 11 yards. Vakapuna had no catches and Tonga had 4 catches for 42 yards.

We thought the object of having a running back with firepower was to get him on the field and get him touches.

We like Vakapuna and Tonga. They are extremely valuable to this team, but not as tailbacks. They are fullbacks, and good ones, but Unga is your tailback. Get him the ball.

Vakapuna and Tonga will continue to get carries, and they will have some nice yardage games against lesser defenses, but they are not tailbacks.

Have we said that enough?

While we have stated our opinion on tailbacks and who should be toting the ball, there is no question who should be the quarterback at BYU.

It's not Ben Olson. Can we now finally put this to bed? He still may be all-Pac 10 and even be

drafted into the NFL, but he is no Max Hall.

BYU definitely got the best of this quarterback shuffle between the Bruins and BYU. Max Hall will win a lot of games for BYU.

As we have maintained since last spring, the best of BYU football is still one season away. The Cougars just lose Sete Aulai on offense with everybody returning with a year of experience under their belts.

It time to stop feeling sorry or bitter for Ben Olson leaving BYU for UCLA. If you still want to feel sorry for somebody, feel sorry for Arizona State. How they let Max Hall migrate to BYU will be the subject of much discussion among Sun Devil fans in the coming seasons.

If college football players can come out early and declare for the NFL draft, wouldn't it be nice if selected high school players could do the same and come out early for college.

We guarantee that if they could, BYU would be beating down the door of Justin Sorensen, the kicker from Bingham HS in South Jordan, UT. He has verbally committed to sign with BYU next February, but the Cougars could certainly use his leg right now.

He set a new state record with a 62-yard field goal in a 36-35 loss to Jordan HS last Friday.

While Sorensen can definitely deliver long-distance field goals and has uncanny accuracy on anything inside 45 yards, where he would help the Cougars the most is with field position.

BYU battled horrible field position against UCLA for the entire game.

They simply are not punting the ball well and can't even sniff the goal line on kickoffs.

Consequently, opponents are starting drives with great field position.

Even with the new rule that requires kickoffs at the 30-yard line instead of the 35-yard line, Sorensen can put the ball in, and sometimes out of the end zone.

BYU doesn't have enough team speed to effectively cover kicks and punts, and with a kicker with a strong leg, that would alleviate that liability.

BYU appears to have been able to adequately survive the season-ending injury to Russell Tialavea. He was the starting nose guard for BYU.

True freshman Eathyn Manumaleuna, has filled in nicely, and the switch of Rick Wolfley from offensive line to back-up nose guard also appears to be working.

While Corby Hodgkiss is doing a nice job filling in for the two guys ahead of him on the depth chart at safety when both went down for the year with injuries, BYU still has some issues here.

In our opinion, Dustin Gabriel and David Tafuna were both much better defenders against the run than Hodgkiss is.

Hodgkiss is doing a nice job in pass defense, but in our opinion, UCLA was able to pick on him a little with the rushing game, especially at the point of attack.

The Cougars won't see a team with a better running game than the Bruins have, but if they do, this could be a lingering liability for the BYU defense.

You simply just can't go to your third guy on the depth chart and expect the same production. There was a reason that Gabriel and Tafuna were ahead of him.

We are still waiting for a breakout game for Bryce Mahuika. BYU coaches have been high on him for the last three years, but injuries always seem to interfere with his potential.

It has now been three years since BYU implemented the spread offense and there has yet to be any consistent offensive threat from the slot position in the offensive scheme. There has been some very nice human interest stories created, but no real production on the field that would require defensive coordinators to worry.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Tulsa

Saturday, Sept. 15 at Tulsa
Kickoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time
TV: CSTV

BYU vs. Air Force

Saturday, Sept. 22 at Provo
Kickoff: 1:00 pm Mountain Time
TV: Mtn Network

BYU vs. New Mexico

Saturday, Sept. 29 at Albuquerque
Kickoff: 6:30 pm Mountain Time
TV: CSTV