



Cougar Sportsline

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Hope So

Is Momentum Overrated and Motivation Underrated?

Whew! Glad that's over. Because both BYU basketball teams, women's and men's, lost to Gonzaga last Saturday, now we don't have to worry about the dreaded kiss of death axiom of "It's hard to beat a team three straight times" as the WCC post season tournament begins in Las Vegas this week.

For the women it was a 73-55 loss in front of a packed crowd of 6,000 fans in Spokane. For the Men it was a 71-68 defeat at home on senior night, also in front of a packed arena of 19,000 faithful.

For both teams the arenas were stuffed and filled. That wasn't the problem. Neither team could fill the hoop, however, with baskets at a high enough rate to merit the wins. Lexi Rydalch was held to just 2-12 for the game and shot a miserable .167 from the field. Kyle Collinsworth was just 4-14 and Nick Emery was worse at 4-16 from the floor.

For an astronomer a shooting star is really a small piece of rock or dust that hits Earth's atmosphere from space. It moves so fast that it heats up and glows as it moves through the atmosphere. Shooting stars are actually what astronomers call meteors. Most meteors burn up in the atmosphere before they reach the ground.

For Dave Rose, a shooting star looks great while it screams across the sky, but when it flames out and can't throw a pea in the ocean, so does BYU's chances of winning a big game for a big title.

Just my opinion, but it appears to me that Rose and his offense is meteor centric. He relies on shooting stars who streak up court and cast off early three point shots. When they go in, it's a show to watch.

When the lights burn out on the guard line, so does BYU.

Astronomically speaking, what BYU needs in basketball and hasn't had in years is a solar system instead of a star system on the guard line.

Gonzaga and most all other consistent winning teams have a solar system with a productive post man, or sometimes two, in the middle and guards revolving around the inside game.

BYU has streaking guards and when they are streaking across the sky red hot and making shots, it is something to see. When they are burned out and the shots aren't falling, without a consistent post game, BYU's offense goes into a solar eclipse. Then it's lights out again for any hopes of a conference title or post season tournament title and any illusions of more than a one and done burnout in NCAA play.

So what we are now left with regarding this coming week is the question of which is best, momentum or motivation? For the women, it is a moot point. They are still the No.1 seed in the WCC tourney and will not meet Gonzaga again. If they do, bet on motivation and BYU dropping the hammer on the Zags.

For the men, it's all about momentum and motivation in the league tourney. They have momentum in the first round Saturday against Santa Clara, a team they beat by 36 in the Marriott Center and by 34 on the road. It should be a BYU-Gonzaga rematch in the second round on Monday. That's when we will find out if motivation for a loss at home trumps the momentum that a win at home would have given the Cougars.

Now back to my basketball solar system theory. There is no question that Gonzaga is a better basketball program than BYU. They are now and they have been for the last 15 years.

What has made the Zags the consistently better team? They have had good guards to be sure, but they make their living inside with NBA quality big men. They have three on their team right now. Domantas Sabonis, Kyle Wiltjer and Prezmek Karnowski. The latter is redshirting because of a back injury.

Here is a list of big men that went from Spokane to play in the league since Dave Rose has been the head coach at BYU. Ronny Turiaf, Robert Sacre, Kelly Olynyk, and Austin

Daye. Now add future NBA guys of Sabonis, Wiltjer and Karnowski and you get 7 solar system players and domination of the WCC.

So where does the sun set when it comes to BYU and NBA quality big men? There has only been one play in the league during Rose's tenure and that was Brandon Davies with one and done deals with Philadelphia and Brooklyn. Raphael Araujo played for Steve Cleveland and was gone before Rose took over the reins.

Now for all the shooting stars on the perimeter for BYU during the last 11 years, only one has had marginal time in the NBA. That would be Jimmer.

So if you were paid to objectively analyze the two teams based on league titles, NCAA post season productivity and NBA products, who would you choose as the best program?

I thought so. And in that analyzation, which players are most important? Guards or big men? I thought so.

So why doesn't BYU go solar system and become more post centric in their play a la Gonzaga? The answer to that question can be found by looking at past rosters, the current roster and even the future roster of post players under Dave Rose. There are no NBA prospects anywhere to be found. Yes, I know about Payton Dastrup and Eric Mika. They can run the court and rebound, but neither are low post scorers.

In BYU's Mormon Solar System of recruiting there just aren't that many legitimate post prospects out there.

So maybe, given that fact, maybe Rose is actually doing spectacularly well as a coach by running an offensive system that is exciting and fun to watch and able to keep BYU hovering around and knocking on the championship door but never being invited in because of lack of legitimate post play.

Now in defense of BYU's guard oriented program, here is an email I received about Kyle Collinsworth and why he should be selected as the WCC player of the year.

Kyle Collinsworth, NCAA basketball and WCC history

Kyle Collinsworth is a one-of-a-kind player in NCAA basketball and WCC history. The volume and depth of responsibilities he is tasked to handle for BYU is outrageous.

Collinsworth is looked upon to orchestrate the WCC's top scoring offense, while also defending his opponent's best perimeter player, guarding the one, two, three, or four.

Collinsworth has the athletic ability and basketball skill to give the Cougars whatever they need in every area of the basketball floor. It is hard to imagine another player coming along in the WCC that will duplicate Collinsworth's efforts.

Collinsworth has career highs of 28 points against Gonzaga, 16 rebounds against Loyola Marymount/Northern Iowa, and 15 assists against Loyola Marymount. Seven of his ten Triple Doubles have come against WCC opponents. He has also shot .478 FG% for his career.

Collinsworth plays his best in big games. In his sophomore year in the WCC tournament he averaged 11.3 rebounds and 18 points and only played half of the championship game because of a torn ACL. In his junior year he averaged 10 rebounds, 18.6 points, and 6.33 assists. As a freshman he averaged 9.5 rebounds and 5.1 points in the Mountain West and NCAA tournament.

*Should Collinsworth collect another 23 rebounds (averages 8 rebounds a game), he would be the **first player in NCAA Basketball history** to ever have 1,500 points (currently has 1,582 points), 1,000 rebounds (currently has 976), and 500 assists (currently has 636) in his career. He also has 215 career steals. Only one other guard has collected 1,000 rebounds in a career in the past 22, joining Wofford's Tim Johnson.*

Kyle Collinsworth has come a long way from his ACL injury in 2014. He has since set the NCAA record for triple-doubles and continues to build on it. In addition, he has recorded 32 double doubles. Collinsworth has had 10 or more assists four times this season as well, which tells you that the Cougars offense depends a lot on his ability to create for his teammates.

Back on March 24, 2011 in New Orleans, some five years ago, Collinsworth played the final game of his freshman year. It was against Florida in the NCAA Tournament and the contest went into overtime. In his final game before departing on a two-year mission to Russia for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Collinsworth had 15 rebounds on a big stage against the highest competition. He always plays his best in big games.

Collinsworth has also been named a top-10 finalist for the Bob Cousy Award, an honor given to the nation's top point guard each year. He ranks near the top of several point guard statistics (fourth in assists per game, first in triple-doubles, and 20th in steals per game).

How does Collinsworth compare to other WCC greats? Collinsworth has the better career statistics than Kyle Wiltjer. Wiltjer only has Collinsworth in two statistical category -- points (approx. 200 more), and blocks (16 more). Collinsworth has about 350 more rebounds, 450 more assists, and 150 more steals. Collinsworth plays great defense and contributes in every area of the game. He makes all of his team mates better. In addition, could Wiltjer guard Collinsworth?

Collinsworth also has the better season statistically. Wiltjer leads in points by 150. Blocks are a draw. KC leads by around 40 more rebounds, 50 more steals, and over 160 assists.

Wiltjer is a very good basketball player. His ability to score is impressive, but it isn't all that rare. Next season, there will be another WCC player that will score 21 points per game -- maybe Santa Clara's Jared Brownridge, San Francisco's Devin Watson, BYU's Nick Emery, or Gonzaga's Sabonis. While on Sabonis, lets again mention, that it isn't exactly clear is Wiltjer is even the best player on his own team.

Collinsworth is the best player in the West Coast Conference. As such, his awesome and unique way of playing the game of basketball should be recognized or awarded to reflect that. It is the time for the WCC to choose the WCC Player of the Year as the best player, not the best senior on the best team.

Name withheld

WCC Tourney Schedule

All Times are PST (add an hour for MST times in Utah)

Thursday, March 3

Women

No. 8 Pacific vs. No. 9 Pepperdine, 12:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)
No. 7 Loyola Marymount vs. No. 10 Portland, 2:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)
No. 3 San Diego vs. No. 6 San Francisco, 6:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)
No. 4 Santa Clara vs. No. 5 Gonzaga, 8:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)

Friday, March 4

Women

No. 1 BYU vs. No. 8/9, 12:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)
No. 2 Saint Mary's vs. No. 7/10, 2:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)

Men

No. 8 Loyola Marymount vs. No. 9 San Diego, 6:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)

Saturday, March 5

Men

No. 3 BYU vs. No 6 Santa Clara, 1:00 p.m. (TWC SportsNet, CSN Bay Area, ROOT Northwest, BYUtv, TheW.tv)
No. 4 Pepperdine vs. No. 5 San Francisco, 3:00 p.m. (TWC SportsNet, CSN Bay Area, BYUtv, TheW.tv)
No. 1 Saint Mary's vs. No. 8/9, 7:00 p.m. (ESPN2, WatchESPN)
No. 2 Gonzaga vs. No. 7 Portland, 9:00 p.m. (ESPN2, WatchESPN)

Monday, March 7

Women

Women's Semifinal No. 1, 12:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)
Women's Semifinal No. 2, 2:00 p.m. (BYUtv, TheW.tv)

Men

TBA - Men's Semifinal No. 1, 6:00 p.m. (ESPN, WatchESPN)
TBA - Men's Semifinal No. 2, 8:30 p.m. (ESPN2, WatchESPN)

Tuesday, March 9

Women's Championship Game, 1:00 p.m. (ESPNU, WatchESPN)

Men's Championship Game, 6:00 p.m. (ESPN, WatchESPN)

[Click Here](#) for Men's Bracket in PDF format

[Click Here](#) for Women's Bracket in PDF format

Spring Football Starts this Week

The curtain goes up on Kalani Sitake's first spring practice as a head coach tomorrow, March 1. The annual spring scrimmage is set to be held Saturday, March 26.

Between those two dates, we should get a good idea of how this staff will operate in actual football duties. We have seen that they are good at public interaction and have generated a nice vibe with fans.

Until we actually see something on the practice field, there is nothing to write about so we will wait until next week.

Wait there is something to write about. Tanner Mangum became engaged to Alexa Gray, the BYU volleyball star, last week. I love it when a BYU romance also potentially restocks the BYU athletic gene pool. Cougar Chromosomes and Congratulations to both.

Television Timetable

BYU vs. TBA (W Basketball)

Friday, March 4 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 1:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Santa Clara (M Basketball)

Saturday, March 5 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 2:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Kansas (Baseball)

Thursday, March 3 at Lawrence

First Pitch: 2:00 pm MST

TV: ESPN3

BYU vs. Kansas (Baseball)

Friday, March 4 at Lawrence

First Pitch: 2:00 pm MST

TV: ESPN3

BYU vs. Kansas (Baseball)

Saturday, March 5 at Lawrence

First Pitch: 10:00 am MST

TV: ESPN3

Missionary Update...Michigan, Lansing to serve in the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion programs in Lansing. Go Spartans...except Oct. 8 when BYU comes to town. Then it will be Go Tanner or Go Taysom and Go Cougars. Oh yeah, occasionally, I'm sure it might be Go UVU. Our Mission President is former UVU AD Mike Jacobsen...Leaving May 9.