

HB Arnett's

COUGAR SPORTSLINE

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NAMES AND GAMES

DOMAN AND DEJA VU

It was Gary Crowton's first year at BYU and Brandon Doman's first chance as a full-time starting quarterback for the Cougars.

The year was 2001 and after two weeks of fall camp, we couldn't believe how good the BYU offense was.

We actually told subscribers that they should get down to practice to see it for themselves. In those days, practices were still open to the public.

The Cougars opened the season by putting up 70 points against Tulane and laying 52 on Nevada.

In addition, they had games where they scored, 44, 35, 54, 63, 59, 56, 41 (twice) and 45 points.

The defense was ordinary, but it was an extremely talented BYU offense.

We don't expect 70 points against Oklahoma, and we don't get as excited about fall camp as we used to, but we still can recognize a very good BYU offense when we see it.

This will be the best offense that Bronco Mendenhall has fielded since he took over from Crowton. It remains to be seen if this will be an offense as good as the one in 2001, but it is very good.

Doman is still around, only as a quarterback coach. The defense is still ordinary and 2001 déjà vu may be too optimistic, but we know good offense when we see it. We've seen it this fall and so will the Sooners.

It would take the déjà vu defense of 1996 and the Cotton Bowl to go along with this year's offense for BYU to beat the Sooners, but BYU will show up in Dallas and they will score points.

We will take a burrito beating, based on a preseason subscription offer we had, but BYU won't.

Defense, or lack of it, is still an issue, but when you can score points, you are in the game. We expect to see the Cougars in the game against Oklahoma.

RANKINGS, RATINGS AND REALITY

BYU is a ranked football team that has some ranked players.

Once the season starts, we will quickly find out if BYU's rankings are in line with reality.

The fact that BYU is ranked in the two major preseason football polls, doesn't say anything about reality. That will be determined as the season progresses. The polls do say, however, plenty about respect. BYU still has it in the eyes of most of the national media.

The Cougars were ranked No. 20 in the AP preseason poll that was released this past weekend. They previously came in with a No. 24 rating in the USA/Coaches poll a few weeks earlier. Four opponents that the Cougars will face this season are ranked and rated ahead of BYU in both polls.

Oklahoma is No. 3 in the AP and USA/Coaches polls.

TCU is ranked No. 17 in both rating systems. Utah is No. 18 in the USA/Coaches poll and No. 19 in the AP list.

Florida State flip flops with the Utes in the polls with the Seminoles ranked No. 18 in the AP and No. 19 in the USA/Coaches poll.

Ratings and rankings are usually suspect at best, especially in the preseason when nobody is sure just how good most teams really are. They are also subjective and suspect after the season concludes when media and moguls from BCS conferences coronate a champion based on ratings and rankings.

The same subjectivity applies to players. CollegeFootballNews.com recently released its preseason rankings of its top 200 NCAA football players for the coming season.

It is fun, but remains to be seen if it will be factual. That assessment of reality will have to wait until next April and the NFL draft.

In relation to BYU and other teams on the Cougars' 2009 schedule, here is how the CFN.com list shook out.

OU Leads Pack

Oklahoma led all NCAA teams with 10 players on the top 200 list. Here are the Sooner stars with their top 200 ranking in parenthesis.

Sam Bradford, QB (5), Gerald McCoy, DT (8), Jermaine Gresham, TE (20), Trent Williams, OL (47), Dominique Franks, CB (141), Travis Lewis, LB (142), DeMarco Murray, RB (148), Ryan Reynolds, LB (173), Jeremy Beal, DL (182), Chris Brown, RB (185).

BYU had 4 players on the top 200 list. They included; Max Hall, QB (62) Dennis Pitta, TE (65), Jan Jorgensen, DL (111) and Matt Reynolds, OL (199).

Other schools on the schedule for BYU this season with players on the Top 200 list of CFN.com include Utah, UNLV, Wyoming and Florida State.

Utah landed three players. Zane Beadles, OL (88), Stevenson Sylvester, LB (104) and Koa Misi, DL (191).

UNLV had Ryan Wolfe, WR (127). Wyoming had John Fletcher, DL (161) and Florida State had Dekoda Watson, LB (172).

U.S. News

While we are on the subject of rankings, BYU came in at No. 71 in the most recent *U.S. News and World Report's* annual rankings of universities.

You can look up the magazine's criteria for ranking schools if interested.

We look at it from the perspective of academics and athletics. Some Pac 10 honks and homers say that BYU is not academically compatible with their conference and consequently will never be seriously included for admission to the league should expansion occur.

The rationale always given is lack of research. That, in our opinion, is a euphemism for perceived political incorrectness and perceived ecclesiastical eccentricity.

If it was all about academics, BYU would be right in the middle of the Pac 10. According to U.S. News, BYU is outranked by Stanford, UCLA, Cal, USC and Washington, but outranks Oregon, Oregon State, Washington State, Arizona and Arizona State.

If you want to use the academic rankings of schools based on BYU and its football schedule, the Cougars are second on the list. Here is how that comes out with each school's academic ranking in

parenthesis as evaluated by U.S. News.

Tulane (40), BYU (71), Florida State and Oklahoma (both tied at 102), TCU (110), Utah (126), CSU (128), San Diego State (tier 3), New Mexico (tier 3), Wyoming (tier 3), Utah State (tier 3), UNLV (tier 4).

Tier 3 is approximately the next 25 percent of schools that are just beneath the numbered ranked schools. Tier 4 schools are considered even lower in academic ranking.

Keeper Or Seeper?

Like football rankings, sometimes academic accolades don't match up with reality. There are a lot of Ivy League educated politicians and government administrators with highly-ranked academic credentials, but sometimes dumb, despite degrees, seems to seep to the surface. Stupidity isn't a respecter of educational endeavors, degrees and rankings.

Need an example? Some of the brightest people I know are BYU graduates. On the other hand, after attending a tier 63 junior college, I somehow also got in at BYU, graduated and seeped to the surface from the same school that produced Mitt Romney.

I think he majored in Organizational Olympics. I wanted to major in English because that was the language most of the girls I dated in high school spoke.

That didn't work out so well when they told me that buying books wasn't optional. I had to settle for a B.A in Bakery. I eventually graduated summa cum lard in cookies and mint brownies. I have a degree and diabetes to prove it.

Me and Mitt. We both have diplomas from the No. 71 ranked university in the nation, but in the alumni data base, he's considered a keeper and I'm a seeper.

That pretty well explains ratings and reality..

HIP HOP PANTS AND PUNTS

Some pants we have seen worn by young men seem to defy the laws of physics. Those pants hang so low that it seems inevitable that they will eventually succumb to gravity and fall to the ground.

Hanging too low also appears to be a problem with Jerry Jones and his new Dallas Cowboys Stadium.

BYU will open the season against Oklahoma in that stadium on September 5.

Based on the first preseason NFL football game held in the new billion dollar stadium last week, it appears the giant big screen and scoreboard centered over the field is also hanging too low.

A Tennessee Titan punter hit the scoreboard with a punt during the game. He also hit it during warm-ups.

The ball was ruled dead and the play was re-run by NFL officials.

We bring this up because it is not unreasonable to think that BYU punter Riley Stephenson, the returned missionary freshman, can hit the scoreboard with a punt.

He has a big leg and regularly has been booming high-hanging punts during fall camp.

Watching Stephenson punt during the game to see if he can hit the scoreboard, hopefully won't be the only highlight of the contest for the Cougars, but we guarantee it will be interesting.

Based on fall camp, Stephenson's chances of hitting the scoreboard in Dallas look better than Mitch Payne's chances of hitting the broad side of a barn with a field goal.

Payne, who was 10-14 last season in field goals for the Cougars, has been dismal and disappointing in kicking during the first two weeks of camp.

Bronco Mendenhall and the entire Cougar nation are hoping he can return to form Sooner (pun intended) than later.

SHUFFLING THE DECK

Since BYU ended its 2008 season with the loss to Arizona in the Las Vegas Bowl last December, Bronco Mendenhall and his coaching staff have made several shuffles in players, personnel and positions.

Here are the most notable.

Jordan Pendleton has switched from a backup safety and is now the starting strong side linebacker for BYU.

Scott Johnson went from a starting cornerback to a starting safety.

Another safety that has been switched for spot action is Shiloah Te'o. He has been working this past week as a middle linebacker.

The rationale is to try and get better athletes on the field and in more positions to try and defend the spread offenses that the Cougars will face this season.

Teams that spread the field against the Cougar defense last season ate alive the BYU defense.

Last year, Utah and TCU were prime examples of BYU not able athletically to match up effectively against spread offenses.

The Cougars were also lucky to beat UNLV in Provo because the Rebels spread the field effectively.

You can add two more teams in the Mountain West Conference that will spread the field on offense this year. New coaches Dave Christensen and Mike Locksley at Wyoming and New Mexico are both bringing spread offensive attacks to their new jobs. Utah State with new coach Gary Anderson, formerly of Utah, is also installing a spread offense.

If you consider Air Force's offense to be a form of the spread offense, that means that six of the eight teams the Cougars will play this year in the MWC play will be running some sort of spread or option attack.

Others BYU players who have switched positions include Vic So'oto. He went from tight end to linebacker last season and has now moved to the defensive line. Jadon Wagner made the same switch from linebacker to defensive line.

From the incoming freshman class, two players have already been reassigned positions. Remington Peck, a 6-4, 240 pounder has been moved from outside linebacker to defensive tackle.

Richard Wilson signed as a talented tight end out of Spanish Fork High School. He is now working as an outside linebacker.

Stephen Covey went from a backup quarterback who was the scout team spread quarterback specialist to a wide receiver.

Jordan Atkinson, played spring football as a middle linebacker, but has been moved to the outside linebacker spot during fall camp. Walkon receiver Matt Edwards (LaVell's grandson) has made the move to tight end.

Landon Jaussi was a backup wide receiver last season. He is now a 6-5, backup cornerback.

MEDIA INSPIRES CONFIDENCE

You can count on the media. They are the last to know.

When a stock market bubble is about to burst, the media is still abuzz about the strength of the market. The same applies to the housing markets.

This axiom, in our opinion, also works on the opposite end of markets.

When the economic news is the bleakest as disseminated by news organizations, it usually means that a recovery is already underway.

The same hold true for BYU football. The mainstream media seldom gets it right.

That is what we see happening with the Cougar offensive line.

Matt Reynolds, BYU's only returning starter on the line, broke his hand. He is expected back in time to play against Oklahoma. Jason Speredon, another projected starter, is gone for the year with a torn rotator cuff. Houston Reynolds, projected to be one of the top eight linemen this season, tore his ACL.

last week is gone for the season.

The media has major concerns about BYU's offensive line.

That is good news for Cougar fans.

This will be a good BYU offensive line. They still have enough talented bodies.

If you spend time watching them work in head-to-head matchups with the BYU defensive line, this group wins most of the battles.

Reynolds will be back in time for Oklahoma. That gives the Cougars six good linemen. The fact that Jesse Taufi is still listed on the roster says that he is eligible to play this season. Why he hasn't been at practice yet is a mystery, but BYU does not list players on their official roster if they are not eligible to play.

Here is how the starting line has looked the last week. R.J. Willing is at center. Marco Thorson is at right guard and Nick Alletto at right tackle. line working head

Terence Brown is at left guard with Braden Hansen at left tackle until Reynolds returns.

When he does come back, Reynolds, Hansen and Alletto will all see action with most of the sharing of playing time coming between Alletto and Hansen.

HALL AND HISTORY SAY 10 WIN SEASON

Max Hall has been on fire in fall camp.

The senior quarterback has never looked better. That is good news because when BYU has a very good quarterback, they have a very good football team.

Hall's numbers last week were unbelievable in controlled and live scrimmages.

Monday, he was 7-of-12 for 78 yards, 1 TD and 2 picks.

Tuesday, he was 19-of-26 for 196 yards and 2 TDs.

Wednesday, he was 12-of-15 for 156 yards and 1 TD.

Thursday, he was 16-of-23 for 147 yards and 1 interception.

Friday, he was 16-of-23 for 223 yards, 2 TDs and 2 picks.

Saturday, he was 13-of-14 for 165 yards and 2 TDs.

After Bronco Mendenhall's first year as BYU's head football coach, he has not lost a home football game.

If that record holds up, it would give the Cougars six wins, including victories over Florida State, TCU, Air Force and Utah. Colorado State and Utah State are the other home games.

All the Cougars would need to do is find four more victories on the road and that would make it four straight seasons of 10 or more wins.

If BYU can hold serve at home, finding four more wins shouldn't be that difficult.

Tulane is a very winnable game. The Cougars also get three lower echelon MWC teams on the road in UNLV, Wyoming and New Mexico. Throw in a rebuilding San Diego State and it shouldn't be hard to manufacture at least 4 wins from those five games.

Now back to Hall. As good as he is, it is likely that Sam Bradford of Oklahoma is better, at least based on the performances of both quarterbacks last season.

Bradford won the Heisman trophy last year as a sophomore. He also led the nation in pass efficiency.

Here are the comparative stats between the two signal callers from last season.

Bradford completed 328 of 483 attempts for 4750 yards. That is a 67.9% completion rate.

Hall completed 330 of 477 attempts for 3957 yards, which is a 69.2% completion average.

Bradford had a passing efficiency rating of 180.84 (led the nation). Hall rating was 157.21.

In 13 games, Hall threw 35 touchdown passes last season compared to 14 interceptions (5 of which game against Utah). Bradford had 50 touchdown passes and 8 picks on the year in 14 games.

BASKETBALL BRIEFS

BYU's top high school recruiting priority for November's early signing period is still Kyle Collinsworth, the 6-7 guard from Provo HS. He is the younger brother of current Cougar Chris Collinsworth who is serving an LDS mission in Australia.

As of now, BYU has made the final cut. Collinsworth has said that despite a boatload of offers, he has narrowed his final choice of college to four schools.

They include Virginia, USC, Stanford and BYU.

He had a big summer playing with his AAU team, Utah Pump 'N Run. He put up some big numbers against some of the premier prospects in the nation.

It was his showing in Los Angeles at the Best of Summer tournament that got USC's attention. The Trojans immediately offered a scholarship after watching Collinsworth play.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Oklahoma

Saturday, Sept 5 at Arlington, TX

Kickoff: 5:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPN

BYU vs. Tulane

Saturday, Sept 12 at New Orleans

Kickoff: 1:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPN2

BYU vs. Florida State

Saturday, Sept 19 at Provo

Kickoff: 5:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Versus