

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

801 372 0819

hbarnett@fiber.net and hbarnett@xmission

PO Box 50424 Provo, Utah 84605

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BYU COMES BACK TO THE PACK WITH LOSS TO SDSU

As the age-old sports axiom says, BYU still controls its own destiny in its pursuit of its second straight MWC basketball championships.

Unfortunately, the Cougars' disappointing 69-65 loss to San Diego State Saturday night in California, took some of the density out of the destiny.

BYU's comfortable cushion between teams like UNLV and New Mexico going into the weekend just got a lot thinner with the SDSU loss.

BYU is now 21-6 on the year and 10-2 in conference play.

The Cougars are likely to fall to 10-3 in league action with another road game on Tuesday, Feb 26 at New Mexico.

The Lobos are on a tear and are more than anxious to avenge the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Cougars a few weeks back in Provo.

In The Hunt

The Lobos and UNLV are still in the championship hunt with BYU. UNLV is currently at 9-3 in league and 20-6 overall. New Mexico is 22-6 and 9-4 in conference play.

A BYU loss at New Mexico will more than likely put BYU and UNLV in a dead heat in the chase for a championship.

While the Cougars play in Albuquerque this Tuesday, UNLV will be hosting San Diego State in Las Vegas.

Later in the week, UNLV will also host TCU at home while BYU will be facing Air Force in Provo on the same day.

New Mexico will not play again after the BYU contest until next Tuesday when they will host UNLV.

Barring a total meltdown and some help from New Mexico against UNLV, we still expect BYU and Dave Rose to capture the title with a 13-3 record.

Road Game

After the Lobo vs. BYU match up, the Cougars' only remaining road game will be at TCU to close out the regular season schedule.

BYU also has two remaining home games against Air Force and Wyoming.

While we are talking sports axioms, here's another to describe BYU last two games of this past week. "What goes around, comes around".

BYU defeated Utah this past Wednesday in Provo 67-59. The Cougars were led by Jonathan Tavernari's 20 points. Both Jimmer Fredette and Lee Cummond each added 14 points to the winning effort.

On the Utah sideline, there was much moaning and consternation about the disparity in fouls.

Charity Attempts

BYU shot 32 charity attempts and converted on 22 of those shots. The Utes went to the stripe just 10 times and made 9 of their attempts.

It was exactly opposite three days later in San Diego.

The Aztecs were lead by an amazing offensive performance by Lorenzo Wade. He scored a career high 28 against the Cougars.

He also had more free throw attempts by himself than the entire BYU team.

BYU shot just 6 free throws in the game and only made 3 of those shots.

Wade, the 6-6 wing for the Aztecs was 8-14 from the line. As a team, SDSU went to the line 30 times.

The bottom line for the loss was that BYU had no answer for Wade. When he wasn't making baskets, BYU was legitimately fouling him in their attempts to keep him under control.

Answer

BYU tried to answer offensively with Lee Cummond. He scored 20 for the Cougars on a very good 8-11 shooting night.

He also fouled out of the game in the final minute of action.

BYU wasted a lot of opportunities early in the game trying to pound the ball inside.

Trent Plaisted didn't have one of his better games and only shot 3-10 from the field and was ineffective in the post. Plaisted was benched for almost half of the game and only logged 24 minutes of action. He was replaced by Chis Miles who scored 4 points. Plaisted finished with 6.

ACHY BREAKY FEELING

It was Billy Ray Cyrus who had a catchy country tune a few years back entitled Achy Breaky Heart.

The two of us have a few things in common. He has a mullet and a daughter named Miley who uses the stage name Hannah Montana.

I also have a daughter named Miley and married a woman from Montana. I don't wear a mullet, but was called one by some subscribers a few weeks back after issuing my assessment of BYU's most recent football recruiting class.

I also received other feed back about those recruiting comments that had country music references. The most prevalent had to do with the Johnny Paycheck song that refers to jobs and shoving it.

Speaking of my wife, I took the advice of my father many years ago when he told me I should try and marry a woman from Montana because no matter how tough times got, she would have seen worse.

Mullet

After those comments, maybe I will start wearing a mullet in hopes that my wife won't recognize me. I digress.

What I want to really talk about is that Achy Breaky Feeling and BYU sports.

There are times during BYU athletic contests when certain players touch the ball when my body becomes tense and the blood pressure starts to rise. You know, that achy breaky feeling.

There were times when that feeling hit in football this past season when a certain running back carried the ball. Most of the time, instead of using his power and hitting the designated hole, he would start to dance like he was Reggie Bush and try to take the ball outside, only to be tackled for a loss or no gain.

It got to the point that when he was handed the ball, I got tense and uptight because, in my opinion, it was usually a wasted play and a drive killer.

Achy Breaky

I now have those same achy breaky feelings when the basketball goes inside to Trent Plaisted.

The 6-11, 245 pound post man for BYU is an exceptional athlete. He runs the floor as well as any big man in the nation. He is a very good rebounder, he is a decent defender. He is a team player and a very hard worker.

He has good enough offensive post skills that he can catch the ball in the low block and make offensive moves that get him to the rim or within three feet of the basket.

The cringing for me comes when the ball goes inside because while he can get within point blank range of the rim, it seems that he just can't consistently make baskets. When he does, those made baskets seem to be after the ball has hit the rim, clanged and bounced around and then fallen through. My assessment is that he throws, flings and tosses the ball more than he shoots it.

Box Scores

A look at box scores, however, tells me that most of this is a misguided perception because he has had some very big scoring nights where he has dominated in the post.

Here are Plaisted's shooting stats for his last seven games. He was 3-10 against SDSU, 2-9 against Utah, 8-17 versus UNLV, 9-9 against CSU, 10-14 going against TCU, 5-13 in Laramie facing Wyoming and 4-6 against Air Force.

Plaisted is the leading post scorer in the conference. He is averaging 15.5 points per game and shooting at a .532 clip from the field. The only other NBA post prospect in the league is Luke Nevill of Utah. He averages 14.2 points per game and shoots .540 from the field.

Based on stats, BYU is lucky to have Plaisted. Based on stats, I should be empirically euphoric when the ball goes into the low post on BYU's offensive possessions.

Still Cringe

So why do I cringe when he touches the ball? I don't think I am alone in that achy breaky feeling when the ball goes inside for BYU in big games where points and possessions are at a premium.

BYU wouldn't have 21 wins this season without Plaisted, so why do I keep yelling, "kick it out, kick it out"?

Maybe it is because he is so talented and has all the tools to make millions at the next level, except for my perception that other than a dunk, he doesn't have a three-foot and in shot that he and BYU basketball fans can depend on.

I would love to get more Johnny Paycheck and Plaisted feedback telling me that I can "shove it". That would mean that the talented Plaisted has picked up his scoring consistency in the low block and BYU has won a first round NCAA tournament game.

Despite Stats

Despite the stats, it is still my opinion that a first round NCAA win won't happen and it is unlikely that a MWC championship will happen without more point-blank makes from Plaisted in the post.

The next time you hear a loud-mouthed fan in the Marriott Center yell, "kick it out", please pass the aspirin because I am having one of those achy breaky moments.

BASKETBALL BRIEFS

We seldom find anything of worth or merit that comes from Utah fans in the BYU-Utah rivalry, but we finally have to give the Utes some credit.

We came across this on a Ute message board recently where a Ute fan referred to Lee Cummond, BYU's best player, as "Leethiopa".

The reference is in regard to Cummond's physical stature, or lack of it.

We found the nickname quite humorous and appropriate.

Speaking of Utah, we find their new basketball coach quite boring and boorish.

For a guy who has beguiled the media, in our opinion, Jim Boylen's post game rants and mannerisms don't do much to impress us.

You can only say you love your team and are playing your "arse" off so many times, then you have to win.

He probably is a great guy, but we have seen enough late-game meltdowns by the Utes to wonder about his x's and o's when the game is on the line.

It is still about players, and once Utah says good bye to Luke Nevill, we don't think Utah will have enough players to accomplish their hoped for revival of their program.

Unlike Michigan State which has Flint as a feeding ground, Tooele is not Flint.

It is all about players and it will be all about Boylen recruiting players. So far, we are unimpressed with his class for this coming year.

That could change with the good local recruiting class for next year. If he can make inroads with the good LDS prospects, then he has a chance. If not, he will have to take second tier Big Ten prospects in hopes of revitalizing the Ute program. That is how we see it.

Speaking of those prized recruits coming out of Utah next season, you can get a first hand look at them during the current 5-A and 4-A basketball tournaments.

If you want a look at Tyler Haws, you are probably too late to make the drive to Ogden today, Monday, Feb. 25. Lone Peak and Haws play Fremont at 11:10 am this morning.

Assuming that Lone Peak continues to win, here are the other opportunities for viewing the Knights.

They will play next on Wednesday at 7:40 pm. With a win, they would then advance to the semi finals on Friday game at 2:30 pm

and the championship game will be played on Saturday at 3:00 pm. The championship game will be televised live on KJZZ TV channel 14 locally.

To look at C.J Wilcox, you can see Pleasant Grove Monday night in Ogden at Weber State's Dee Events Center in a game that tips at 9:10 pm. If PG wins, they would next play on Wednesday at 2:30 pm. Another win would put them in the semi finals at 4:10 pm and again, the championship will be Saturday at 3:00 pm.

In the 4A arena, you can get looks at BYU recruits Kyle Collinsworth and Brandon Davies beginning Tuesday, Feb. 26 with Provo HS opening game at 5:50 pm. A win in the opener and they would play on Thursday at 12:40. If they continue winning, the semis would be Friday at 7:40 and the championship game will be Saturday at 5:00 pm. That game will also be televised live by KJZZ TV.

FOOTBALL FLUFF AND STUFF

BYU will begin spring drills in football on Monday, March 17. Don't expect Max Hall to be touched at all during the drills.

The spring game is set for Saturday, April 12.

BYU will also manage to get in some needed PR with high school coaches and a little recruiting to boot.

The annual Spring Football Coaching Clinic for high school coaches is set for Friday, March 21 at the Student Athlete Building.

Speakers for the clinic will include John Barnes, Chris Jones and Steve Gervais.

Barnes is the head coach at Los Alamitos HS in Southern California and coached former Cougar qb Kevin Feterik.

Jones is currently the coach at Vista del Lago HS in the Sacramento area and was Austin Collie's coach at Oak Ridge HS before switching jobs. BYU is currently recruiting and has offered wide receiver Brett Thompson from Oak Ridge.

Gervais is the head coach at Skyline HS in Sammamish, WA. He won a state championship last season with a sophomore quarterback named Jake Heaps.

BYU has already offered Heaps a scholarship. It certainly doesn't hurt that his coach will be one of the keynote speakers at the clinic.

It probably isn't a coincidence that Heaps, who is LDS, and also has an offer from Washington, will be in town at the same time.

He will be here with his father, to observe BYU spring drills

OTHER SPORTS

The BYU men's volleyball team dropped their first match of the season when Stanford swept the Cougars 3-0 Saturday night. BYU had to go 5 games to defeat the Cardinal on Friday night.

BYU is now 12-1 on the year.

BYU baseball started their season with a three game series at Portland. The Pilots took two of three games from the Cougars.

BYU won the opener on Friday 4-2, but were swept in Saturday's doubleheader 12-1 and 8-7.

In softball, BYU is now 9-5 on the year after finishing a tournament at Tennessee where the Cougars went 2-2.

We haven't said much about the BYU women's basketball team. You haven't missed much. This has been a very ordinary year for the Lady Cougars who currently are 13-11 on the year and 7-5 in league play.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. New Mexico

Tuesday, Feb. 26 at Albuquerque

Tipoff: 8:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Air Force

Saturday, Mar. 1 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: none

BYU vs. Wyoming

Wednesday, Mar. 5 at Provo

Tipoff: 8:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs TCU

Saturday, Mar. 8 at Fort Worth

Tipoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

Rebroadcasts

Here is a list of games that will be rebroadcast in the Utah Market only on KBYU:

BYU-New Mexico: Saturday, Mar. 1, 11:00 pm

BYU-Wyoming: Saturday, Mar 8, 11:30 pm

BYU-TCU: Wednesday, Mar. 12, 10:30 pm