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TALENT STILL TRUMPS ALL

We have seen a trailer of the new Indiana Jones movie that will be released later this year. It got us thinking of something we wrote three years ago concerning Bronco Mendenhall and his first foray into spring drills as BYU's new football coach.

Here is what we wrote then and what we see now, three years later.

Movies and Mendenhall

We are old enough that we struggle remembering the names and plots of the movies we have seen. We do remember, however, a few images that have remained vivid in our limited cinematic consciousness.

One such image involved the movie character Indiana Jones. Again, don't ask us to name the movie or recite the plot, but the scene that stood out to us involved Jones trying to escape some sort of danger in the desert.

He turned the corner into an alley only to be met and confronted by a menacing antagonist. This guy was much bigger than Indiana Jones.

Not only bigger, he was badder. Forgive the grammar, but it fits the scene. He was dressed in resplendent color with sashes around his waist and a turban on his noggin.

He had a sinister smile as he saw Jones.

He also had two huge swords that he was twirling adeptly. Think Benihana's. This guy was the chef with knives and Jones was soon to be the steak.

Jones reacted with surprise and anxiousness. His days looked to be numbered.

As the menacing marauder advanced on Jones with his swords, suddenly Jones began to smirk and his eyes lit up.

He simply reached down to his belt, drew his pistol and shot the guy.

Forgotten

We have never forgotten that scene. It taught us that it matters not how big or fierce the opponent is, in an alley fight, a gun almost always trumps twirling swords.

Over the last 100 days, we have been watching the previews and opening clips of the Bronco Mendenhall movie.

In it, he plays the new head football coach of BYU.

The opening scenes and script have been spell binding. He looks like a bona fide star. He has us all

glued to the screen and licking our chops for the renewal of BYU football.

He is as charismatic as any movie star we have seen on screen. For those old enough to remember, he reminds us of Gary Cooper. They are both tough, taciturn and terrific box-office draws.

Mendenhall has gone to the cutting edge of management. He has color-coded his coaches by having them take personality tests. He has highlighted the Honor Code as an asset instead of a liability to the football program.

He has tapped into the legacy of the past with a link to former players and gone retro in uniforms.

He has said that he won't be held hostage by talent. He has said that players will need to recruit him instead of vice versa if they expect to play football in Provo.

He has quoted scripture in press conferences and in letters to former players and parents of current players.

He has the local press fawning and foaming at the mouth. Everything written about him and the direction of the program is positive.

Mendenhall has captured the Cougar nation. His mission statement for BYU football has resonated with almost all.

He has refocused attention on a program that was floundering. Mendenhall has come onto the scene with plenty of color, charisma, character and swords twirling.

Based on his first 100 days on the job, he looks indefatigable, sounds inspirational and acts like a born leader.

Buying

We are buying what he is selling.

This would be the perfect movie if he only could keep his team from scrimmaging. We are buying everything being sold until we actually see the product and just like the Indiana Jones movie we referenced earlier, we have a hole shot in our hope.

Talent still trumps management, motivation and marketing.

Bronco's vision and vitality are great, but he will need more players and more bullets to back it up.

Based on the initial perceptions of Mendenhall's public and private presentations, BYU will be a very good football team.

Based on the scrimmages of this spring, they won't be a good football team.

Mendenhall's Power-Point presentations are good and helping the program. Better players will help more.

Effort, execution and accountability are all good, but better players will have a bigger impact on the outcome of the season opener against Boston College on September 3. When it comes to football at every level, talent usually trumps all else.

Since writing this three years ago, it is obvious that Mendenhall has a mission and a model for BYU football. The BYU football record of the last two years speaks for itself and what Mendenhall has brought to the program.

It truly is amazing.

That said, we still hold to our original premise of a few years back. Talent trumps all else in football.

Without it, you won't consistently win football games.

We admit that three years ago we didn't think Mendenhall's model would be able to attract enough talent to win football games.

We still have occasional doubts, but based on the results and records of the past two years, BYU has either been able to recruit or develop enough talent under Mendenhall to prove us wrong.

Most of us have been mesmerized by Mendenhall and how he has established his program based on discipline, accountability etc., during the past three years, but he also has still managed to accumulate some very talented football players under his system.

There is room for debate as to whether BYU is now recruiting players that fit the new BYU model and then develops them into talented players or if those who fit the model came as talented players.

It really doesn't matter. Talent is talent and it still trumps all else on the football field.

Case in point. Can you name five better quarterbacks than Max Hall in college football that will be on the field next fall?

Can you name five better tight ends in college football than Dennis Pitta?

Austin Collie and Harvey Unga certainly aren't the best wide receiver and running back in the country, but in our opinion, they would have to be considered in the top twenty in those respective positions.

Take away those key players on offense last year, and the program established by Mendenhall would still be amazing, but the win-loss record wouldn't.

Talent really is important and BYU had its share of it on the field the last two seasons and will still have plenty of it on the field for this coming year.

WHEELS OF JUSTICE AND BYU RECRUITING BOTH GRIND SLOW

This week Bronco Mendenhall will wrap up his fourth year of spring football drills as BYU's head football coach.

That would certainly seem to indicate that enough time has passed that there would be no more ties to the previous coaching regime at BYU.

Not so fast! While most college programs are able to cycle a recruiting class through their programs in 4 or 5 years, it takes 7, and sometimes, 8 years to wash, rinse and spin dry a BYU batch of recruits.

For example, Gary Crowton now seems like ancient history, but he is still having an impact on the program. Here is a list of current players on the BYU roster that were recruited or brought into the program by Gary Crowton.

Austin Collie
Dennis Pitta
Travis Bright
Ray Feinga
David Oswald
Michael Reed
Fui Vakapuna
Nick Alletto
Saia Hafoka
Bryce Mahuika

On the defensive side, here are players that still are in the spin cycle of BYU's recruiting under the previous coaching staff.

David Nixon
David Tafuna
Brett Denney
Dan Van Sweden
Matt Ah You
Chris Warner

The 2005 recruiting class was a transitional one. Bronco Mendenhall was hired in December of 2004 and he signed a class two months later that was basically put together by the previous coaching staff

before they were fired.

Harvey Unga
Luke Ashworth
Dallas Reynolds
Stephen Covey
Andrew George
Terrance Hooks
Brandon Howard
Vic So'oto

FOOTBALL FLUFF AND STUFF

BYU suffered their first major injury of the spring when inside linebacker Terrance Hooks went down last week with a torn patella tendon. He is expected to miss at least 6-8 months before he can return to the field.

Until the injury, BYU had four inside backers that would see time. Besides Hooks, Matt Bauman, Matt Ah You and Shawn Doman were the others.

BYU will now move journeyman linebacker Dan Van Sweden inside from his normal outside position and they are also now asking recent signee Spencer Hadley, a 6-2, 220 pounder from Connell HS in Washington to enroll in school this fall.

Hadley originally was going to serve an LDS mission before enrolling, but now will show up this fall and then leave for a mission next January.

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED

The 2008 BYU football schedule has been announced. It is always subject to change, but here it is as of now.

Aug 30, SAT, Northern Iowa, Provo, 4:00 pm, Mtn
Sep 6, SAT, Washington, Seattle, TBA, TV=TBA
Sep 13, SAT, UCLA, Provo, 1:30 pm, Versus
Sep 20, SAT, Wyoming, Provo, 1:00 pm, Mtn
Oct 3, FRI, Utah State, Logan, TBA, TV=TBA
Oct 11, SAT, New Mexico, Provo, 4:00 pm, Mtn
Oct 16, THU, TCU, Fort Worth, 7:00 pm, Versus
Oct 25, SAT, UNLV, Provo, 12:00 pm, Mtn
Nov 1, SAT, Colorado State, Fort Collins, 4:00 pm, Mtn
Nov 8, SAT, San Diego State, Provo, 12:00 pm, Mtn
Nov 15, SAT, Air Force, Colorado Springs, 1:30 pm, CBS C (CSTV)
Nov 22, SAT, Utah, Salt Lake City, 4:00 pm, Mtn

SPRING RUNOFF AND RUNDOWNS

The BYU baseball team took two of three games from UNLV this past weekend in Las Vegas. The Cougars are now 5-4 in MWC play and 14-7 overall.

In softball, BYU swept a weekend doubleheader from Colorado State, 9-2, 6-1 in Provo. The Cougars are currently 23-13 overall and 3-1 in league play.

BYU's volleyball team improved to 21-4 and a league record of 16-4 with two wins on the road at Hawaii.

Annual Blue-White Scrimmage Set For Saturday

The conclusion of spring football drills will take place this Saturday at LaVell Edwards Stadium with the annual Blue-White Scrimmage.

It will begin at 1 pm and be preceded by a football clinic for youth which stats at noon.

Listed below is the 2008 BYU Spring Football Roster.

Num.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.	Class	Hometown	Years Rostered
1	Fui Vakapuna			6-1	245	RB	Sr. — Glendale, UT / East HS —2002—2003—2006—2007—2008-
2	Bryce Mahuika			5-9	186	WR	Sr. — Vancouver, WA / Evergreen HS —2004—2005—2006—2007
2008-							
3	Michael Reed	6-1		202	WR	Sr. — Baytown, TX / Robert E. Lee HS —2004—2005—2006—2007—2008-	
4	Brandon Howard			5-9	164	DB	Jr. — Riverside, CA / La Sierra HS —2005—2006—2007
2008-							
4	Kurt McEuen	6-2		213	QB	So. — Heber City, UT / Wasatch HS —2006—2007—2008-	
5	Brandon Bradley			6-0	201	DB	So. — Tallahassee, FL / Lincoln HS —2006—2007—2008-
5	Parker Mangum			6-4	213	WR	So. — Boise, ID / St. Mary's —2007—2008-
6	Brenden Gaskins			6-4	215	QB	Jr. — Farmington, NM / Glendale CC —2007—2008-
7	Chris Warner	6-1		208	DB	Jr. — Reno, NV / McQueen HS —2003—2006—2007—2008-	
9	Austin Collie	6-2		206	WR	Jr. — El Dorado Hills, CA / Oak Ridge HS —2004—2007—2008-	
10	Stephen Covey			5-11	177	QB	Fr. — Provo, UT / Timpview HS —2005—2008-
10	J.J. Di Luigi	5-9		196	RB	Fr. — Canyon Country, CA / Canyon HS —2007—2008-	
11	Manase Tonga			6-0	238	RB	Sr. — San Mateo, CA / Aragon HS —2005—2006—2007
2008-							
12	Brannon Brooks			5-8	175	DB	Fr. — Elk Grove, CA / Elk Grove HS —2007—2008-
12	Jason Munns	6-5		244	QB	Fr. — Kennewick, WA / Southridge HS —2007—2008-	
13	Nate Hutchinson			6-3	200	WR	Jr. — St. George, UT / Pine View HS —2005—2006—2007
2008-							
15	Max Hall	6-1		201	QB	Jr. — Mesa, AZ / Arizona State —2006—2007—2008-	
16	Kellen Fowler			5-11	187	DB	Sr. — Kaysville, UT / Davis HS —2006—2007—2008-
16	BJ Peterson	6-3		201	WR	So. — Salt Lake City, UT / Brighton HS —2007—2008-	
17	Mitch Palsson			6-2	192	WR	Fr. — Danvill, CA / San Ramon Valley HS —2008-
17	G Pittman	5-10		183	DB	Fr. — Rancho Cucamonga, CA / Rancho Cucamonga —2007—2008-	
18	Skyler Ridley	5-11		168	WR	Fr. — Murrieta, CA / Murrieta Valley HS —2007—2008-	
20	Mitchell Reid	5-11		194	DB	Fr. — Sandy, UT / Skyline HS —2008-	
20	Reed White	5-10		198	WR	Sr. — Gilbert, AZ / Arizona State —2007—2008-	
21	Ryan Folsom	5-10		200	RB	So. — Medford, OR / North Medford HS —2007—2008-	
21	Scott Johnson			5-11	186	DB	Jr. — Provo, UT / Timpview HS —2006—2007—2008-
22	Tyler Kozlowski			5-9	185	WR	So. — Wildwood, IL / Warren Township HS —2007—2008-
22	Steven Thomas			5-11	172	DB	Fr. — Chino Hills, CA / Chino Hills HS —2007—2008-
23	Kelly Bills	6-0		228	LB	Jr. — Provo, UT / Southern Utah —2007—2008-	
23	David Tafuna	6-1		216	DB	Sr. — Mesa, AZ / Mesa HS —2004—2005—2006—2007—2008-	
24	Jameson Frazier			6-2	201	DB	Fr. — Draper, UT / Alta HS —2008-
24	Brian Smith	6-2		175	P/K	So. — Orem, UT / Mountain View HS —2007—2008-	
25	Steven McFarland			6-2	230	FB	So. — Lakeview, OR / Lakeview HS —2008-
25	Gary Nagy	6-1		190	DB	Fr. — Laie, HI / Kahuku HS —2007—2008-	
26	CJ Santiago	6-2		212	P	Sr. — Honolulu, HI / Orange Coast CC —2007—2008-	
27	Matt Marshall	5-10		192	WR	Fr. — Salt Lake City, UT / Skyline HS —2006—2007—2008-	
27	Jordan Pendleton			6-2	218	DB	Fr. — South Jordan, UT / Bingham HS —2007—2008-
28	Bryan Kariya	6-0		192	RB	Fr. — Kaysville, UT / Davis HS —2005—2008-	
29	Luke Ashworth			6-2	194	WR	So. — Provo, UT / Timpview HS —2005—2008-
30	Isaac Taylor	5-11		210	RB	Sr. — Camino, CA / Modesto JC —2006—2007—2008-	
30	Jake Webber	5-10		170	DB	Fr. — Salt Lake City, UT / Highland HS —2007—2008-	
31	Byron Putnam			5-11	178	DB	Fr. — Draper, UT / University of Utah —
32	Dennis Pitta	6-5		250	TE	Jr. — Moorpark, CA / Moorpark HS —2004—2007—2008-	
33	Wayne Latu	5-11		214	RB	Jr. — Provo, UT / Timpview HS —2005—2006—2007—2008-	
33	Tana Uyema	5-9		178	DB	Sr. — Honolulu, HI / BYU-Hawaii —2008-	
34	Matt Ah You	5-11		221	LB	Jr. — Rancho Cucamonga, CA / Lone Peak HS —2003—2005—2008-	
34	Tyler Holt	5-9		178	K/P	Fr. — Granite Bay, CA / Granite Bay HS —2008-	
35	Matt Bauman	6-1		226	LB	Jr. — Salt Lake City, UT / Skyline HS —2007—2008-	
36	Andrew Rich	6-3		210	DB	So. — Ogden, UT / Snow JC —2008-	
37	Vic So'oto	6-3		240	LB	Jr. — Carlsbad, CA / Carlsbad HS —2005—2006—2007—2008-	
38	Mitch Payne	6-2		207	K	So. — North Ogden, UT / Weber HS —2006—2007—2008-	

39	Grant Nelson	6 3	226	LB	So.	Hopewell, PA / Hopewell HS	2007	2008
41	Coleby Clawson	6 3	220	LB	Jr.	Wales, UT / Snow JC	2008	
42	Shawn Doman	6 2	224	LB	Jr.	Woodburn, OR / Canby HS	2006	2007 2008
43	David Nixon	6 3	223	LB	Sr.	College Station, TX / A&M Consolidated	2003	2006 2007
2008								
44	Dan Van Sweden	6 2	221	LB	Jr.	West Point, UT / Northridge HS	2003	2006 2007
2008								
45	Harvey Unga	6 0	243	RB	So.	Provo, UT / Timpview HS	2006	2007 2008
46	Masi Tuitama	6 2	210	LB	Fr.	Oxnard, CA / Pacifica HS	2008	
47	Terrance Hooks	6 1	233	LB	Jr.	Tempe, AZ / Marcos de Niza HS	2005	2006 2007
2008								
48	Dustin Graham	6 0	220	LB	So.	Glendale, AZ / Mountain Ridge HS	2008	
49	Jadon Wagner	6 4	230	LB	Fr.	Lethbridge, Alberta / LCI	2007	2008
50	Connor Hamilton	6 2	220	LB	Fr.	Issaquah, WA / Issaquah HS	2008	
52	Russell Tialavea	6 3	320	DL	Jr.	Oceanside, CA / Oceanside HS	2005	2006 2007
2008								
53	Tom Sorensen	6 5	306	OL	Jr.	Salt Lake City, UT / Vanderbilt	2006	2007 2008
55	Jordan Chronister	6 2	231	DL	So.	Fruit Heights, UT / Eastern Arizona CC	2007	2008
56	Chris Muehlmann	6 0	207	DS	So.	American Fork, UT / Snow College	2007	2008
57	Matt Putnam	6 6	247	DL	Fr.	Brigham City, UT / Box Elder HS	2007	2008
58	Jeff Bell	6 0	224	LB	Jr.	Williamsburg, VA / Bruton HS	2007	2008
59	John Pace	6 2	208	DS	So.	Yorba Linda, CA / Esperanza HS	2007	2008
61	Mark Freeman	6 0	295	OL	So.	Orem, UT / Orem HS	2007	2008
64	R.J. Willing	6 5	312	OL	Jr.	Kahuku, HI / Kamehameha HS	2003	2004 2007 2008
65	Dallas Reynolds	6 5	332	OL	Sr.	Provo, UT / Timpview HS	2005	2006 2007 2008
66	Garrett Reden	6 3	286	OL	So.	Valley Center, CA / Valley Center HS	2006	2007 2008
68	David Oswald	6 8	330	OL	Sr.	Sandy, UT / Brighton HS	2002	2005 2006 2007 2008
70	Matt Reynolds	6 6	315	OL	Fr.	Provo, UT / Timpview HS	2007	2008
71	Rick Wolfley	6 3	343	DL	So.	Afton, WY / Star Valley HS	2006	2007 2008
72	Nick Alletto	6 6	280	OL	So.	Parker, CO / Ponderosa HS	2004	2007 2008
73	Jason Speredon	6 5	286	OL	So.	West Valley City, UT / Granger HS	2006	2007 2008
74	Travis Bright	6 5	320	OL	Sr.	Queen Creek, AZ / Highland HS	2004	2005 2006 2007 2008
75	Stetson Tenney	6 5	285	OL	Fr.	Show Low, AZ / Show Low HS	2008	
76	Ray Feinga	6 5	331	OL	Sr.	West Valley City, UT / Hunter HS	2004	2005 2006 2007 2008
77	Chris Hunt	6 3	313	OL	Fr.	Hattiesburg, MS / Hattiesburg HS	2007	2008
78	Levi Mack	6 5	318	OL	Jr.	Thatcher, AZ / Eastern Arizona JC	2007	2008
79	Manaaki Vaitai	6 3	300	OL	Fr.	Eules, TX / Trinity HS	2007	2008
80	Kaneakua Friel	6 5	240	TE	Fr.	Kaneohe, HI / Kamehameha HS	2007	2008
82	Ryan Neeley	6 0	181	WR	Jr.	Draper, UT / Snow JC	2006	2007 2008
83	Saia Hafoka	5 10	187	WR	Sr.	Kahuku, HI / Kahuku HS	2004	2005 2006 2007 2008
84	Spencer Hafoka	6 0	196	WR	Fr.	Kahuku, HI / Kahuku HS	2008	
84	Jan Jorgensen	6 3	256	DL	Jr.	Helper, UT / Carbon HS	2005	2006 2007 2008
85	Landon Jaussi	6 5	215	WR	So.	Wylie, TX / Southern Virginia	2007	2008
88	Andrew George	6 5	246	TE	Jr.	Englewood, CO / Cherry Creek HS	2005	2006 2007
2008								
89	Cortny Barton	5 8	186	WR	Jr.	Hawthorne, CA / LA Harbor JC	2007	2008
90	Steven Fisher	6 4	230	DL	So.	Orem, UT / Timpanogos HS	2008	
92	Brett Denney	6 4	252	DL	Jr.	Thornton, CO / Legacy HS	2003	2006 2007 2008
93	Mosese Foketi	6 0	276	DL	Sr.	Oakland, CA / Laney CC	2006	2007 2008
94	Brock Richardson	6 2	267	DL	Sr.	Idaho Falls, ID / Bonneville HS	2007	2008
95	Rockey Kalamafoni	6 2	276	DL	Fr.	Portland, OR / Liahona HS (Tonga)	2008	
96	Jonathan McCullough	6 5	222	TE	So.	Hillsboro, OR / Glencoe HS	2008	
96	David Tuitupou	6 5	250	DL	Fr.	Orem, UT / Mountain View HS	2008	
97	Tevita Holo	6 1	310	DL	Jr.	West Valley City, UT / Snow JC	2008	
98	Steven Fendry	6 5	255	DL	Fr.	Castle Rock, CO / University of Colorado	2007	2008
99	Ian Dulan	6 1	252	DL	Jr.	Hilo, HI / Kamehameha-Hawaii HS	2006	2007 2008