

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

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IT'S NOT A DEBATE...COUGARS DEFEAT UTAH STATE 34-14

Based on all the post-game chatter and opinions of the local press, you might think that the BYU-Utah State match up last Friday night in Logan was a political debate, not a football game.

Despite the scoreboard reading 34-14 in favor of the Cougars at the conclusion of the contest, the political spin by most of the press in general, and Aggie fans in particular, was that BYU had just lost its first game of the season.

To borrow from Lloyd Bentsen in his debate with Dan Quayle in 1988, "I am familiar with several BYU football losses, and Aggie fans, this was not one of them."

To borrow from a more recent political quote, just because you can see BYU from across the field and across the line of scrimmage, does not make you a good football team and does not make you victorious.

Just like any political debate, the Cougars were guilty of plenty of gaffes and goofs, but anyway you score it, dissect it or digest it, BYU is still 5-0 on the year.

If you want to hold the Cougars' feet to the fire of the Bentsen burner in this game, in our opinion, it is actually encouraging in a convoluted way.

Struggle

All good teams struggle occasionally to win games they are expected to win. Just ask Alabama about their 17-14 squeaker of a win last week against Kentucky.

Ask Utah if they are going to give back the last-second win over Oregon State, just because they played poorly.

There are no hanging chads or recounts in football. What the scoreboard shows when the clock expires is exactly how it is.

It may not be pretty, but you either have a win or a loss.

The fact that the Cougars were never seriously threatened by Utah State, despite Max Hall having a sub par game and the BYU defense looking like they were facing Jake Locker again, might mean that they are actually good enough to phone it in occasionally and get away with it.

Hall may be good enough to have a bad outing and still end up with 303 yards through the air and two touchdowns. He did all of that while completing 23-of-37 attempts. Yeah, he did throw two interceptions, but didn't we say it wasn't his best effort and he still got the win?

It didn't hurt Hall that he also was the beneficiary of his own personal bailout by Austin Collie.

Landside

The junior wide receiver turned in a landside performance with 8 catches for 132 yards and two touchdowns. He got the Cougars on the board in BYU's first drive of the game when he took it to the house from 76 yards out.

BYU seemed content to run the ball between the tackles and let USU gang up in the box to try and stop the run.

Despite a lack luster running scheme, Harvey Unga still had 89 yards rushing on 22 carries.

Speaking of rushing, based on the reaction of Aggie fans and the perception of the press, we are surprised that those same fans didn't rush the field in celebration of their political perception of a win.

BYU may be good enough to play poorly and still put up 406 yards of total offense.

On the Quest For Perfection scale, this latest Cougar outing was probably a 5. On the win-loss record, it was a 10.

While Aggie fans were chanting overrated in the stands, BYU fans get the ultimate chant. Scoreboard.

NEW MEXICO A PERFECT DRESS REHEARSAL

The big show is still 10 days away.

That will be when the Cougars take their football show to Broadway against TCU in Fort Worth and see if they really do have a hit or they get panned by pundits and pulled from a BCS bowl game.

The Cougars will get a nice dress rehearsal this coming Saturday against New Mexico in Provo.

It will be a chance for BYU to clean up some rough spots that showed themselves against Utah State last week.

There are plenty of things to work on for Bronco Mendenhall and the Cougars.

Offensively, BYU is still scoring points, but they have slipped in their third-down conversions and in steamrolling the last two defenses they faced in Wyoming and Utah State.

You can expect the Lobos to show BYU plenty of pressure with their unorthodox 3-3-5 scheme.

It should be a good test for Max Hall and company.

Defensively, New Mexico will bring it on the ground and try to grind down the BYU defense with a running game.

QB Gone

Since the Lobos of Rocky Long lost their starting quarterback, Donovan Porterie, to a season-ending injury, they have gone back to a potent ground game.

At least it was potent against Wyoming when the Lobos rushed for 317 yards on 48 attempts in a 24-0 win over the Pokes.

The impressive part of that rushing performance is that the Lobos did it without Rodney Ferguson, the premier running back, who sat out the game nursing a shoulder injury.

Instead, freshman James Wright led the Lobo ground game with 120 yards on just 15 carries.

To beat BYU, New Mexico will need some sort of productive passing game. That seems unlikely because UNM is now using redshirt freshman Brad Gruner at qb as a replacement for Porterie.

Against Wyoming, Gruner ran for 84 yards on just 8 carries, but in the passing department, he completed just 8-of-19 for 33 yards.

In his first start the previous week against New Mexico State, Gruner was just 7-of-16 for 55 yards and one touchdown.

Front Seven

You can look for the BYU front seven to get after Gruner and put pressure on him.

Up to this point in the season, BYU hasn't faced a team with a ground game as good as New Mexico's. It should be interesting to see how the Cougars stack up against a team that is intent on stuffing the ball down BYU's defensive throat.

Offensively, for the Cougars, we expect to see plenty of big plays. That is what the man coverage of New Mexico will give the Cougars in their passing game if the Lobos can't get to Max Hall.

Big plays should translate into a big score on BYU's side of the ledger. We call it BYU 41 UNM 10.

FLUFF AND STUFF

FOOTBALL RECRUITING...Richard Wilson, the 6-3, 225 pound tight end from Spanish Fork HS in Utah, committed to Bronco Mendenhall last week and says he will sign a letter of intent with the Cougars next February.

Wilson was highly recruited. He has solid offers from LSU, Miami, Stanford,, Tennessee, Washington, Utah and Arizona.

His final four included BYU, LSU, Miami and Stanford.

While Wilson projects as a tight end for BYU, he runs and catches like a wide receiver.

He is the second big receiver from Spanish Fork HS that the Cougars have nabbed in the last two years.

They signed 6-4 receiver Jordan Smith in 2007. He redshirted his first season and is currently serving an LDS mission. Wilson also is LDS.

After five games, Wilson had 23 catches for 405 yards for an average of 17.61 yards per grab.

With Wilson in the fold, here is the current BYU football commitment list for 2009,

Richard Wilson, TE, 6-3, 225, Spanish Fork HS, UT
Brett Thompson, WR, 6-3, 210, Oak Ridge HS, CA
Fono Vakalahi, OL, 6-4, 320, Bryan HS, TX
Ryan Mulitalo, OL, 6-3, 285, Hunter HS, UT
Remington Peck, TE, 6-5, 215, Bingham HS, UT
Anthony Heimuli, RB, 5-11, 225, Mountain View HS, UT
Mitch Mathews, WR, 6-5, 195, Southridge HS, OR
Trevor Bateman, DB, 5-11, 180, Palm Desert HS, CA
Peni Maka'afi, RB, 5-10, 215, Northridge HS, UT
Riley Nelson, QB, 6-1, 195, Transfer from Utah State
Tui Crichton, OL, 6-4, 280, Timpview HS, UT
Terry Alletto, OL, 6-3, 260, Ponderosa HS, CO
Craig Bills, DB, 6-2, 205, Timpview HS, UT
Jray Galea'i, DB, 6-0, 180, Kahuku HS, HI
Adam Timo, RB, 6-1, 185, Snow Canyon HS, UT

Still Shopping

BYU still has a few more offers of scholarships on the table for other players. They include:

Manti Te'o, LB, 6-2, 225, Punahou HS, HI
Xavier Su'a Filo, OL, 6-5, 285, Timpview HS, UT
Kyle Van Noy, LB, 6-4, 210, McQueen HS, NV
Latu Heimuli, DL, 6-4, 305, Highland HS, UT
Steven Fanua, LB, 6-1, 210, Milpitas HS, CA

L.T. Filiaga, LB, 6-0, 235, Bingham HS, UT
Brad Wilcox, OL, 6-7, 250, North HS, OK

This past weekend, Steven Fanua made an official trip to Cal. He has other offers from Arizona, ASU, UNLV, Fresno State and Boise State. Before he makes a college choice, he will make an official visit to BYU.

Also making official visits this past weekend were Latu Heimuli and Kyle Van Noy.

Heimuli was in Lincoln, Nebraska to take in the Missouri-NU game. He has the Huskers in his top three schools as of now. The good news for Cougar fans is that BYU is in that list also.

The third school is Oregon State.

Van Noy was in Boulder, Colorado this past weekend visiting the CU Buffs.

He was there for the Texas-CU game.

He also will make trips to Arizona State on January 5 and to BYU on January 11. Other schools that he still has interest in are UCLA and Boise State.

All of the current commits and those who have offers on the table for this recruiting campaign are LDS.

2010 Offers

Here is the list of recruits that already have scholarship offers for the following year. They are all currently juniors in high school and all are LDS.

Timothy and Kaufusi have already committed to BYU.

Jake Heaps, QB, 6-2, 190, Skyline HS, WA
Gifford Timothy, OL, 6-6, 280, Middletown HS, DE
Bronson Kaufusi, DL, 6-6, 220, Timpview HS, UT
Kona Schwenke, DL, 6-5, 210, Kahuku HS, HI
V.J. Fehoko, DL, 6-0, 215, Farrington HS, HI
Zac Stout, LB, 6-2, 215, Oaks Christian HS, CA
Chris Badger, DB, 6-0, 180, Timpview HS, UT

2011 Offer

Harvey Langi, RB, 6-1, 210, Bingham HS, UT..He is a sophomore.

POLLS AND PERSPECTIVE...Officially, as of today, BYU is a top-ten team. The Cougars are ranked No. 8 in the USA Coaches Poll. They are No. 9 in both the AP and Harris Interactive Polls.

The Coaches and Harris polls are the two that matter and each makes up 1/3 of the BCS standings which determine if the Cougars will receive a BCS bowl bid.

Now that almost all teams have played five or six games and we have seen almost all of the top teams, here is our personal poll.

We have Oklahoma No. 1. They are scary good.

We have USC at No. 2. They are scary good, despite the loss to Oregon State.

We have Missouri at No. 3. They are an offensive machine.

We don't see BYU being good enough to beat any of these three teams.

We also don't have BYU in our top ten. Don't fret. We don't have anybody else in our top ten either.

Behind OU, USC and Missouri, we think there are about 12-13 teams that you could throw in a bag and shake up and randomly place in our top 15 ranking.

BYU is one of those teams and so is Utah.

On a neutral field, we think BYU and Utah could beat about five or six of those teams.

Here is a list of teams that we don't think BYU could beat because of speed. These teams have too much of it offensively and BYU doesn't have enough of it defensively.

Those teams are, in no particular order:

Ohio State...They have the kind of qb in Terrelle Pryor that BYU has proven they can't defend.

Florida... Tim Tebow isn't as athletic as Pryor, but BYU couldn't defend him or the speed outside that the Gators have.

Georgia...It wouldn't be the mismatch that Hawaii and the Bulldogs was last year, but again, there is too much speed on Georgia's side and not enough on BYU's.

Texas Tech...The Red Raiders are a team that can out BYU the Cougars with their passing game. They finally have a defense to match.

Speaking of Speed

When it comes to speed, we may change our mind on BYU's chances of beating some of the teams mentioned above, but we need proof first.

That should come against TCU. The Horned Frogs have plenty of it defensively. So does Utah.

It should be very, very interesting to see how the BYU offense performs against real speed and how BYU's lack of defensive speed will fare on the other side of the ball.

How these two games turn out will not only determine BYU's BCS chances, but will determine how they will do against a team in a BCS bowl game that will undoubtedly have more speed than BYU.

As of right now, we have seen enough to think that the Cougars can throw the ball on both TCU and Utah.

We don't think they can run on either.

If we had to bet our house or children on the two upcoming games right now, we would take our chances for a win at TCU, but go with Utah over the Cougars based on what we have seen so far this season.

We actually think that BYU can throw the ball on Utah, even with their defensive speed, but we don't think they will have an answer for the kicking advantage the Utes have.

The Utes have the best kicker in the nation and in any kind of competitive field position game, which the last few games have been, an outstanding field goal kicker and punter would give the edge to the Utes.

We may change our mind after watching the BYU-TCU game, but you can't overestimate the advantage the Utes have in the field position and kicking game based on performances of both teams up to this point in the season.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. New Mexico

Saturday, Oct 11 at Provo

Kickoff: 4:00 PM Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. TCU

Thursday, Oct 16 at Fort Worth

Kickoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Versus

BYU vs. UNLV

Saturday, Oct 25 at Provo

Kickoff: Noon Mountain Time

TV: Mtn