

HB Arnett's

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BYU 26 Utah 23

DEFENSE WINS GAME BUT HALL GIVES BYU FANS A HANDY TEFLON TICKET

On paper Utah's defense is better than BYU's. They have better athletes and more of them. They have better stats and many believe they are better coached.

They weren't better Saturday.

The BYU defense won this latest game between long time rivals BYU and Utah.

BYU defenders may not be better on paper and in stats, but they were better on the field against the Utes.

Domination is not a word that was used frequently in the same sentence with BYU defense this season, but it is certainly appropriate to use when referencing this particular win for the Cougars.

Neither team had much offense to crow about, but had to rely on their defenses for a chance to win.

BYU's was better than Utah's on this day and it showed on the scoreboard with the 26-23 overtime win.

By now, you know that Max Hall went Morgan Scalley in his post-game comments saying he hated the Utes and that they are a classless institution with classless fans.

Like Scalley, who also had his comments caught on video, Hall has scurried to issue an apology for his remarks. In case you can't remember, Scalley, now a Utah assistant coach, said as a player in 2004 "I hate those __icks."

The Deal

Here's the deal from our perspective. Hall probably should not have said what he did, but there are probably thousands of Cougar fans who agree with everything he did say, but have never been able to say it themselves and get away with it.

Hall's comments now give us a get-out-of-jail-free card.

He said what many of us have thought for years and still think, but never wanted to be held accountable for thinking or, heaven forbid, saying.

Now Hall has taken the heat for us.

Both sides of this rivalry have fans who display boorish behavior.

The difference is that when you mix beer with boorish behavior, it is never a good thing. You can be the judge of which fan base the beer reference applies to.

Card carrying Mormons from both sides of the aisle are against boorish and bad behavior by the respective teams for whom they cheer.

Utah Mormon fans don't have that boorish behavior stick to them, however. They have had their Teflon ticket for years. They can take the wins and glory and revel in them, but never are held accountable for being supporters of an institution that at times produces unacceptable behavior. It is just incidental and collateral damage that never comes back to roost with their religion.

Bad Report

It doesn't work that way with BYU fans. Anything bad, boorish or of bad report, is automatically laid at the feet of Cougar fans who are Mormon as another example of hypocrisy and self-righteous behavior exposed.

Now with Max Hall taking the heat, we get our temporary version of the Teflon ticket. We agree with what he said, but because Hall is taking the heat, it is just incidental Cougar collateral damage that we can't be personally held accountable for.

NOW THAT IT IS OVER, HOW DID THEY DO?

If Bronco Mendenhall and almost every other D-1 coach can have exit interviews with players at the conclusion of the season, we can give our exit review for the 2009 regular season and our entrance preview for the 2010 season.

Overall Season...BYU finishes the regular season with a 10-2 record and a No. 14 BCS ranking.

Despite all the hand wringing and criticism about lack of speed, poor coaching and play calling and a dysfunctional defense, there was only one game that you could call a choke and clunker by the Cougars this past season..

That would be Florida State. TCU is just better than BYU and in our opinion, one of the top three teams in the nation. BYU would have been given a pass by its fan base if they had lost to Florida, Texas or Alabama, but TCU is as good as any of those teams and could whip any of the three if given the chance to play them. A very, very good year for the Cougars.

Quarterback...We give Hall our MVP for the year because of what he meant for the team. We base it on the fact that without him, BYU would have been lucky to have been 7-5.

He had some terrific games and also had some less than terrific games, but he still was the MVP. BYU couldn't have won 10 games without him.

He didn't look impressive against Utah, but he won two of his three matchups with the Utes. As they like to say, "Scoreboard".

For those who question his legacy as a Cougar, he is right up there now with Wayne Howard and Lenny Gomes.

Is he irreplaceable? No way. No BYU quarterback has ever been irreplaceable. It is the nature of the college game. There are no quarterbacks signed to long-term contracts.

Our money is still on Riley Nelson as the starter at qb next season. We look for some mistakes early, but this guy is a gamer and will win games for the Cougars.

Jake Heaps is a great prospect, and continues to have a brilliant senior season.

Saturday, he led his Skyline HS to a semi-final 31-26 win over No. 1 rated and previously unbeaten Bothell HS. Heaps started slow with two first-half interceptions but made big third down completions when the game was on the line in the second half to secure the win. Heaps finished with 17-of 32 pass-

es for 220 yards, two touchdowns and three interceptions.

Despite his obvious talent, we haven't given Heaps much of a chance to secure the starting job as a true freshman next year.

Then we saw what Jordan Wynn did as a true freshman for Utah.

He came in early to the program and had a spring practice under his belt. Heaps will follow the same timeline as a Cougar.

We now at least will acknowledge that if Heaps lives up to his billing, he at least now has a chance to start for next year.

Running Back...BYU isn't going to have any big-time backs with shake and speed. That is why the need big power backs.

Thank goodness for Harvey Unga. Take away Unga, either with an early NFL entry or after his final season in 2010, and it is back to the very ordinary backs that usually dot the Cougar backfield.

Here's hoping Harvey returns for his senior season.

Offensive Line...For a unit that was supposed to be young and inexperienced, it turned out pretty good for BYU. Four starters return for next season. All coaches need to do is find a center next year to replace R.J. Willing.

Matt Reynolds is the guy from this group most likely to cash an NFL paycheck when he is done, but the real find of this season was Braden Brown. He was forced to switch from tight end to right offensive tackle because of depth issues.

In our opinion, he has found his spot and a chance also to maybe someday cash an NFL check.

He needs to add another 30 pounds, but he has the athleticism and feet that the NFL guys are looking for.

Speaking of adding pounds, BYU would be wise to take Brown's younger brother, Travis Brown, the starting qb for Timpview HS. He isn't D-1 as a qb, but he has the same feet and athletic ability of his older brother. Send him on a mission and put an additional 70 pounds on his frame and you probably will have another outstanding offensive tackle on your hands.

Receivers...This was an ordinary to disappointing season for this group. Despite the early excitement and projections for McKay Jacobson to be the play maker that Austin Collie was, it didn't happen. Jacobson was hurt for four games, but he, along with all the other receivers, Luke Ashworth, O'Neill Chambers and Spencer Hafoka, never kept opposing defensive coordinators awake at night. The only hope for next year is that Ross Apo, the verbal commit from Texas can come in and be a playmaker.

Tight Ends...Dennis Pitta is a good and a proven producer. Andrew George also helped. We don't see how this position can be as good next season.

Defensive Line...In our opinion, college defenses are like good baseball teams. They have to be strong up the middle. BYU was very ordinary this season up the middle at defensive tackle.

While the 2009 all conference teams have yet to be released when this was written, it says plenty that in the nine years since the Mountain West Conference was formed, BYU has never had a defensive tackle selected as a first-team all-conference performer.

There have been a few defensive ends selected, but it starts up the middle with the tackles.

We don't see any outstanding tackles in the pipeline either for the foreseeable future. Eathyn Manumaleuna is due back from his mission, but we keep hearing talk from his home town in Alaska that he is considering transferring to the Pac 10 and Norm Chow and UCLA will be making a run at him when he returns.

Fans get excited about quarterbacks, receivers and running back recruits, but wake us when BYU is able again to sign all-conference type defensive tackles.

Linebackers...Weak up the middle, but better on the outside was our assessment of this season. The outside backing spots have a chance to be good next year, but it is a stretch, in our opinion to see much, if any, improvement inside for next season.

Defensive Backs...Just like defensive tackles, BYU has not had a first-team all conference selection at corner back since the league was formed. They have only had one defensive back selected all conference in the last nine years and that was Aaron Francisco as a safety.

Brian Logan was a serious upgrade at corner for this past season, despite his smallish size. BYU, in our opinion, desperately needs another juco infusion at corner for the coming year.

Kicking...Okay, we didn't see all top-twenty five teams play, but the ones we did see on television all seem to have kickers that can get the ball into the end zone on kickoffs. Most of the other teams in the MWC also have kickers that can get the ball back there. Even at altitude, BYU has not been able to get it done.

The punting was also spotty this season despite the preseason prognosis that it would be great.

Maybe another year will be what it takes in experience because there won't be any new kicking personnel coming on board for 2010.

Coaching...Despite all the nitpicking, Bronco Mendenhall and his staff, like Max Hall, get the best of all accolades: "Scoreboard".

Some of us may not like his style, demeanor, dour expressions or how he does it, but four straight seasons of 10 or more wins really is some great coaching.

BYU LIKELY HEADED TO LAS VEGAS BOWL

There are only two bowl possibilities for BYU this year. They will either return to the Las Vegas Bowl for their fifth consecutive appearance or head to San Diego for the Poinsettia Bowl.

As of right now, regardless of either of the two bowls, there are only three possible opponents for the Cougars.

That would be USC, Arizona and Cal.

The Las Vegas Bowl gets the fifth-place team from the Pac 10 and the Poinsettia Bowl gets the sixth-place team from the same conference.

BYU GETS WAKE UP CALL AND TUNE UP FOR UTAH STATE

BYU found out two things last Friday in their 87-70 win over Weber State.

After four previous wins, BYU discovered that there are teams that will actually play defense and compete on the boards with the Cougars.

Weber State did both.

BYU also found out that despite a little adversity and facing a team that doesn't roll over, the Cougars are still pretty good.

The BYU guard line was the difference in this game. Jimmer Fredette had 23 points and Jackson Emery added 15 which included a second half shooting spark for the Cougars.

Emery was limited to just 22 minutes of play because of foul problems, but when he did return to the court in the second half, it was his 3-point shooting barrage that put BYU back in the lead for good.

The competitive game will be a good tune up for the Cougars when they travel to Logan to take on the Utah State Aggies Wednesday, December 2.

To say it will be a hostile environment would be an understatement.

To say the Aggies won't play hard and be prepared is an even bigger understatement.

This will be a better barometer than what we have seen so far in the early going of this season and just how good the Cougars can be.

Unless BYU can shoot at least 50 percent from the floor, we don't expect BYU to win, but we do expect them to compete. We don't think it matters how well the Cougars shoot from the free throw line because in Logan, BYU never seems to be able to get there.

THE FUTURES MARKET

As an old commodities trader, we have found a new futures market to follow as it pertains to BYU basketball.

Listed below is how BYU's most recent signees and future prospects fared during the last week.

Kyle Collinworth, 6-6 guard/wing, Provo HS...The recent BYU signee opened his senior season with a steady performance despite being dogged by double teams all game long. Provo beat Springville 63-60 and Collinworth had 14 points and 14 assists.

Nick Emery, 6-3 freshman guard, Lone Peak HS...As a ninth grader, Emery opened his high school career locked up the limit. He led the Knights to a 63-48 win over Salem Hills and scored 19 points, had seven rebounds, five assists and five steals in his debut. He is the brother of current Cougar Jackson Emery.

Anson Winder, 6-3, guard, Bishop Gorman HS...Season kicks off Dec 12 for this recent BYU signee. The opening bell forecast calls for a higher opening for Winder, who should lead his team in scoring this season.

Jabari Parker, 6-5, wing, Simeon HS, Chicago...Season kicks off Dec. 6 for this multi-talented LDS freshman.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Utah State

Wednesday, Dec 2 at Logan

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: the CW30 (local only in Utah)

BYU vs. San Francisco

Saturday, Dec 5 at Salt Lake

Tipoff: 4:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUTV and KJZZ (local)

BYU vs. Arizona State

Tuesday, Dec 8 at Provo

Tipoff: 8:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: The Mtn

BYU vs. Fresno State

Saturday, Dec 12 at Fresno

Tipoff: 8:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: none

BYU vs. Wagner

Thursday, Dec 17 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUTV

BYU vs. Eastern Washington

Saturday, Dec 19 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUTV

BYU vs. Nevada

Tuesday, Dec 22 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 8:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUTV

BYU vs. Nebraska or Tulsa

Wednesday, Dec 23 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: TBA

TV: BYUTV