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BYU BASKETBALL A FEEL GOOD STORY

Everybody loves a feel good story.

That's why "Hoosiers" and "Rudy" were popular movies

BYU basketball this season was also a feel good story.

The Cougars cobbled together a nice 26-9 record and had a few "Hoosier" moments while doing it.

Even Jimmy Chitwood couldn't have matched BYU's spectacular comeback victory over Iona in the first round of NCAA action last week.

But let's be clear. Hickory High School and Rudy at Notre Dame were over achievers and under athletic.

So was BYU.

Give Dave Rose some credit. He didn't play the toughest schedule, but still managed to find a way to come up with 26 wins with a team that has nobody that is headed for the NBA.

The Cougars overachieved with a bunch of under athletic players...especially on the guard line.

Let's be real

BYU's most successful teams, judged by NCAA performances, have had NBA talent on them.

Most recently, that was Jimmer Fredette and his crew. You have to go a ways back to Danny Ainge, Fred Roberts and Greg Kite to find BYU's most successful team. Again, the criterion used is NCAA play.

We didn't forget about Raphael Araujo. He certainly was drafted in the first round, but it didn't take long to figure out that he wasn't NBA material.

You don't need NBA players to be a good and entertaining team. BYU proved that this year, but really great teams do not exist in college without NBA caliber players.

There are the occasional short-lived anomalies, such as George Mason and VCU and there are always going to be the No. 15 vs. No. 2 seeded games when gigantic upsets occur, but to consistently advance in NCAA play, it takes NBA caliber players.

There is a reason that teams like Kentucky, Duke, North Carolina, Ohio State and Syracuse are perennial powers in NCAA play. They all consistently have NBA caliber players.

The sooner BYU fans realize this the easier it will be to recognize and appreciate what Dave Rose and BYU basketball has done in the last seven years.

The Cougars have over achieved with mostly under athletic players and with the exception of Jimmer Fredette, no NBA players.

Great Coaches or Great Players?

So called great coaches have to have great players if they want to be good. The better way of judging those coaches is by how they recruit.

Really good coaches can recruit to their limitations and still win. That certainly sounds like Dave Rose to me.

One of my favorite basketball stories was related by Dave Rose's predecessor, Steve Cleveland when talking about his first season at BYU. He relates his first encounter with UTEP's legendary coach Don Haskins. You can read the entire story online [here](#).

I recommend reading all of what Cleveland has to say, but the salient part I refer to is this:

"Then I'm sitting in The Bear's office. He looked me in the eyes and said, "That was a big win at UNM. I know you can coach, but understand this: everybody can coach at this level. There are three things that you must understand to survive in this business.

"Number One: Recruiting is the most important thing you do. Did you hear me? Recruiting! You can't win without good players.

"Number Two: Scheduling! I don't know who made your schedule, but you, the head coach, need to get control of that right now. Find a good balance. If you don't do this right, you might just schedule yourself out of a job.

"Number Three: Coaching! When you win you'll get more credit than you deserve, and when you lose you'll get more blame than you deserve. Don't read the papers and don't listen to talk radio. There is no one way to coach or win games. Commit to a system and teach it with a passion."

Coach Haskins then stood up, smiled and said, "Take it easy on us tonight," and walked out of the office."

Great coaches, including Dave Rose, understand the first principle. It's all about recruiting. Everything else is ancillary. That fact that Rose, given his recruiting parameters at BYU, which means that NBA talent is going to be few and extremely far between, needs a pat on the back for

what he has done with strictly the LDS recruiting pool. It is the only option he has.

Is there any one out there that thinks that BYU's slim to none chance of landing Jabari Parker would even be possible if Parker wasn't active LDS?

I am aware that there will be some who will let me know that they think Brandon Davies is NBA material. If you count the three steps he takes every time he goes to the basket, he is already NBA ready

In my opinion, if Davies is to make it in the NBA, he will have to be in the low post. That means he will need to be much stronger and tougher to bang and beat against other low post players and earn a paycheck.

We will see.

Most of this is rambling, but here is the reality of BYU basketball. It will take more talented LDS players if BYU is to ever be a serious NCAA contender.

The good news is that more talented LDS players are in the pipeline and if the Jabari Parker lotto sweepstakes ticket somehow turns up being purchased in Provo, then we can take NCAA post season play seriously.

Meanwhile, let's appreciate what we have. We don't have a BYU movie like Hoosiers or Rudy, but we do have a very entertaining and most of the time exciting basketball team to watch and cheer for.

That is more than 90 percent of other college teams can say with consistency.

BYU is what it is and it isn't yet an NCAA big boy when it comes tournament time.

ROSTER REVIEW

As a movie critic, I gave Hoosiers 3 stars. I gave Rudy just two stars, not because of the movie, but because I never like Dan Devine, the Notre Dame coach.

Here is my review of some of the BYU basketball roster of this year.

Noah Hartsock...Hands down, the undisputed MVP of the team. When he was healthy, BYU was good. When he wasn't healthy, the Cougars weren't as good.

Brandon Davies...The next best player on the team, but the most physically gifted. He has improved each season, and will be BYU's go to guy next year. He won't be doing much going, however, if BYU can't find another scoring threat on the front line to keep teams from doubling and triple teaming him.

Nate Austin...A big bruiser with a great competitive attitude. If somehow he can find a dependable low post scoring move, he could be dynamite. If the only scoring he can provide is the occasional three point shot, he will be relegated to journeyman status.

Chris Collinsworth...Here's hoping that he is the next Haley Steed story for BYU. Steed is the BYU women's guard who suffered through three ACL tears before finally getting to play. She was never the same player, but was productive. After two years of knee problems, here is hoping that Collinsworth at least can see the court next season. That's the first place to start. Any productivity would be a bonus.

Stephen Rogers...Another player knee deep in knee problems. Has a nice mid range game, and

when hot, can hit the three ball, but the biggest question on him, in my opinion, is toughness. We will find out how tough he can be next season.

Brock Zylstra...Toughness is not an issue for him. What is an issue is his erratic scoring. With the return of Tyler Haws and the infusion of juco guard Raul Delgado, we don't see how Zylstra's minutes for next season can do anything but go down.

Matt Carlino...The sooner he realizes that he is not NBA material, the better he will be. He gets caught up in playing against good athletic guards thinking he can be just as athletic. A good dependable two guard that can knock down a shot, may do wonders for Carlino's game. He will be much better when he gets a better grasp on his role and future.

Charles Abouo...Always played hard, but was always inconsistent. You never knew what you were going to get on any given night.

Anson Winder...The only player on the team with any hope or ability to stay in front of opposing point guards on defense. He had some very nice games. He needs more of them next season to be a factor.

Damarcus Harrison...A total enigma. The athletic ability was obvious, but it never materialized into anything productive until his last two games of the season. An LDS mission should do him a lot of good as a person and as a player when he returns.

Craig Cusick...The ultimate first responder. When Carlino was playing like a freeway wreck, Cusick was the guy Rose called on to try and stabilize BYU as a patient. Never going to be a star, but played a vital role keeping the guard line from going off the deep end. More often than not was successful in that role.

THREE OUT, TWO IN?

The math is not that hard. BYU had the allowed 13 players on scholarship this past season....Hartsock, Abouo, Davies, Zylstra, Austin, Harward, Carlino, Winder, Harrison, Stout, Collinsworth, Rogers and Martineau.

With Hartsock and Abouo gone to graduation and with Harrison apparently gone to the LDS mission field, that frees up three grants in aids.

Two are already spoken for and allocated. Tyler Haws will be back from his LDS mission to the Philippines. Raul Delgado, the 6-3, juco guard from Western Nebraska, will also sign with BYU next month.

Delgado wasn't on a mission in Nebraska, but he was involved in missionary work. He was converted and joined the LDS Church a couple of months back.

The third scholarship will more than likely go to Craig Cusick. He played as a walkon this past season.

This fall, it will be very interesting to see what takes place.

BYU will sign at least six players during the early signing period in November.

That will be Nick Emery, a 6-1 guard from Lone Peak HS in Utah, Eric Mika, a 6-8 forward from the same team, Braiden Shaw, another 6-8 forward from Eagle HS in Idaho, Jakob Hartsock, another 6-8 forward, Jordan Chatman, a 6-4 guard from Union HS in Camas, Washington and Cory Calvert, another 6-4 guard from Chaparral HS in Parker, Colorado.

Of course the big fish and big long shot is Jabari Parker the 6-7 forward from Simeon HS in Chicago. His team won the 4A Illinois State Championship last week.

That would make seven signees in November. All are committed with the exception of Parker.

Chatman, Hartsock and Calvert are for sure going on LDS missions before enrolling in school, but no word yet on the plans of Mika and Shaw. Emery is expected to play his freshman season before leaving on a mission.

BYU will also have to find a scholarship for Kyle Collinworth who will be back from his mission to Russia in 2013.

Looking for Playmakers

Let's cut to the chase.

You can't win football games without controlling the line of scrimmage, but more importantly, you can't win football games without playmakers.

That is why you have spring football. Coaches are looking for playmakers.

Bronco Mendenhall and his Cougars already know that they will have solid, but not spectacular offensive and defensive lines.

There will be no surprises coming out of spring ball on that front. As a matter of fact, his best offensive linemen are not even participating in spring drills and if they are, it is in only non contact drills.

Football coaches don't need spring practices to determine who their best interior linemen on both sides of the ball are.

What they need spring football for is to determine if there are any legitimate playmakers that are being overlooked.

You already know who the playmakers are and will be for BYU next season based on what we all saw last year.

Riley Nelson and Cody Hoffman are the playmakers on offense. We thought towards the end of the season that Ross Apo might take a step up in that category, but that is still a wait and see deal.

There were no other legitimate playmakers on offense last year. There were some nice solid players, but only the two playmakers; Nelson and Hoffman.

Based on this spring, our opinion is that BYU is still looking for more offensive playmakers. It would

be nice if one could emerge at tight end. There are plenty of bodies and good solid players, but nobody is screaming, "Look at me, I'm a playmaker."

There is still hope for help for Nelson and Hoffman. We think it will show up in the fall. That will be when we expect and BYU coaches expect Taysom Hill and Jamaal Williams to be the two most likely suspects as potential playmakers.

Spring football is for political correctness. Everybody gets a chance. Fall is for real when coaches forget seniority and politics and do all they can do to get playmakers on the field.

Expect to hear more of Hill and Williams this fall.

On defense, last year the playmakers were Kyle Van Noy and Loni Fangupo, the USC transfer. Fangupo is gone to the NFL and Van Noy is rehabilitating his shoulder after off season surgery.

He will be back in the fall and still be the premier playmaker for Mendenhall on defense.

There are plenty of solid journeyman players at almost all defensive positions, but it appears that there is a chance there could be some future playmakers to join Van Noy this fall on defense.

We talked last week about Manoa Pikula, the redshirt freshman linebacker. Athletically, three other defensive guys have playmaking ability. Ziggy Ansah and Alani Fua are making some noise this spring.

They both are athletically superior to other defensive players, but both have flaws. Ansah is being worked at both outside linebacker and defensive end. He could be an awesome pass rusher, but lacks experience and a legitimate feel for the game.

Remember, he came to BYU from Ghana to run track. We haven't given up on him. He probably will be something extra special after another year.

Fua is showing that he is athletically gifted also. His flaw is that after two years, he still hasn't put on the needed weight or added the needed strength to be a star.

The third playmaker we had pegged from the time he arrived on campus. We saw glimpses of Joe Sampson and his abilities last season. They should be much more prominent this coming fall.

In football, talent is nice, but it is all about making plays. We saw that epitomized last season with the play at quarterback.

BYU WOMEN FALL IN FIRST ROUND 59-55 TO DePAUL

Here's a short synopsis of BYU's official report on BYU Women's first round loss to DePaul:

CHICAGO—In its first NCAA Tournament game in five years, the No. 10 seed BYU women's basketball team ended its season with a 59-55 loss to No. 7 seed DePaul at the Allstate Arena Saturday.

The West Coast Conference Tournament champions finished the season with a record of 26-7 overall.

“Congratulations to DePaul,” said BYU head coach Jeff Judkins.. “They executed very well. I was impressed with their point guard. I’m really proud of our team. They’ve played hard and worked hard. We have some things that we need to work on for next season. I’m really proud of Kristen. She’s had a great career her at BYU.”

Jennifer Hamson scored a career-high 21 points in the loss and added a season-high 11 rebounds for her fourth career double-double. Senior Kristen Riley also scored in double figures with 10 points and added 12 rebounds for her 15th career double-double. She also had a career-high seven assists.

The Cougars’ 20 turnovers and 25 percent 3-point shooting hurt them. DePaul had 15 turnovers, but connected for 30 points off BYU’s turnovers compared to the Cougars’ 11 points off turnovers. BYU shot 33.9 percent on the night compared to the Blue Demons’ 42.6 percent.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU Women’s Softball

BYU vs. Idaho State at Provo

Tuesday, March 20 at Provo

First Pitch: 6:00 pm Mtn Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. New Mexico State

Friday, March 23 at Provo

First Pitch: 6:00 pm Mtn Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. New Mexico State

Doubleheader

Saturday, March 24 at Provo

First Pitch: 1:30 pm Mtn Time

TV: BYUtv