

HB Arnett's

COUGAR SPORTSLINE

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BYU BASKETBALL AND WEST COAST CONFERENCE AS SEEN WITH A DOWNTON ABBEY PERSPECTIVE

Excuse the letter being sent a little late today. I blame *Downton Abbey* for the delay.

I stayed up and watched a few episodes. I make no apologies. I am hooked.

Unlike most junkies, I don't need rehab, just a little more rest and sleep on Monday mornings.

BYU has the WCC; I love the BBC and Masterpiece Theatre.

The addiction started with the slippery slopes of North and South, Wives and Daughters, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Emma etc. I never miss any thing with Inspector Morse, Sherlock Holmes and now Inspector Lewis and Sergeant Hathaway.

Downton Abbey, season 2, the latest offering from Masterpiece Theatre, is even better than season 1 of last year.

The overall storyline of Downton Abbey reminds me of BYU basketball and its first year as a member of the West Coast Conference.

The Cougars are a lot like Matthew Crawley who was unexpectedly brought into the upstairs aristocracies of Downton Abbey and Gonzaga and St. Mary's. Both Crawley and the Cougars have fit in nicely.

Downstairs at Downton Abbey is where the servants reside. The WCC is no different. There is a definite distance between the aristocracy of the league and those living in the basement of the WCC and Downton Abbey.

That was never so evident than last Saturday's 85-48 Cougar win over Pepperdine at the Marriott Center.

Occasionally the aristocracy of the WCC can show a kinship for those living in the lower level of the

manor and league, but there is an indisputable difference between the classes and teams.

We already cast BYU as Matthew Crawley. He has had his ups and downs, but eventually will have a happy ever after ending. Similarly, the Cougars also just have to endure season 1 in the WCC.

Gonzaga would be perfect for the part of Mary. Both are so used to getting their way and what they want.

This season, St. Mary's is perfect for the role of Sybil. The Gaels have broken away from their normal lifestyle to explore new options at the top of the league.

My favorite character of Downton Abbey is Thomas, the footman. He reminds me of WCC officiating. You can't trust either of them.

BYU has had its ups and downs and enough setbacks to make their story line interesting and at times, even riveting.

Here is how we see the Cougars storyline of this season.

They are retooling and rebuilding. Yes, I know that is hard to swallow; especially with a current record of 21-6 overall and 9-3 in league play, but the signs are obvious.

This is not a complete team. There is a very good inside game, but BYU is definitely rebuilding their guard line and buffering for time until they have the tools needed to get the makeover done.

It's still possible for BYU to earn an invite to NCAA play this year, but they won't do well there because of a suspect guard line.

That guard line, despite some current liabilities, also has some definite possibilities for the future.

Dave Rose currently has two guards that are both freshmen in Matt Carlino and Anson Winder. Both have proven to be hot and cold, especially shooting the ball.

The good news is that both can get to the basket with the ball in their hands.

That is an anomaly for a BYU guard line.

If both can spend the summer shooting hundreds of jumpers a day, BYU may be back in the guard business next season. The key is not the shooting of hundreds of jumpers, but making hundreds of jumpers.

The addition of another mentally tough guard with a penchant for scoring will also help next year. BYU and Dave Rose and his staff are hoping they have filled that need with juco transfer Raul Delgado.

Demarcus Harrison will either get better or get going on an LDS mission this summer. He is athletic enough that he should be better than he has shown this season.

We look for that to eventually happen.

BYU's guard play has been an overall liability this year. We expect it to pick up and be much better beginning next season.

The reality of this year is that we lost Jimmer Fredette. Connecticut also lost Kemba Walker. Ask the Huskies how it is to lose your best player?

For you chess buffs, how would you like to play after losing your queen?

That is exactly what Dave Rose has done this year. The fact that he and his Cougars are 21-6 and still in the hunt for a shot at a NCAA tourney berth is a testament to his coaching abilities and the weak bottom half of the WCC.

Speaking of the Mountain West Conference this year. BYU would not have a current 9-3 record in league play in the MWC.

Check out and compare the two league standings below. In our opinion, there are five teams that BYU would have trouble beating on the road in the MWC this season.

Mountain West Standings

TEAM CONF OVERALL

UNLV	6-2	22-4
San Diego State	6-2	20-4
New Mexico	6-2	20-4
Wyoming	4-4	18-6
Colorado State	4-4	15-8
TCU	4-4	14-10
Air Force	1-7	11-11
Boise State	1-7	11-12
Expanded Standings		

Men's West Coast Standings

TEAM CONF OVERALL

Saint Mary's	12-1	23-3
Gonzaga	10-2	20-4
Brigham Young	9-3	21-6
Loyola Marymount	9-4	16-10
San Francisco	7-6	17-10
San Diego	5-8	10-15
Portland	3-9	6-19
Pepperdine	2-12	8-17
Santa Clara	0-12	8-17
Expanded Standings		

Women's West Coast Standings

TEAM CONF OVERALL

Gonzaga	11-2	22-4
Brigham Young	10-2	22-4
San Diego	9-3	18-6
Saint Mary's	9-4	18-8

Pepperdine	7-5	12-11
Santa Clara	3-9	10-15
Loyola Marymount	3-10	7-18
Portland	2-10	9-17
San Francisco	2-11	4-22
Expanded Standings		

BYU MEN LOOK LIKE LOCK FOR THIRD SEED IN UPCOMING WCC POST SEASON TOURNAMENT

Based on the current WCC standings and remaining games for the top three teams, it would take a couple of serious upsets during the next two weeks for the Cougars to merit a pass into the semi-finals of the league tourney.

The two top seeds and finishers in league play are automatically seeded into the semi-finals.

That looks like it will be St. Mary's as the No. 1 seed and Gonzaga as the No. 2 seed.

The Gaels of St. Mary's have a game with Loyola Marymount in Moraga this week and then finish off their regular season on the road in a Bracket Buster game at Murray State and league games on the road at Portland and San Francisco.

Gonzaga has very good shot at securing the second pass into the semis.

If form holds, the only way that BYU and Gonzaga could swap places as the No. 2 seed is if the Cougars can upset the Bulldogs in Spokane next week. We don't see that happening.

That means that BYU will be the No. 3 seed and begin play on Friday, March 2 against the winner of the 6/7 game of the previous day. Currently the 6/7 teams in the standings are San Diego and Portland.

That would put BYU up against Gonzaga in the semi-finals the following day, Saturday, March 3. The Zags would be playing their first game of the tourney.

The tournament will take Sunday off for religious services. The championship game is set for Monday, March 5.

The same format holds for the women's tournament. BYU, with three home games remaining against San Francisco, San Diego and Santa Clara, finish their regular season at Gonzaga. That game should determine if the Lady Cougars are the No. 1 or No. 2 seed.

All men's games will be televised by ESPNU beginning on Friday, March 2. Both men's semi-final games will be televised by ESPN2. The Monday men's championship game will also be televised by ESPN2.

The only women's tournament game set to be televised will be the championship game on ESPNU.

SPRING SPORTS RECAP

In one of the better performances by a BYU athlete in years, Miles Batty, a senior distance runner for the BYU track team, set a new indoor collegiate record for the mile in taking second place in the prestigious Wanamaker Mile at the Millrose Games in New York City.

His time was 3:54.54. Batty was also last year's national indoor champion in the mile.

You can see his race here: <http://byucougars.com/home/m-track-field>

In softball, the BYU women started their season with a 2-2 record at the Kajikawa Classic in Tempe, AZ.

The Cougars were blasted 22-5 by Oregon State in their opener. They came back the next day to upset No. 15 ranked Texas A&M 3-2. That was followed up with a 6-2 loss to Texas State.

The Cougars came back strong the last day of this classic by beating No. 11 ranked Oregon 2-1 and finishing up with a 12-4 win over UC Santa Barbara.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. San Francisco

Thursday, Feb 16 at San Francisco

Tipoff: 8:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: ESPNU

BYU vs. San Francisco (women)

Thursday, Feb 16 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Cal Baptist (men's volleyball)

Friday, Feb 17 at Provo

Start: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. San Diego (women)

Saturday, Feb 18 at Provo

Tipoff: 1:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Santa Clara

Saturday, Feb 18 at Santa Clara

Tipoff: 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: ESPNU

BYU vs. Cal Baptist (men's volleyball)

Saturday, Feb 18 at Provo

Start: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Santa Clara (women)

Thursday, Feb 23 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Gonzaga

Thursday, Feb 23 at Spokane

Tipoff: 9:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: ESPN2

BYU vs. UC Santa Barbara (men's volleyball)

Friday, Feb 24 at Provo

Start: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Portland

Saturday, Feb 25 at Provo

Tipoff: 4:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv