

HB Arnett's

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UTAH NEXT

BYU SPLITS HOME GAMES WITH UNLV AND SDSU

It was a second half meltdown that led to an unexpected 76-70 loss to UNLV last week in the Marriott Center and exposed some chinks in the Cougar armor that opponents can exploit.

Despite those chinks and thanks to a subsequent 77-71 win over San Diego State three days later, BYU is still in contention for their third consecutive MWC basketball championship.

Heading into the third week of conference action, six of the nine league teams all have two losses. That includes UNLV at 4-2, TCU 4-2, BYU 3-2, SDSU 3-2, Utah 3-2, and New Mexico 3-2.

With Utah on deck and waiting for the Cougars in Salt Lake City on Tuesday, either the Utes or Cougars will drop out of the 2-loss six pack.

The game against UNLV was bizarre as BYU blitzed the Rebels and almost ran them off the court in the first twenty minutes of action.

The Cougars held a 13-point lead at intermission, but went stone cold from the field for most of the second half.

That extended dray spell and BYU's inability to get any production from the paint spelled defeat for BYU.

Tavernari

Jonathan Tavernari led all Cougars with 21 points. Jimmer Fredette had 19 points and Lee Cummond, who was held scoreless in the second half, finished with 10 points. While Tavernari had 21 points, it took 22 shots for the Brazilian junior to get those points.

BYU's big men, Chris Miles and Gavin MacGregor were non-existent in this game.

It was an renewed emphasis by Dave Rose to get more involvement from the BYU big guys that helped the Cougars salvage a home split. That split came thanks to a 77-71 win over San Diego State.

Despite 14 points from the triumvirate of Miles, MacGregor and James Anderson, it still took a clutch three pointer from Jonathan Tavernari with just 1:30 in the game to seal the win.

From that point on, it was a matter of the Cougars making free throws.

The renewed emphasis on post play will get a severe test on Tuesday against Luke Nevill and the Utes.

Player of the Year

Nevill is on track to be the league player of the year. He is having a big year and a big impact on games.

We expect the same against BYU. We don't see any way BYU can contain the 7-1 Australian.

As New Mexico, UNLV and SDSU showed, when you take away BYU's transition game and don't have to worry about post touches, BYU is pretty ordinary.

Unless Dave Rose can find a way to negate Nevill on both ends of the court, we look for more Cougar ordinary against the Utes.

The spotty play in the post for BYU will do one of several things for the future.

It will put more of a spotlight on Brandon Davies, the 6-10 post from Provo HS. He was one of three local post players to be signed early in November.

The other two, Nate Austin of Lone Peak HS and Ian Harward of Orem HS, both will serve LDS missions before enrolling.

That means that any needed post help BYU and Dave Rose needs for next year will have to come from Davies or the junior college ranks.

Finding good post players at the juco scene is very hard to do. That leaves Davies as the next best option for improving post play at BYU for next year.

We will be paying closer attention to him now and you can bet that BYU coaches will be the same.

FOOTBALL FLUFF AND STUFF

BOWL GAME TV RATINGS...In real estate it is all about location, location, location. In television, it is all about viewers, viewers, viewers, which in turn, more often than not, translates into money, money, money.

Those college football teams that generate the most viewers, consistently make the most money.

Here are some of the viewership numbers from this past bowl season compiled by Nielsen TV Ratings Data.

It is interesting to see how BYU fared in TV viewership in their Pioneer Bowl matchup with Arizona in comparison to other games.

The number of viewers is affected by what medium the game is shown, when it is shown and with whom you are matched up. For example, the Texas Bowl which pitted Rice and Western Michigan was shown on the NFL Network and drew just 186,000 television viewers.

The BCS Championship game was shown on FOX and drew almost 27 million viewers. The Rose Bowl was on ABC and had 20 plus million viewers.

To more accurately compare BYU's television numbers from their bowl appearance which was televised on ESPN, we will compare those numbers only with other bowl games that were broadcast by the same network.

As mentioned earlier, the date, time and opponent are all in the mix, but we found the numbers interesting. Maybe you will too.

BYU vs. Arizona drew 3.389 million eyeballs. Fresno State and Colorado State, drew a little more with 3.432 million viewers earlier that same day on the same network.

The Poinsettia Bowl, with TCU and Boise State had 5.881 million people watching. Air Force and Houston drew 2.050 million.

We found it interesting to see how BYU-Arizona stacked up with other ESPN televised bowl games.

The Las Vegas Bowl had more viewers than Wake Forest-Navy, Southern Miss-Troy, LA Tech-Northern Illinois, Rutgers-NC State, Maryland-Nevada and Tulsa-Ball State.

BYU-Arizona didn't have more viewers than Florida Atlantic-Central Michigan, Hawaii-Notre Dame, West Virginia-North Carolina, Florida State-Wisconsin, Missouri-Northwestern, Oregon-Oklahoma

State, Vanderbilt-Boston College, LSU-Georgia Tech, Iowa-South Carolina and Kentucky-East Carolina.

The Utah-Alabama Sugar Bowl drew 13.369 million viewers on FOX.

BYU AND BCS MONEY...Speaking of BCS payouts and money, Utah certainly padded their athletic coffers with a nice payout from the Sugar Bowl. All other Mountain West Conference teams also received a nice bonus check because of Utah.

Here's the kicker, nobody will officially say so, but based on what Jerry Jones is paying for college football matchups in his new billion dollar stadium in Dallas, the Cougars could be making more from their upcoming game against Oklahoma than the Utes did for their showdown against Alabama. And BYU doesn't have to share with anyone else in the MWC.

According to published reports, Jones has put together a ten-year deal with Texas A&M and Arkansas for the two teams to meet annually in his new stadium.

The figures released say that both the Aggies and Razorbacks will make \$5 million apiece per year.

You can bet that Oklahoma will be getting a paycheck in that same range. Who knows if BYU will be getting an equivalent paycheck, but even at half the \$5 million figure, BYU would be happy.

Word we get filtering out of BYU is that the Cougars are ecstatic with what they will be making this fall on just this game alone.

The check certainly will solidify athletic department budgets and have an immediate and positive impact for all sports sponsored by the Cougars.

WE LIKE OUR STORIES SANITIZED...When it comes to the BYU football program, since Bronco Mendenhall has taken over, there has not been one single honor code violation.

There have been a few violations of team rules that have resulted in players being dismissed from school, but no honor code violations.

The good, even great news is that those violations of team rules have been few and far between. The bad news is that when you have 120 players in your program, honor code hiccups or violation of team rules vagaries have always happened and will continue to happen. It is the nature of the beast.

It is the frequency of the infractions and severity of those infractions that grabs the headlines.

If rumors and reports turn out to be true, we expect to hear more about some "violation of team rules" soon.

It won't be the only infractions that have reportedly occurred during a big recruiting weekend of hosting prospective players.

Our guess is that if anything is actually publicly made known, we won't hear of it until after national letter of intent signing day.

That may disappoint, but it shouldn't diminish the overall character and core of the BYU football program. It is at an extremely high level. This program is loaded with outstanding student athletes.

That said, the football program is like any other organization. it has a few kinks that always need to be worked out.

It shouldn't surprise that some players don't like certain coaches. That happens at all programs. It shouldn't surprise that some coaches don't always see eye to eye. And just because you coach at BYU doesn't automatically make you a good x's and o's coach or a good recruiter.

And it especially shouldn't surprise that with 120 players in the program, you are occasionally going to have some problems that need to be addressed whether they call it honor code or violation of team rules.

NEW RECEIVER?...With the graduation of Michael Reed and the departure of Austin Collie to the NFL, BYU's receiving corp looks a little thin.

McKay Jacobson is back from his LDS mission to Japan and is enrolled in school and should help. Rhlen Brown is also back from a mission and will be a true freshman.

Another new missionary on the roster is Collin Fanning. He played baseball for the Cougars in 2006 and 2007 and it looks like after a mission he is changing sports.

Others returning to the roster include Spencer Hafoka and Luke Ashworth.

Another name to add to the receiver corp might be Stephen Covey. We are hearing that he wants to switch from qb to wr this spring.

If that happens, it would open up the backup qb this fall to Riley Nelson, the transfer from Utah State, who will be back from a mission to Spain.

We are also hearing that Adam Timo, the running back from Snow Canyon HS in St. George, will sign with the Cougars but serve an LDS mission before enrolling in school.

BYU MISSES MANTI BUS

The Manti Te'o bus made a stop at BYU, but when it left, the Cougars were still standing on the curb. Te'o is one of the top rated high school football prospects in the nation and BYU thought they were going to sign this LDS athlete.

He told Bronco Mendenhall last Saturday that he would not be doing so and now will make his college choice from either USC, UCLA or Notre Dame.

While the Te'o news was not good, the encouraging thing is that there will be another LDS top-prospect bus coming by again in just another few months.

The LDS prospect pool of football players is big enough now that a bus will be coming along every year.

Unfortunately, while the buses keep coming, BYU football keeps standing on the corner.

There are plenty of theories and thoughts on why BYU can't reel in the big LDS football fish, but so far the only thing proven is that BYU must be using the wrong bait.

Not only did the Te'o bus already come and go, we don't expect the Cougars to be picked up by Xavier Su'a Filo. He was the other LDS national caliber recruit that BYU had hope to sign.

There are always excuses and circumstances that seem to explain away the dismal record of the Cougars when it comes to signing the big fish, but the cold hard facts always remain. BYU will be shut out again on the national recruiting stage.

While the big fish swim away, the Cougars did reel in a smaller fish this past week. That would be Cody Hoffman. He is a 6-3, 210 pound wide receiver from Del Norte HS in Crescent City, California. He chose BYU over Sacramento State.

Here is the current list of verbal commits for BYU. National letter of intent signing day is set for Wednesday, February 4.

Terry Alletto, OL, 6-3, 260, Ponderosa HS, CO
Trevor Bateman, DB, 5-11, 180, Palm Desert HS, CA
Craig Bills, DB, 6-2, 205, Timpview HS, UT
Thomas Bryson, DE/LB, 6-3, 215, Layton HS, UT
Tui Crichton, OL, 6-4, 280, Timpview HS, UT
Jray Galea'i, DB, 6-0, 175, Kahuku HS, HI
Anthony Heimuli, RB, 5-11, 225, Mountain View HS, UT
Cody Hoffman, WR, 6-3, 210, Del Norte HS, CA
Peni Maka'afi, RB, 5-10, 215, Layton HS, UT
Mitch Mathews, WR, 6-5, 195, Southridge HS, OR
Ryan Mulitalo, OL, 6-3, 285, Hunter HS, UT
Riley Nelson, QB, 6-1, 190, transfer from Utah State
Remington Peck, TE/LB, 6-5, 215, Bingham HS, UT
Brett Thompson, WR, 6-3, 210, Oak Ridge HS, CA

Adam Timo, RB, 6-1, 190, Snow Canyon HS, UT
Fono Vakalahi, OL, 6-4, 320, Bryan HS, TX
Kyle Van Noy, LB, 6-4, 215, McQueen HS, NV
Brad Wilcox, OL, 6-7, 240, North HS, OK
Richard Wilson, TE, 6-3, 225, Spanish Fork HS, UT

MAKING MOVIES AND BASKETS DOESN'T MAKE YOU A DEEP THINKER

I am constantly amused how fame and fortune seem to automatically make shallow thoughts seem like deep philosophy.

Why is it that fluffy film stars and some fifth-grade educated professional athletes are awarded Socratic status for almost everything that seeps from their mouths?

Take away the fame and fortune and you have a better chance of having a meaningful conversation at a truck stop in North Dakota than you would in a professional locker room or on location at a film shoot.

I am also amused by seemingly Socratic supporters of BYU football that suddenly go to the shallow end of pool just because an 18 year boy splashed a little water in their face.

Speaking of meaningful conversations, when was the last time you had one of those with a teenage boy? Even your own.

Even more puzzling is why things an 18 year-old kid says, does and decides causes us so much distress, discombobulation and discomfort, especially when it comes to BYU football?

Why can't Manti Te'o be as smart as me? Why can't he see that he can help make the BYU football program better which will then enhance my experience as a BYU football fan and make it easier for me to prove to Utah fans that my dad can still beat up their dad?

If he could only see this through my eyes, then he could never say no to BYU. If he could only understand how not signing with BYU impacts me as a die hard BYU football fan, then he would get it.

I know my status as a supporter of BYU football is not specifically asked about by ecclesiastical leaders when they quiz me once every two years, but I sure wish it was. I sure would like that question better than the one that inquires about my family. I always sheepishly admit I have a daughter, brother, mother and uncle that graduated from The University of Arizona. Three of the four did go on LDS missions, but none of that made BYU a better football team.

Why can't this Te'o kid grow up and see things the way I do as a mature and well grounded grownup?

Believe me, If I ever run in to him at a truck stop in North Dakota, I will definitely ask him.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Utah

Tue, Jan 27 at Salt Lake

Tipoff: 8:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Wyoming

Saturday, Jan 31 at Provo

Tipoff: 4:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Air Force

Tuesday, Feb 3 at USAFA

Tipoff: 6:00 pm Mountain time

TV: Mtn