

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

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As a subscriber, you are allowed to access our new blog. You can view it by going to www.cougar-sportsline.blogspot.com

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.

BYU PUTS NEW MEXICO ON THE COUGAR PAYROLL WITH 31-24 WIN

New Mexico is now employed by BYU.

You can add the Lobos to Air Force as two teams that are now working for the Cougars in BYU's quest to repeat as MWC champions.

With the 31-24 win over UNM last Saturday night in Albuquerque, every win the Lobos and Falcons now can muster in MWC play, benefits the Cougars and makes their road to the top that much easier.

It wasn't like Rocky Long and his Lobos interviewed for the job. They are more like indentured servants now working to pay off the cost of their painful defeat at the hands of the Cougars.

Both New Mexico and Air Force now have to hope the Cougars have two losses in conference play if they hope to get the nod as outright conference champs.

That doesn't now seem likely.

Going into the game, neither did a win over the Lobos, in our opinion.

Thanks to some solid defense and some big plays on offense, the Cougars recorded their first road win of the season.

Gate

Defensively, BYU got out of the gate quickly when Bryan Kehl intercepted a deflected Donovan Porterie pass and returned it for a touchdown and a 7-0 lead in the first quarter.

Manase Tonga gave the Cougars a 14-0 lead with a 8 yard td run in the second quarter.

The Lobos got on the board late in that same quarter with a Rodney Ferguson 1 yard run. They missed the extra point and BYU went to the locker room at halftime with a 14-6 lead.

Despite some less than stellar passing numbers (18-40 for 251 yards) Max Hall made the big plays

when needed.

He hit Austin Collie for a 59-yard scoring toss in the third quarter to take a 21-6 lead.

That is when the game got interesting.

The Lobos responded with two touchdowns of their own and a two-point conversion to knot the game at 21 all going into the fourth and final quarter.

Hall again found Dennis Pitta for the go ahead touchdown on a nicely threaded 14 yard touchdown toss.

Field Goals

The two teams then traded field goals and BYU held on for the conference win. The Cougars are now 3-2 on the year and 2-0 in league play.

BYU will have a bye week before traveling to Las Vegas for their next action against the UNLV Rebels.

Collie, playing with an injured rib and ankle, led all Cougar receives with 4 catches for 98 yards.

Harvey Unga was the leading BYU ball carrier with 56 yards on 22 touches.

The key stat in this game, however, was in turnovers. BYU only had two while the Lobos coughed it up five times.

BYU had already proved that they couldn't win with excessive turnovers and now they proved that they can win on the road when they win the turnover and takeaway game.

McMahon, Max and New Mexico

We started this newsletter in September of 1980.

In our first issue ever we predicted a BYU win over New Mexico in Albuquerque in the opening game of the season.

We were wrong.

In our last newsletter, we predicted a BYU loss in Albuquerque. We were wrong again.

We based our ill advised predictions on quarterbacks.

In 1980 BYU was coming off an 11-1 record and had Jim McMahon starting at quarterback. New Mexico was coming off a 5-7 record and had Joe Morrison as a new coach.

We had no idea who Joe Lee Dunn was, but the new defensive coordinator of the Lobos blitzed and brought pressure all night long on McMahon.

It worked. New Mexico won the game 25-21 and Lobo players ran off the field chanting, "We just won the WAC."

New Mexico finished the year with a 4-7 record. BYU finished with a 12-1 mark, including the now historic 46-45 Holiday Bowl win over SMU.

Same Philosophy

With a new BYU quarterback in Max Hall and the same UNM defensive philosophy, only with better athletes than those the Lobos had in 1980, we didn't expect Hall to be able to handle the pressure.

It remains to be seen if Hall is another Jim McMahon, but if a future super bowl quarterback was picked apart by the pressure, how could Hall, a rookie working on just his fifth start in Division I football handle it?

Based on his first four games stats, the pressure actually did bother Hall. He was just 18-40 for 251 yards passing.

It wasn't hard to see that he was not as accurate as he had been in previous games.

But here's the deal on Hall. Despite being hammered and hit in the mouth with the Lobo defensive pressure and despite making some bad throws, Hall never wavered in his confidence. He never

backed down from trying to make plays and thinking that he could.

This is a quarterback that thinks he can score against anybody and then goes out and does it.

You can talk about New Mexico's five turnovers, and the Lobo's defensive pressure. You can also commend the Cougar defense for their own good play, but the bottom line for the BYU win was that Max Hall made enough big plays to get the Cougars' first win on the road this season.

Four Plays

In case you forgot, there were four plays, only three of which were counted, that made the difference. Hall hit Austin Collie over the top for a 59 yard scoring toss in the third quarter for a 21-6 BYU lead. After New Mexico stormed back to tie the game in the closing seconds of the same quarter, Hall found Dennis Pitta and squeezed in a ball between defenders for a touchdown and a 28-21 lead in the fourth quarter.

New Mexico hit a field goal to make it 28-24. Hall's next big play was a touchdown pass to Andrew George to put the game on ice.

That play was overturned after an extremely lengthy review.

BYU had to settle for a Mitch Payne field goal to go up 31-24.

The last big play by Hall came late in the game with New Mexico looking for a stop and the ball back.

On third and long, Hall did something he rarely does. He took off for the chains needing a first down to keep the clock running and the Lobos losing.

Chains

He not only made the chains, he stayed in bounds to keep the clock running after the first down.

Hall wasn't glossy, but he was good when it counted.

The beauty of his performance is that he never lost his courage under fire or his confidence in his ability.

In our opinion, this was his best game of the year because he got the win without playing his best.

Good pitchers win with their best stuff. Great pitchers win when they don't have their best stuff. The same goes for quarterbacks.

We expect Max Hall to win a lot more games this season and to have some gaudy statistics to go along with those victories, but considering the circumstances, we don't expect him to have a better game than he did against New Mexico.

That had to be demoralizing for New Mexico coach Rocky Long.

It was this past summer when Long said that there wasn't much difference between league champion BYU and three or four other MWC teams last year, except for the play of John Beck.

He said if Beck had been hurt during last year, BYU probably wouldn't have won the conference title.

Beck Gone

Long finally gets rid of Beck, thanks to graduation, and he finally gets his best quarterback at New Mexico in the last several years, and along comes Hall.

At BYU, and apparently New Mexico, it is all about the quarterback. The good news for BYU fans and the bad news for Long is that Hall is here now, will be here next season and still here the following year.

Losing Streak Continues

BYU may be on a two-game winning streak, but they certainly are in a losing slump when it comes to referee reviews.

While stats are not kept for that category, if our memory serves us, the Cougars have yet to be on the right side of any reviews this year.

They lost three in the UCLA game alone.

The streak continued at New Mexico when review officials overturned a game-sealing touchdown reception by Andrew George in the fourth quarter.

It was the longest review we can remember in a college game.

When it surpassed five minutes in duration, you just knew this one would not be called in BYU's favor.

The longer the review went, you just knew they were probably going frame by frame, looking for anything to overturn the call.

That is our opinion, and not meant to impugn the integrity of the review officials.

But this was not the Zapruder film. It was a football play where incontrovertible evidence had to be found to overturn the call on the field which was a touchdown.

It didn't determine the outcome of the game, but it certainly could have.

It did keep BYU's losing streak in reviews alive.

SIX FRESHMAN SUSPENDED

Bronco Mendenhall announced last Thursday that six freshmen football players have been suspended from the team and will remain suspended until they have met the conditions for re-instatement that he has put in place.

The six are G Pittman, Brannon Brooks, Gary Nagy, Ryan Kessman, Ryan Love and David Angilau. All were redshirting this year.

Kessman has since asked for his release from his scholarship in order to transfer to another school.

Mendenhall has agreed to the release.

While BYU won't release the reasons for the suspensions, other than to say that it was for violations of team rules, you don't have to search very hard on the internet to get the story.

The reasons are not relevant. What is relevant is the fact that while nothing that happened made it to the police blotter, it still emphasizes the fact that when you have 120 players on the roster, you are going to eventually have mishaps and misfortunes.

It is just statistically inevitable.

What we find interesting, and always have, is that in context with the rest of the college football world, BYU is still almost Pollyanna in its personnel.

Good Thing

Considering the sponsoring institution, that is a good thing.

BYU will never be perfect.

As long as they have players, they are going to have occasional problems.

It has always been that way, is now, and always will be.

That doesn't make them acceptable, just inevitable. Bronco Mendenhall certainly runs a tight ship and has boldly framed his expectations for the conduct of the players he recruits and coaches.

But if even LDS mission presidents, where the bar is raised to its highest point and the numbers of missionaries are about the same as the number of football players on the BYU roster, have to deal with an occasional personnel problem, why do we expect BYU football to be any different?

If you are a parent and you raised six great kids, congratulations. If you were an exceptional parent and have 15 kids and they all turned out wonderful. Write a book.

If you are a football coach and have 120 kids under your part-time tutelage and stewardship, even at BYU, take a statistics class and just hunker down and hope that the inevitable player problems don't make the police blotter.

Intellect

What we should be more worried about is the intellect, not the conduct of these suspended players. If you are a BYU football player, here's some useful information. Salt Lake used to be a safe haven for misconduct. In the past, just like Las Vegas, what happened in Salt Lake, used to stay in Salt Lake.

If you are looking for a statistically safe haven for your non-BYU sponsored activities, rethink it. How could they think that they wouldn't be noticed.

This is the age of the internet and You Tube. There is no safe spot for sorry behavior anymore.

BYU IS JUST ONE PASS AWAY FROM NEPOTISM

In case you haven't noticed, the sightings of Reed White on the football field during recent games are becoming more frequent.

He wears #20 and has been lined up to return kickoffs and in Albuquerque, even found a few snaps as a wide receiver.

It will probably be sooner than later that he will get a pass thrown his way by Max Hall and have a catch recorded in the BYU record books.

White, who is a walkon and the son of former ASU and NFL standout qb Danny White, and Hall are cousins.

Nepotism aside, are we the only ones who has noticed that BYU appears thin at wide receiver this season and only an injury away from being in trouble?

White is a nice player who has made some progress, but the fact that he is now seeing the field as a receiver, is exactly our point.

Austin Collie is the real deal and a game breaker if he can stay healthy. He will need the bye this week to recover from his ankle and rib injuries.

Michael Reed and Matt Allen are experienced and dependable receivers, but beyond that, it looks very ordinary, especially if one of those three goes down.

Big Three

After the big three, here are the other receivers currently listed on the roster.

Bryce Mahuika, has been touted for the last few years as a playmaker, but it has never quite panned out that way on the field.

Other than White, you have names like Saia Hafoka who has always been injured and never seen the field. Nate Hutchison moved over from a db, but he too is injured. Ryan Kessman was redshirting, but now transferring. Jordan Smith is also redshirting, but likely to serve an LDS mission this next season.

Tyler Kozlowski is another walkon. He too has had a cameo appearance this year as a receiver. Matt Marshall, Ryan Neeley and Daniel Tervort are also walkons and make up the remainder of the wide receiver roster.

The good news is that BYU is loaded at tight end where Dennis Pitta is basically a talented wide receiver hiding in a tight end body. He is currently BYU's leading receiver.

Matt Allen graduates, but even with Collie and Reed returning for 2008, where will BYU find additional receivers to make a much needed contribution for next season and beyond?

No Jucos

We don't expect BYU coaches to bring in any juco receivers. Currently, they have just two high school

wide out committed in Atem Bol, of Hurst, TX. and Jake Murphy, a 6-5, 215 pounder from American Fork HS in Utah. We would expect both to be at least a season or more away from contributing to the program.

The Cougars are also recruiting the very talented O'Neill Chambers, a 6-3, 205 pound big-time receiver from Florida. He will make an official visit to BYU in January.

The connection is Tyler Anderson, the former Cougar receiver. He is now the head coach at Harmony HS in Florida where Chambers plays.

BYU may be able to bolster the wide receiver ranks next year with the return of two LDS missionaries.

Luke Ashworth and Spencer Hafoka will both be on the team for the 2008 season. Both are talented, but their contributions will be determined by how they are able to get back into shape get ready to play.

Collie is the key. If he can stay healthy and stay on the field, the rest of the receiver rotation, will be able to function by committee.

If Collie can't stay healthy, the rest of this season and next could be a problem when it comes to receivers for the Cougars.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

October 6 - **Bye**

BYU vs. UNLV

Saturday, Oct. 13 at Las Vegas

Kickoff: 7:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Eastern Washington

Saturday, Oct. 20 at Provo

Kickoff: 3:30 Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. San Diego State

Saturday, Oct. 27 at San Diego

Kickoff: 7:30 Mountain Time

TV: Mtn