

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

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BYU FINISHES OFF SAN DIEGO STATE 41-12

BYU put the finishing touches on another undefeated home schedule with a 41-12 win over San Diego State.

It marked the third year in a row that BYU has held serve at LaVell Edwards Stadium and provided a fitting finish to the home careers of 22 seniors.

The win also padded the numbers for not only the Cougars who are now 9-1 on the year and 5-1 in league play, but saw Austin Collie go over 100 yards in receptions for his eighth-straight game. Collie entered the game as the nation's leading receiver in both total yards and yards per game. His nine catches for 127 yards and two touchdowns kept Collie as the national leader.

After 10 games, Collie has 78 receptions for 1185 yards and 13 touchdowns. That works out to 118.50 yards per contest. He is also averaging 7.8 catches per game for 15.9 yards per catch.

All of those nice numbers came from the hot hand of Max Hall.

The BYU quarterback threw for 317 yards and three touchdowns. Besides the two for Collie for 61 and 9 yards scores, Andrew George also hauled in a 6-yard touchdown strike.

Hall was 25-of-30 for the day with no interceptions.

While Hall doesn't lead the nation in passing, he is having a big year. Hall currently is 6th in passing efficiency, 6th in passing, 7th in passing yards and 8th in passing yards per game.

BYU looked lackluster offensively in the early going, but ended the game with 421 yards of total offense.

The one surprise was that BYU could not dominate in the ground game. While SDSU had given up 300 plus yards of rushing to their last two opponents before BYU, the Cougars could only muster 104 yards on the ground in 37 carries.

BYU AND AIR FORCE HAVE BEEN FEASTING ON LOSERS...NOW SOMEBODY HAS TO PICK UP THE TAB

The last time BYU faced a team with a winning record, they were thumped by TCU.

Take away the season opener with I-AA Northern Iowa and all of BYU's other 8 wins have come against teams with losing records.

Here is the list of losers.

Washington (0-9), UCLA (3-6), Wyoming (4-6), Utah State (2-8), New Mexico (4-7), UNLV (4-6), CSU (4-6) and SDSU (1-9).

With just a little deviation, Air Force has been eating from the same menu as the Cougars.

They are currently 8-2 on the year. The two losses came against teams with winning records: Utah and Navy.

With the exception of a close win over Houston (5-4) that was moved to a neutral field in Dallas because of a hurricane, the Falcons have feasted on losers.

Here is their sketchy schedule: Southern Utah (4-5), Wyoming (4-6) SDSU (1-9), UNLV (4-6), UNM (4-7), Army (3-7) and CSU 4-6.

One of these teams will be exposed in a big way this Saturday at Colorado Springs.

When this game is over, one will be just a pretender and the other still a contender for at least a piece of the Mountain West Conference championship.

Both teams will score plenty of points. BYU has Max Hall to throw the ball and Air Force has finally found a serious threat at quarterback in freshman Tim Jefferson. Not only can he run the option attack well, he has added a passing threat to the Air Force arsenal.

Jefferson was 6-for-8 for 171 yards last week in the Falcon's 38-17 win over Colorado State.

CSU could move the ball against Air Force.

They just couldn't stop the Falcons defensively.

That scenario should repeat itself Saturday.

We expect both teams to move the ball and score points.

The winner of this game will be the team with the defense that can get off the most times without allowing a score.

It may be only a difference of one or two possessions, but it will determine the winner.

Just like the last road game for BYU, the last team with the ball on offense with at least a minute and half remaining in the game will win.

With just an average defense, we normally like BYU in this spot. BYU's defense is not average, however. It is bad. BYU's offense is good enough to compensate. We call it BYU 38 Air Force 35.

SO THIS IS WHAT A BRONCO REBUILDING YEAR LOOKS LIKE

At 9-1, there are plenty of BYU football fans who look at the current season as a disappointment.

Most of that discouragement is due to the dwindling chances the Cougars have of landing in a BCS bowl.

Forget that the Cougars are ranked, the TCU pummeling took the wind out of a lot of BYU fan's sails.

While he won't get any immediate accolades to add to his present karma and career, a year from now, in our opinion, people will be gushing again about what a great coach Bronco Mendenhall is.

Let's face it. BYU is playing this season with one hand tied behind its back. To be more accurate, they are playing without a defense they can count on.

This current Cougar team is seriously flawed. BYU is weak up the middle defensively. You can't sugar coat it and you can't hide it. Opposing coaches certainly have seen it, but to date, only one coach has been able to beat it.

In a worst case scenario, BYU could easily lose to Air Force, Utah and a team to be faced in a bowl game.

However, winning at least one of those three remaining games seems very doable to us.

That means that in an "off" year for Bronco Mendenhall, he is going to finish at 10-3.

Double Digits

Once Cougar fans figure out that in a "rebuilding" year, BYU has double digit wins for the third season in a row, those same fans will soon return to their reverence of Bronco Mendenhall and reveling in just what he has really done for the BYU program.

With all of the serious offensive weapons returning for next season and with offensive linemen in the wings who are as talented as the group BYU will lose, all Mendenhall has to do is find some fixes for his defense and a 10-3 “rebuilding” year will quickly be in the rear view mirror.

Before we totally put this season in the past, there are still two more regular season games to be played.

What if BYU finds a way to win the remaining contests at Air Force and Utah?

How does 11-1 sound for a rebuilding year?

Winning at Air Force is very doable. Winning at Utah seems less likely, but trust us, the Utes have never had to play a Mendenhall team with Utah as a prohibitive favorite.

The pressure on the Utes to get to a BCS bowl will be immense. You can almost feel the tightening of the collar in Salt Lake City right now.

For the first time in several seasons, it will be BYU and not Utah that has nothing to lose in this game.

While “off” years have cost big money coaches like Phil Fuller, Tommy Bowden and Tyrone Willingham their jobs, a 10-3 or better “rebuilding” year for Bronco Mendenhall will just add to his luster and legacy.

FLUFF AND STUFF

Austin Collie, Luke Staley and Craig Bills?

It doesn’t happen often, but occasionally BYU will land a high school football player that can come in as a true freshman and make an immediate impact.

Most of the time, that player is on offense. The last two Cougar players to fit that description were Austin Collie who stepped right out of Oak Ridge HS in El Dorado Hills, Calif., and stood out and started immediately on offense for BYU.

Before Collie, it was Luke Staley who showed up from Tualatin, Oregon and immediately showed that he was a go-to running back.

If you talk to 100 BYU fans that follow recruiting, 99 of those fanatics will tell you that if the Cougars can land Manti Te’o in February, he will be an immediate impact player for BYU next fall as a line-backer.

That very well could be. Te’o is a man among boys in high school and a consensus pick as one of the top 15-20 recruits in the nation.

What about that other 1 guy out of 100. What does he think?

I’m glad you asked.

My money is on Craig Bills. The only thing that I can see keeping him from making an immediate impact would be an LDS mission. If he serves before enrolling at BYU, then we will have to wait two more years before he shows his wares and makes an impact.

If he does enroll and play a year before serving, it is perfect timing for the Cougars.

They are in desperate need of help at safety and Bills is a big-time player.

Like almost all other recruits that commit early to BYU, they seem to run off the radar screen before they show up on campus.

This guy can play.

We know that Bronco Mendenhall likes to see his freshmen simmer and season while they learn his style of defense and adjust to his demands of intensity and play, but when you can already hit and cover, it might mandate that the seasoning process be cut back in order to get more talent on the field.

Keep your eyes on Bills. He is the real deal. You can get a sneak peek at this kid during the current Utah 4-A playoffs. The 6-2, 205 pound safety is a key cog in the Timpview HS machine.

The T-Birds already have two wins in the playoffs and face Mountain Crest this week in the 4A semis in Salt Lake City this week.

IS BYU TRADING A GREEN WAVE FOR A SOONAMI?

Yes we can spell tsunami, but you get the point? BYU could be trading in a Green Wave of Tulane for a tidal wave from Oklahoma.

A few weeks back, it looked like a slam dunk for BYU and Tulane to open the season in New Orleans next fall.

Now BYU is trying to trade in Tulane and ink a deal with the Oklahoma Sooners to play in Texas early next year in the new state-of-the-art Dallas Cowboys' Stadium.

The game is being brokered by ESPN and BYU is one of a select few teams that will be considered to face the powerful Sooners.

BYU already appeared to be in a non-conference frying pan for next year with Florida State coming to Provo and Arizona State waiting for the Cougars in Tempe.

It doesn't get much hotter if the Cougars make the leap from the pan to hit the fan and fire that is Oklahoma football.

BYU's other remaining non-conference game is Utah State. That contest will be held in Provo.

Regardless of what shakes out with the non-conference schedule for 2009, BYU already gets a leg up on the season with the three toughest games in conference play slated for Provo. Those would be games against Air Force, TCU and Utah.

We can also spell Ouija, as in board, but even that forecasting tool couldn't have predicted that Washington would be a weeji and weenie when BYU scheduled them.

Football scheduling is like Forrest Gump's box of chocolates. You just never know what you will get.

Washington and UCLA seemed like formidable foes a few years ago. They weren't.

Florida State looked favorable as an opponent for BYU as the Seminole program went south for a few seasons. Now, just in time for a trip to Provo, Bobby Bowden has FSU playing better football again.

Michigan looked like a marquee game for Utah when it was set up. Now Michigan is just another Big Ten midget.

Non Conference scheduling is always a crap shoot. You never know what kind of team you will be getting, but you always know who you will be getting.

Here are the who's of BYU next few seasons:

2009

At Arizona State, Utah State, Florida State, at Oklahoma or Tulane

2010

Washington, At Florida State, At Utah State, TBA

2011

At Washington, Arizona State, Utah State, TBA (Army was dropped)

2012

Washington, Utah State, At Boise State, TBA (Army was dropped)

2013

Boise State, TBA, TBA, TBA

2014

At Boise State, TBA, TBA, TBA

2015

Boise State, TBA, TBA, TBA

BYU WILL SIGN FOUR TO EARLY LETTERS OF INTENT

Dave Rose will stay close to home this November for his early letter of intent class.

Recruits can sign those early letters beginning Wednesday, Nov 12 until Wednesday Nov. 19.

If BYU has been accused of being provincial in its basketball recruiting before by relying on prospects from the state of Utah, they apparently have circled the wagons to an even tighter circle with this new class.

All four of BYU's early signing class are not only from Utah, they are all from Utah County.

Circling the wagons tightly around this group of players will pay dividends and keep this talented group from escaping the state and BYU's grasp.

Here are the four that will be signing.

1. Tyler Haws...Haws was targeted by BYU years ago as a guy they had to have. He can play and can produce with the game on the line. He is 6-5 and out of Lone Peak HS in Highland, UT. He could have had his pick of numerous schools, but narrowed his choice to Stanford and BYU.

2. Brandon Davies...At 6-8 and growing, this talented big man came on this summer and received major recruiting attention. He had offers from Cal, Utah State and Gonzaga. He is from Provo HS, just across the street from BYU.

3. Nate Austin...At 6-10, Austin was the first of the four signees to commit to BYU. He sealed his deal in July with an AAU tournament game in Las Vegas when he scored 24 and pulled down 20 rebounds. He will finally see significant playing time this season at Lone Peak HS. He had recruiting interest from Fresno State, Utah State, Stanford and Utah.

4. Ian Harward...This 6-10 center barely played at Orem HS last season because of an injury. BYU wanted to see how he performed on the summer circuit. It must have been good enough because the Cougars pulled the trigger. He also had an offer from Utah State.

WOMEN'S SOCCER CAPTURES MWC TOURNEY CHAMPIONSHIP

The BYU women defeated Utah 1-0 Saturday afternoon in Las Vegas to capture the MWC Soccer tournament.

With the victory, the Lady Cougars secure an automatic bid to the upcoming NCAA tournament.

Pairings will be announced early this week.

BYU also won the regular season MWC championship and finished with a 17-5-0 record. It was BYU's second consecutive MWC tournament championship and gives the Cougars six tourney championships since the league was formed.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Georgetown (KY)

Tuesday, Nov 11 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUTV

BYU vs. Air Force

Saturday, Nov 15 at Colorado Springs

Kickoff: 1:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: CBS C

BYU vs. Utah

Saturday, Nov 22 at Salt Lake

Kickoff: 4:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn