

HB Arnett's

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BUCKLE UP BYU, BEAVERS ARE FOR REAL

You should always be careful about what you wish for.

BYU football players and fans expressed concern that they wouldn't get to prove just how good BYU is unless they were able to face a quality team from the Pac 10 in a bowl game this season.

Wish granted.

BYU will face Oregon State in the Maaco Las Vegas Bowl on Tuesday, Dec 22.

It will be the Cougars fifth consecutive appearance in the game.

It will also be BYU's biggest test yet in that particular post-season affair.

The Beavers of OSU had a legitimate shot at being in the Rose Bowl and facing Ohio State in Pasadena.

A 33-37 loss to Oregon on the Ducks home field made the Beavers a runner up for an appearance in the Granddaddy of all Bowls.

OSU finished tied for second place in the Pac 10 with a 6-3 conference slate and at 8-4 overall. Stanford and Arizona were the other two teams tied with OSU for the second place conference finish.

How?

So how did a team that finished tied for second in the Pac 10 end up in Las Vegas in a bowl game that has the fifth pick from that same conference?

OSU started out Sunday hoping for a berth in the Holiday Bowl. Arizona was invited instead because they defeated Oregon State in the regular season.

The Sun Bowl, which has the third pick from the Pac 10 took Stanford because the Beavers were in El Paso last year and there is a no-repeat clause in play.

USC finished behind the Beavers in the standings, but was taken by the Emerald Bowl with their fourth pick from the Pac 10 because they couldn't afford to pass up a bigger name and a bigger TV draw.

The Beavers, in our opinion, did finish first in two crucial conference categories.

Oregon State had the best quarterback and running back in the Pac 10 this past season. Forget stats, Sean Canfield was the best qb and Jacquizz Rodgers was the best running back in the league.

They Got It

If BYU's defense was looking for the highest ranked and best team they could face, they got exactly what they wanted.

Canfield, completed 284-of-406 passes for 3103 yards. He threw for 21 touchdowns and had just six interceptions on the year.

Max Hall, who will lead the Cougars, completed 256-of-379 passes for 3368 yards. He threw for 30 td passes and had 14 interceptions on the year.

Rodgers, the 5-9, 195 pound sophomore running back for the Beavers, rushed for 1377 yards on 255 carries. He also accounted for 21 touchdowns.

Harvey Unga carried the ball 184 times this past season for 1016 yards and scored 10 touchdowns.

In the rankings department, BYU finished No. 14 the final BCS standings while Oregon State came in at No. 18.

In the AP poll, BYU was No. 15 and OSU No. 16. The USA Coaches Poll had the Cougars at No. 14 and the Beavers at No. 20.

Oregon State will move the ball and score points against the Cougars.

The good news is that BYU will be able to do the same versus the Beavers.

Four Losses

In their four losses, OSU gave up 42 points to USC at the Coliseum, 37 points to Oregon on the road and to Arizona in Corvallis.

The other loss was a 28-18 defeat against Cincinnati. That game was also in Corvallis. The Beavers also suffered a major blow in their final-game loss when one of their starting cornerbacks broke his leg against Oregon. We are referring to Tim Clark, the senior cb from Compton, California.

The Cougars should be healthy coming into this matchup.

There is one department where BYU and Oregon State are already tied. Neither team practiced last week and neither team will be able to get in the allotted 15 practice sessions allowed by the NCAA in preparation for a bowl game. The early bowl game date will not make it feasible.

There is some talk in Corvallis about the Beavers and TCU matching up to start the 2010 season with a game at Dallas in the Cowboys' stadium, but details still have to be worked out.

Oregon State did face another MWC team this season when they eked out a 23-21 win over UNLV in Las Vegas in early September.

OSU had to kick a 33-yard field goal with 7 seconds remaining to get the win over the Rebels.

We couldn't find an early Las Vegas line for this game, so here is ours.

We call BYU a 3-point favorite.

FOOTBALL FLUFF

Jake Heaps, the heralded high school quarterback out of Skyline High School in Seattle, finished his high school career Saturday night by winning his third straight Class 4-A state football title in Tacoma.

Heaps was the starting qb in all three title runs and was 15 of 25 for 254 yards and 254 yards. He also threw four touchdown passes in the 45-21 win over Ferris HS.

No official word on when BYU knew they were headed to the Las Vegas Bowl, but we are betting that they knew about the invitation a few days before Sunday evening.

We base that on the fact that the posted basketball schedule of BYU had changed almost immediately Sunday. BYU was originally set to play Nevada at the Orleans Arena on Tuesday, Dec 22 at 8:30 pm. That would conflict with the Bowl game and its 6 pm start time.

Almost immediately, as soon as the Las Vegas Bowl invitation was formally announced, the game time for the basketball game switched and was posted on BYU's athletic web site from the original tipoff

time to 1 pm.

Our supposition is that BYU knew beforehand and it allowed them to negotiate with the basketball tournament people for an earlier start time.

It works well for BYU and the tournament. The tourney folks will get an increased audience and ticket sales from BYU fans that wouldn't be in town if it weren't for the football game.

BYU fans get a two-for-one chance to now support both their football and basketball teams.

BCS IS STILL BACKROOM

Blame it on Utah.

In our opinion, the BCS backroom boys were so embarrassed last year about having one of their BCS darlings, Alabama, thumped by the Utes, that there was no way they were going to allow that to happen again.

In our opinion, the fact that two non-qualifying teams, TCU and Boise State are facing each other in the Fiesta Bowl is no accident.

It is also our opinion, that the Fiesta Bowl honchos had plenty of help in making their picks.

There is no way the BCS snoots and snobs were going to risk having more embarrassment heaped on their beauty pageant by allowing the Frogs and Broncos a chance to expose the fallacy of foibles of the BCS process.

It was a win-win for the BCS cartel. They can actually point to the fact that non-qualifying conferences like the WAC and MWC can qualify for the BCS. They also can now also turn down the heat from possible congressional and anti-trust hearings.

By letting Boise and TCU win the miss congeniality titles, they guaranteed that their hand-picked contestants will be crowned queen of the BCS ball.

It didn't come cheap.

Last year's projected payout for conferences for both participating teams in the Fiesta Bowl was \$17.5 million per team.

Tiger Woods and the BCS, in our opinion, are both making financial adjustments in order to make a marriage and a monopoly stay intact.

UTAH STATE MAKES BYU LOOK LOYOLA

It was a few years back when Paul Westhead was the coach at Loyola Marymount in the late '80s. He was famous for his run-and-gun style of play and had Hank Gathers and David Spencer, two transfers from USC to help him implement his style of play.

The Lions were famous for getting down the court and hoisting up threes.

When those shots fell, they were spectacular and a media darling. When they faced teams that actually played defense and took away those shots and they didn't fall, they were exposed as an ordinary team.

BYU likes to push the ball, but they are a long way from the frenetic pace of Loyola Marymount years ago.

BYU, however, does live and die by its perimeter game.

When the shots are falling, they look spectacular. When those shots are taken away by a team that defends, they are not exactly exposed, but gaps in their game certainly appear.

That happened last week when the outside shots continued to be hoisted, but they didn't go down against the Aggies of Utah State.

It resulted in BYU's first loss of the year, a 61-71 setback in Logan.

BYU followed up the loss with a 69-43 blowout of San Francisco at Energy Solutions arena. The

Cougars are now 6-1 on the year.

Against USU, BYU shot 30.8% in the second half and it cost them the ball game.

Against USF, the Cougars shot 51% and they were never in trouble.

It is obvious that Dave Rose is aware of the fact that against good teams he can't survive with just a perimeter game.

He is tinkering with his lineup by now bringing Jonathan Tavernari off the bench.

Tavernari's shooting woes are well documented, but he isn't BYU's biggest problem.

The post play of BYU is so far just ordinary. That will be good enough to get by against most of the MWC, but it won't cut it against quality teams BYU will have to face in post-season play. As long as the Cougars can shoot it from outside, they can win their third consecutive league title, but against New Mexico and UNLV, they will at least have to show a post presence if they expect to hold off the Lobos and Rebels for a conference championship.

BYU will face Arizona State on Tuesday in the Marriott Center. The Sun Devils will come to Provo with a 5-2 record. Their two losses came at the hands of Duke (64-53 and Baylor 64-61).

The Cougars will then travel to Fresno State for a game against the Steve Cleveland-coached Bulldogs.

THE FUTURES MARKET

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

Kyle Collinsworth, 6-6 guard/wing, Provo HS...The recent BYU signee played in two games last week. He scored 19, had eight boards, six assists, three steals and two blocks for the Bulldogs in a 54-52 double overtime loss to American Fork.

Later in the week, Provo defeated Mountain Crest 57-46. Collinsworth had almost half of his teams offensive output when he scored 27 against the Mustangs.

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. The 19 points still stands as a career high for Emery because his team has not played another game for two weeks. Lone Peak will be in action this week with games against Viewmont and Lehi.

Anson Winder, 6-3, guard, Bishop Gorman HS...Still has not played a game as the Gaels season doesn't kick off until this Saturday against Findlay Prep of Las Vegas. Findlay is a nationally recognized prep power. The game will be played at the Orleans arena.

Jabari Parker, 6-5, wing, Simeon HS, Chicago...In his high school debut as a freshman for perennial power Simeon, Parker was the leading scorer for his team with 14 points in a 50-37 win over Thornton HS. The game was part of the City-Suburban Basketball Showcase held at Chicago State.

In referring to his performance in the season opener, Simeon Coach Robert Smith said Parker reminds him of Derrick Rose, who also played for Simeon, then played one season with Memphis and is now with the Chicago Bulls.

DeMarcus Harrison, 6-4, guard, Christ School, Arden, North Carolina...This LDS guard played last year at his local high school in Greenwood, South Carolina, but is now at the prep school in the neighboring state. It is similar to what current Cougar Charles Abouo did when he went from Logan HS in Utah to a prep school in New Hampshire.

Harrison debuted at his new school on November 10 with a 95-79 win over Quality Education Academy. Harrison had 13 points and 14 boards in the win.

Two days later, Harrison had 15 points in a 79-59 win over Veritas Christian Academy.

In a national tournament in Kentucky this past weekend, Harrison scored 11 against Findlay Prep of Nevada and 10 against Grace Prep of Texas.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

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. Oregon State (Las Vegas Bowl)

Tuesday, Dec 22 at Las Vegas

Kickoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPN

BYU vs. Nevada (HoopTV Las Vegas Classic)

Tuesday, Dec 22 at Las Vegas (Orleans Arena)

Tipoff: 1:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUTV

(Game was originally set for 8:30 pm start, but moved to 1:00 pm start to accommodate BYU's Las Vegas Bowl appearance. Cougar fans can now see both games)

BYU vs. Nebraska or Tulsa (HoopTV Las Vegas Classic)

Wednesday, Dec 23 at Las Vegas (Orleans Arena)

Tipoff: TBA

TV: BYUTV