

HB Arnett's



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Two Week Check Up

Reading Between the Top and Bottom Lines

I had recent cataract surgery. I went in last week for a checkup and the doctor ask me to read the top line and then the bottom line.

No problem with the top line. It was crystal clear, but the farther down the lines I went, the fuzzier things became.

That pretty well describes BYU after their second week of fall camp and a second scrimmage in the stadium.

The top line looks clear and distinct. The letters read T-A-Y-S-O-M. Even a blind squirrel can see that as Hill's health goes, so goes the BYU offense this season. Actually, let me clarify that. As Hill's health goes, so goes the BYU season.

Yes, he really is that good. When you add his competitiveness to his "goodness" we may be in for a bigger year than most of us think. Hill will be to BYU this season what Johnny "Football" was to Texas A&M a few years back, what Marcus Mariota was to Oregon and Jameis Winston was to Florida State last year.

Quite frankly, I think most of us are too close to the forest to see just how good a tree Hill is. How can a superstar come out of Pocatello, Idaho? Think Jimmer a few years back. Hill is new Jimmer for BYU football. The question will be how long the Cougars can ride him during his senior swan song.

Yeah, I know all about the phrase “there is no I in team”, but there is an “I” in Hill and Heisman.

If you want your own optical line to read, try this one on for size. Hill completed 13 of 18 passes for 143 yards in BYU’s closed scrimmage last Saturday. He did it with both legs tied behind his back, relatively speaking.

Here is what Bronco said about Hill after the scrimmage. “Who knows what’s going to happen when we actually let him run and try to tackle him. That’s a whole other element, but I think history shows that’s strong, but throwing and catching wise I actually liked it. There’s a lot of unique challenges he’s going to pose to defenses, but one of the strengths today of the scrimmage, at least from my perspective, was throwing and catching the ball and Taysom in particular.”

So here is the bottom line – or top line optically. With Hill healthy, BYU will be at least 20-20 at quarterback and wide receiver. Hill has some weapons to throw to. Still no flat out speed guy to make defensive coordinators convulse while game planning for the Cougar offense, but those same defensive coordinators will at least have to cough and consider the mismatches BYU presents with its stable of tall and semi athletic receivers.

Nick Kurtz is having the fall camp that we thought he would have last year until he broke his foot. It was over a decade ago that Gary Crowton said that Chris Hale was a homerun waiting to happen. Kurtz has already gone “gone yard” multiple times in the first two weeks of camp.

BYU has made a living over the last 25 years with [below the Mendoza line](#) receivers. Now with Kurtz, Devon Blackmon and Mitch Matthews among others, this unit looks more like Manny Machado than Mario Mendoza.

BYU Line Actually Blurry

When it comes to offensive line play this fall camp, the rhetoric of spring football and fall camp forecasts hasn’t matched what it actually visible. This group still looks suspect to me. As they say in the meat business, except for Tejan Koroma, this Cougar cut in this fall camp has been select, but not stellar. Prime cuts of offensive lines are found at Alabama and Ohio State, Choice cuts are usually at UCLA and USC.

BYU is still select in my opinion and is another year in the feedlot away from moving up to a choice cut of meat up front. Hope I am wrong and would love to have to eat all the select beef this offensive line can feed me if they turn out better than I think.

Here are the guys that will play besides Koroma, who still looks like he will miss the opening Nebraska game due to a suspension from the Memphis Bowl game. Ryker Mathews, Ului Lapuaho, Jaterrius Gulley, Brad Wilcox, Tuni Kanuch (if healthy), Austin Hoyt and Kyle Johnson.

It's easy to read the top line of an eye chart because the letters are big. So are the running backs of BYU. It is obvious to me that the only ball carrier who will be a threat to take the ball to the house is Hill. The rest of the group are big and bruising.

Bronco has found a clone to supplement Algernon Brown, who has a history of being injury prone. That would be Francis Bernard, the 6-1, 230 pound freshman from Herriman HS in Utah. Bronco was almost effusive in his praise for Bernard after his performance at the scrimmage Saturday and his steady performance of fall camp.

"Tough physical, reliable, consistent, all those things. He's been one of my real pleasant surprises of this fall camp and he's farther along and more productive at a higher level than any of us expected. He'll play. He's done a nice job," said Mendenhall.

The BYU defense was at the bottom of the BYU eye chart last season. They were beyond fuzzy, they were frankly bad. It looks like to me that they are better, but judgement on how much better will have to be reserved until the Boise State game.

I don't think we can judge how much improved the Cougar defense will be because this unit is likely to have a couple of key suspension in place in the opener against Nebraska.

The two most likely to miss the opener are Kai Nacua and Sione Takitaki. Both will be big playmakers for Mendenhall's defense, but not against the Huskers. BYU should be improved up front. That won't be hard to do based on last season. A stellar year will be determined by the play of the defensive backs.

Here are the names that will have to perform in order for improvement to take place. At safety it will be Kai Nacua, Eric Takenaka and Grant Jones, a 6-5 sophomore who redshirted last year. At corner the trio that needs to make plays are Michael Davis, Michael Shelton and Micah Hanneman. The sophomore just returned to practice last week after doctors gave him the go ahead to start practicing.

My vision after cataract surgery is 20-20. That is also what I have projected as the halftime score of the season opener against Nebraska.

If my retina holds on and the BYU running game is better than I think, which also means the offensive line is better than I think, a highly successful season will be more than just an optical illusion and projection after two weeks of fall camp.

Seeing is Believing

I'll believe it when I see it.

Bronco and the local media have been effusive in their praise and projections for BYU's linebacker play this fall. Guys like Harvey Langi, Manoa Pikula, Fred Warner and Sione Takitaki have all had their names called as playmakers...in camp.

Bronco's defense is predicated on linebackers making plays. As good as these guys have looked in fall camp, none of them have proven themselves to be playmakers against an actual opponent.

The last time the BYU defense was good was when it had linebackers like Kyle Van Noy, Spencer Hadley and Uani Unga. That will be the case this season also. If these highly hyped fall camp linebackers can make plays against real players from other teams, then Bronco and his defense will definitely be back. Seeing is believing so keep your eyes on this position group against Nebraska.

Is There Fly Fishing in Tuscaloosa?

You gotta love Bronco Mendenhall's musings. He's an accomplished football coach and his muses and metaphors over the years have been interesting. [This one](#) published a few days ago in the Provo Daily Herald was a well written piece by Jared Lloyd that caught my attention. The salient sentences are below.

BYU head coach Bronco Mendenhall said he likes fly fishing and used that as a metaphor to how he views a football season.

"The intent and focus on every cast that I have is to put the fly in the right place with the right mend and the right drift to give myself as a fisherman the best chance for success and to present the fly to make it appealing to the fish," Mendenhall said.

He said that as a coach, he views it as trying to give the team the best chance to be successful during a season.

"If it happens to be a big one, awesome," Mendenhall said.

He added that in fishing, it's exhilarating to feel the pull of the big catch.

"You can tell as soon as it hits the fly with the bend of your rod and how fast the line starts going out what size you are engaged in," Mendenhall said. "Then you take a picture after and send it to Holly and the kids, yeah that feels pretty cool. But that lasts about as long as the next cast."

He talked about how the big stages and big wins can be similarly satisfying and yet fleeting.

"It lasts until you walk off the field and then it's about who you play next," Mendenhall said. "It's about the next cast."

Somehow I just don't envision Nick Saban tying flies in Tuscaloosa, but I can envision [Dan Hawkins](#) flying off the handle with his infamous quote about "It's Division I football."

And speaking of casting, Nick Howell, last year's defensive coordinator, hasn't been cast aside, but he has yet to be interviewed or quoted after two weeks of fall camp.

My One Deep

BYU will release its first two-deep football roster this morning after this issue has been sent. To compensate, I'm releasing my projected BYU one-deep roster of stat leaders for the coming season.

Leading Rusher: Taysom Hill

Leading Passer: Taysom Hill

Leading BYU Heisman Vote Getter: Taysom Hill

Leading Receiver: [Dan Smith](#)

Leading Tackler: Last guy standing closest to the goal line wearing a BYU uniform

Leading Scorer: UCLA

Leading Kicking Game Scorer: Ashley Hatch

Leading in 3-pt shots attempted in a game: Nick Emery. He could relegate Chase Fischer to Matt Montague status

Leading Lighter of the Y: Former Wagner alum and current BYU assistant basketball coach Quincy Lewis should be front runner for the October game against the Seahawks

Leading with his right: Will lead Kai Nacua to a one-game suspension against Nebraska

Miss Congeniality

In the Frank Jackson beauty pageant, BYU looks like the leading candidate for capturing the Miss Congeniality title in my opinion.

Jackson, the talented senior guard from Lone Peak HS in Utah was in New York this past week participating in the Under Armour Elite 24 Showcase has his list of potential college destinations down to four. You can read the entire article by clicking on the link below, but here is what Jackson said himself about the four finalists in the article written by Pat Lawless of [TheRecruitScoop.com](#).

Four for Frank

Class of 2016 point guard Frank Jackson is one of the most talented players in attendance at the Under Armour Elite 24. He's been very impressed with how the event has been run thus far.

"It's really been great, the talent here is tremendous and playing with these guys is a lot of fun especially being in New York City," said Jackson. "Under Armour is doing a great job putting this all together so I'm enjoying myself."

Jackson's stock rose this past year, but his attributes this all to one thing.

"I just felt I needed to get a little more exposure than I was previously getting," he told Rivals.com. "Playing against some of these top players has helped a lot as well."

He hasn't taken his recruitment for granted and is enjoying it all.

"I'm just grateful of all the opportunities I have honestly," he said. "Some people say they get sick of it all, but I'm just enjoying the process. It will be nice when it all ends and I come to decision."

Jackson - ranked No. 10 in the class of 2016 by Rivals - is down to four schools and has a lot to say about each school on his list.

BYU: "BYU has been recruiting me right from the start," he said. "They've shown love to me and have been great to me. It's only twenty minutes from my house and I've been involved with their program since I was eight years old by going to all their camps and events. I decided to decommit from them to see my other options and make sure it was the right choice."

Utah: "The Utah coaches have been great, they've been on me ever since I was in ninth grade too," he said. "After I committed to BYU I didn't talk to them, but right when I decommitted they were right on me."

Stanford: "I love Stanford, the campus is beautiful and the coaching staff has been very nice to my family and me," he said. "They make sure we are doing well and show a lot of love."

Duke: "Duke has been great, they kind of came in later than the other teams," he said. "They have really shown interest in me and have contacted me every day. I will be going on a visit there next weekend, which will be fun."

He is trying to learn more about Duke on his visit to the school next weekend.

"I just want to get a feel for the school and the overall campus," he told Rivals.com. "I'll get a chance to spend some time with the team and the guys there as well."

A decision could be coming soon for Jackson.

"After I visit them I'm going to go home and reevaluate everything to make hopefully make a decision from there," said Jackson.

Jackson has three factors in mind in terms of what he'll base his decision off of.

"I have to go off of three things when it comes to my decision," said the Utah native. "The

environment I am going to be in, my education and ultimately who is going to get me to the next level."

In my opinion, "next level" is code for Duke. Utah is also an intriguing final four option, but has political ramifications, again in my opinion. Jackson's father, Al is a sitting state senator from Northern Utah County.

If Jackson opts for the Utes, I don't need a political poll to tell me that getting reelected for the senior Jackson will become more difficult. As Tip O'Neill, the former Speaker of the House once said, "All politics are local, and in my opinion, so is basketball recruiting when the majority of your constituency are BYU fans.

Yeah, I know, it doesn't make sense, but neither does the current Presidential political scene where "wild hair" has gone from a popular slang term, to a populist political movement.

For where I think Jackson will sign in November, I defer to Gene Chandler. Chandler is pretty clear on where he thinks Jackson will end up. [Click Here](#) for what he has to say and sing about Jackson's recruitment.

Women in Waipahu

The BYU Women's Soccer team kicked off their season with a bang.

After beating Arizona 3-2 in an exhibition match in Provo, the Lady Cougars traveled to Hawaii to take on two ranked teams from the Pac 12. Last Friday, they defeated No. 18 Cal 2-0. Today they take on No. 3 Stanford.

A win over the Cardinal and it won't be long before opposing coaches start the cry of "unfair" because the Cougars Soccer team is older than their opponents and has a huge advantage with the number of return missionaries on the squad.

According to the latest soccer roster, there are three returned missionaries listed. That number should continue to grow. The three are: Rachel Boaz, a transfer from San Diego State, Paige Hunt, who served in Indianapolis with Steve Cleveland as her mission president, and Courtnee Wood. She served in the Philippines.

Television Timetable

BYU vs. Colorado (Women's Soccer)

Friday, August 28 at Provo

Start Time: 7:00 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Utah (Women's Soccer)

Friday, September 4 at Provo

Start Time: 7:00 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Nebraska

Saturday, September 5 at Lincoln

Kickoff: 1:30 pm MDT

TV: ABC