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Vol. 34, Issue 17 – November 25, 2013

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ND 23 BYU 13

BYU Played a Great Game...On Paper

BYU left a nice paper trail in South Bend last Saturday. They also left South Bend a loser. The final was Notre Dame 23 BYU 13.

The Cougars accumulated 23 first downs. Notre Dame had one more at 24. BYU out rushed the Irish 247 yards to 235 yards. The Cougars had 415 yards of total offense. They only turned the ball over one time and that was a Hail Mary desperation pass thrown with seconds remaining in the first half.

BYU had four offensive trips inside Notre Dame's 20-yard line, but only one touchdown. What BYU put down on paper against the Irish was good enough to get a win. How the Cougars actually played on the line of scrimmage wasn't.

The Cougars were pushed, shoved and beat to a pulp on both sides of the line against Notre Dame. Give BYU's offensive and defensive lines some credit. They played like bulldogs. Unfortunately for Bronco Mendenhall, Notre Dame's offensive and defensive lines played like bulldozers.

On paper, BYU's kicking game was good. Notre Dame did their kicking on the field simply by being obviously more physical than BYU.

You can't coach physicality. You get it three ways. You recruit it, you build it with a good strength and conditioning program, or players get it on their own with PED's.

For us old timers who after years finally learned how to spell steroids, PED is the acronym for performance enhancing drug. Don't know if it is better than steroids, but it certainly is easier to spell.

BYU and Notre Dame, both being faith based institutions who pride themselves on towing the line when it comes to rules and regulations, more than likely get their physicality the old fashion way...with strength and conditioning programs and the recruiting of big strong bodies. If that is the case, then it is obvious that the Irish have better recruiting and conditioning programs than BYU does.

On paper, Taysom Hill is a much better quarterback than Tommy Rees of Notre Dame. Hill, however, was in the grasp and on the ground more than Rees was. Notre Dame was in Hill's face all day while BYU couldn't get close to Rees while he implemented the Irish passing attack. Hill threw for 168 yards and Rees had 235.

Going into this game, on paper, BYU was a 1-point favorite. In reality, the Cougars couldn't even outscore the game time temperature on the field. They did come close, however, to the wind chill factor. Those are the cold hard facts about BYU's performance in South Bend on Saturday.

The Cougars, with the latest loss are now 7-4 on the year. They close out the regular season on the road this Saturday against Nevada in Reno. The Wolfpack is currently the exact opposite of BYU with a 4-7 record on the season.

The game will be televised live by the CBS Sports Network with kickoff at 1 pm Mountain Time.

BYU Gouged, Gut Wrenched and Gone Astray

The last time we saw BYU playing basketball, Eric Mika was gouged in the eye and BYU was gut wrenched by the 90-88 loss to Iowa State in the Marriott Center. While the eye gouge to Mika hurt, the lackluster free throw shooting of BYU actually cost the Cougars this win.

The loss puts the Cougars at 4-1 on the year with Texas coming tonight in Kansas City. The Cougars will face the Longhorns as part of the College Basketball Experience Hall of Fame Classic. Tonight's game will tip at 5:30 pm Mountain time and can be seen live on ESPNU.

Depending on if the Cougars win or lose, they will face either DePaul or Wichita State in a losers game or winners game. If it is the losers game, BYU will play Tuesday night at 5:30 pm on ESPNU. If it is the winners game, the contest will start at 8 pm and be televised live on ESPN2.

As was proved last week against Iowa State, BYU won't win against good teams unless Erick Mika is on the floor. He was a beast against ISU until he left the game with the gouged eye late in the contest.

He is getting better every game. If continues on that path, BYU could be a dangerous team nationally. That is based on the assumption that the Cougars can find a way to make free throws consistently and shoot better than 15 percent from beyond the arc.

This week will be telling. BYU gets three pretty good opponents in Texas, and hopefully Wichita State. They then come home to face an undefeated Utah State on Saturday in Energy Solutions Arena on Saturday.

It's Time to Put the One-Trick Pony Back in the Barn

Bronco will never ride his one trick pony offense to national prominence

Somebody is going to have to tell Bronco and Robert Anae to put some clothes on and face reality. Wisconsin, and now Notre Dame, have exposed the emperor and BYU for just how naked the Cougar offense really is.

This go fast, go hard offense is good enough and gimmicky enough to beat ordinary teams, but once again, Notre Dame proved that the current BYU offense has zero chance of beating teams that have a good front seven and a defensive coordinator that has any experience at all.

Defensive experience and good defensive schemes trumps BYU's offense every time.

Unfortunately for Bronco, his brash national limelight aspirations are just another 80-1 long shot. You can't saddle a nag and get national respect.

Bronco has swallowed Robert Anae's offense, bit, bridle and saddle. Even worse, he continues to embrace an offense that thinks it is playing in Canada. In the CFL you get just three downs instead of four to get a first down.

Forfeit First Down

BYU still gets four downs a series, but they have voluntarily forfeited the first down of at least half of those series, by persisting on running that non productive and nonsensical dive play on almost every first down of every series.

For example, against Notre Dame, last Saturday, BYU made 23 first downs against the Irish. On 11 of the plays run on first down, it was the dive play up the middle by Jamaal Williams. On those 11 first down plays, he accounted for just 17 yards. For the game, he had 18 carries for 43 yards.

The question is why waste those first down plays with a dive play that has proven not to work against good defenses.

The second question that this giddy up and gimmicky offense presents is why allow defenses to take away Taysom Hill's biggest asset?

Hill is a fabulous runner. He proved that early in the season before defensive coordinators who know their stuff started scheming against him and limited his ground game.

Hill is still shifty and productive, but where he could be absolutely a nightmare for opposing defenses is in a drop back passing attack. Right now, his passing skills still need a little honing, but think of what could happen when a play breaks down and Hill breaks containment or avoids a sack and heads down field.

Run Wild

He would run wild without two defensive guys gearing up at the line of scrimmage on every play to stop him. That is what is happening in the horsey offense currently being used by BYU.

If BYU was in a pro style passing offense now, even with the current offensive line woes, Hill would be under constant pressure. The difference is that even under pressure, with linebackers and defensive backs forced down field in pass coverage, all Hill has to do is make a pass rusher miss or scoot outside of the pocket and take off and defensive coordinators literally be would be pulling their hair out.

Against good teams, it is apparent that Bronco's defense can't consistently stop the run. This year that lack of run stopping prowess was exacerbated by having no cornerbacks. That is not a good combination.

That said, Bronco has always preached that his defensive goal is to keep opponents under 24 points. He was pretty much on the mark, despite the defensive deficiencies of this year, against Wisconsin and Notre Dame.

That is a testament to just how good of a defensive coach he really is. The problem is that after 11 games it is apparent that the offense of BYU can't produce more than 24 points against good defenses.

Three Options

Bronco has three options here. He can send Anae back down to AAA ball and another season at Arizona with Rich Rodriguez to see how this offense really is run. He can go back to the pro set offense featuring throwing the ball with Hill as the scrambling wildcard in the package. Anae knows the drop back pass game. He ran it with Max Hall and was semi successful.

The third option is the one I think Mendenhall will use. He can continue blowing smoke up Cougar fans' nostrils by telling us next season that the offense will be better because he has a good quarterback and good running backs returning and all that is needed is improved offensive line play. His ace in the hole is that he can probably sell it for one more year because of the ordinary schedule full of ordinary teams next season.

There is no Wisconsin or Notre Dame on the docket next year. There is Connecticut, Texas, Virginia, Houston, Utah State, Central Florida, Nevada, Boise State, Middle Tennessee State, UNLV and Cal.

Even the horsey one down default offense BYU has hung its hat on will be good enough to carve out another 8-win season. But if BYU and Bronco wants to ever back up his national prominence promise, then the sooner he gets back to a drop back passing game while he has a quarterback like Hill with a strong arm and legs that can make defensive coordinators throw up, the sooner those dreams will be realized.

Musing with Music

In my opinion, the go fast go hard offense has been a one hit musical wonder. There will be no follow up hits. It's time for BYU to get back to what made them an offensive force. They have all the ingredients in a good quarterback, good running backs, an offensive line that can't get any worse and enough BYU type receivers, to make defenses and national pollsters pay attention again.

If you need a musical illustration between Taysom Hill playing in the current offense versus a real drop back passing attack, in my opinion here it is: [Herman Hermits](#) or [The late Stevie Ray Vaughn, the world's greatest rock guitarist](#).

Unfortunately, Mendenhall has painted himself into a disastrous offensive corner. His last two offensive coordinator picks were poor and reflect on his lack of any offensive perception or expertise. He will be forced to save face by hanging with Anae until Bronco himself says he wants to retire. The handwriting is on the wall on this one.

As the BYU color commentary guy, Marc Lyons said in his post game comments concerning the Notre Dame game, the current BYU offense is okay between the twenties, but when they get close to the end zone, defenses can bring their safeties closer to the line of scrimmage and take away the normal offense. He suggested that BYU have an alternative offense for scoring than the one they use for the entire game.

Die Trying

That isn't going to happen because BYU has a couple of very stubborn coaches in Bronco Mendenhall and Robert Anae. They are going to prove that they were right in installing this gimmicky offense or die trying. The irony of the situation in Bronco's failure on the offensive side of the ball is that he has no problem utilizing consultants or reading their books regarding organizational behavior in an effort to help the program and team. Yet, when it comes to offense, it is now painfully obvious that he is reading the wrong books and hiring and consulting with the wrong coordinators.

Look, I know what the other side is. BYU will win 9 games this season and 8-9 games next year and we will be told how consistently good BYU is. They just aren't consistently good enough offensively to beat the national caliber teams that Bronco has to whip to back up his bragging about being a national contender.

Here is the reality as I see it. If BYU isn't good enough offensively in this go fast, go hard offense to beat the big boys with Taysom Hill as the quarterback, what will happen when he is gone and the quarterback will be a guy with ordinary skills?

Premier League

The other option is to use the English futbol model. It's called relegation. The bottom three teams in the standings from the Premier League, the top league in the country, are forced to leave and move down to the league below, the Champions League. The top three teams from that league are then elevated to the Premier League.

Unless BYU can fix its offensive problems against the premier teams in our country, then relegation might be the answer. If BYU can't whip the Notre Dame's or Wisconsin's then maybe they should self relegate themselves back to the MWC where they can win and compete.

Look, we all want to play name teams that are actually good. The problem is that type of schedule with this type of offense, in my opinion, puts Mendenhall between a rock and a go hard place.

There was a reason LaVell Edwards vetoed the veer offense and went to a passing game. He realized early that BYU wasn't big enough or strong enough on either side of the line of scrimmage to compete with the big boys.

That scenario hasn't changed. BYU isn't currently big enough or strong enough on either side of the ball to be able to back up Bronco's national ambitions. Bronco's acumen as a defensive coordinator has been able to compensate for that deficiency on the defensive side.

Now he has to find a way to compensate on the offensive side of the ball. I'm not holding my breath on that one.

That means that for a few more years you and I will be forced to breathe the offensive smoke Bronco is blowing.

BYU Television Timetable

BYU vs. Texas (Men's Basketball)

Monday, Nov 25 at Kansas City

Tipoff: 5:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPNU

BYU vs. DePaul/Wichita State (Men's Basketball)

Tuesday, Nov 26 at Kansas City

Tipoff: TBA

TV: ESPN2 or ESPNU

BYU vs. Washington State (Women's Basketball)

Tuesday, Nov 26 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Nevada

Saturday, Nov 30 at Reno

Kickoff: 1:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: CBS Sports Network

BYU vs. Arizona (Women's Basketball)

Saturday, Nov 30 at Provo

Tipoff: 2:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Utah State (Men's Basketball)

Saturday, Nov 30 at Salt Lake City

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv