

HB Arnett's

COUGAR SPORTSLINE

801 372 0819

hbarnett@fiber.net and hbarnett@xmission.com

1391 West 800 South – Orem, Utah 84058

Vol. 30, Issue 13 – November 2, 2009

[Click Here To Order Or Renew Your Subscriptions](#)

UPON FURTHER REVIEW

Now that the dust and disgust of BYU's beat down a week ago at the hands of TCU has settled, the disappointment is still real, but the disillusionment is gone.

After watching a weekend of college football, it appears to us that BYU is probably as good, and even better, than 85 percent of the other Division I teams playing the game these days.

The current reality of BYU football, however, is that there appears to be a glass ceiling for the Cougars. They are hovering just below the top 15 percent of programs who play the game.

We also probably should acknowledge that the TCU team that dismantled BYU is currently one of those teams in the top 15 percent that is clearly better than the Cougars.

If BYU is ever going to break through that glass ceiling it won't be with coaching. Blaming coaches is basically a knee-jerk reaction and what we expressed last week after the TCU loss.

Here is how we see it after more thought and viewing of college football games that didn't involve BYU.

In our opinion, the number of great coaches who can win games with only x's and o's are extremely rare.

If a coach really is that good, he is never going to be coaching at BYU. He will demand such a big salary that BYU will never be able to match it.

Reality

Here is the reality of college football coaches in general and BYU coaches in particular, as we see, it when it comes to the actual coaching of football. You could throw all college head coaches and assistant coaches' names into a bag, shake it and randomly draw out a staff and they would all look pretty similar.

If a guy is truly brilliant, he is going to be teaching physics or mathematics at an Ivy League university, not coaching football at BYU or any other school.

Even if there was such a thing as a brilliant LDS super-guy who could coach the game, and as a bonus, is a motivator and mover of mountains, the law of supply and demand would keep him away from BYU and put him at some BCS school where he would be making \$3-4 million per year.

That is our take on coaching and especially BYU coaching.

BYU's coaches know their stuff, but they are nothing special. That description also applies to 99 percent of other coaches in the business when it comes to teaching, implementing schemes, games plans and motivation.

Football coaches and mechanics are similar. A mechanic, no matter how good he is, can't take a Yugo and make it a Lexus.

A football coach can't take a team of dogs and make them thoroughbreds.

Taking Steroids

You and I could train for years, even take steroids, hire a track coach who could teach us technique and execution, but if we had to face Usain Bolt in the 100 meters, he would still win. On our best day, we might be within 15 meters of him at the finish line, but only if he was suffering from the H1N1 virus and had major reconstructive knee surgery the day before the race.

In our opinion, when it comes to coaches, having horses is better than having a high IQ.

All of which brings us back to the Bronco Mendenhall stable. If he is going to continue to win games and eventually break through the glass ceiling and big-game barrier, he needs more horsepower, not coaching acumen.

He was left some horses from the previous regime, but as evidenced by the last two years, those horses are not yet good enough to run with the better bloodlines. We acknowledge the win over Oklahoma, but also acknowledge a long-shot from New Mexico's Sunland Park winning this year's Kentucky Derby. Both were aberrations.

In all of the major disappointing losses during Mendenhall's career as a head coach at BYU, he has been out-horsed more than he has been outcoached.

Need a Herd

If you are going to run a ranch that is reaching for the top, you have to somehow build a herd of horses that will get you there.

Bronco's modus operandi for getting his herd in place is certainly different and by the nature of the LDS missionary program involves a longer timeline than at other programs.

He has narrowed his recruiting pool and made such odd statements as "A player needs to recruit me."

The true test of what kind of Cougar coach Mendenhall is going to be is just around the corner.

Despite all the hoopla of mindset, mantras and models, after the 2010 season next year, Mendenhall will have only horses that he and his staff has recruited. We will soon begin to see if his horses are going to be good enough.

There are four players still on the team that were part of Gary Crowton's last recruiting class. They include Nick Alletto and Terence Brown, both current starters on the offensive line, Matt Putnam, a backup defensive end and Grant Nelson, a backup outside linebacker.

Mendenhall's first class in 2005 was primarily recruited by the Crowton staff of which Mendenhall was a part. As a head coach, he had little time to put his brand on recruiting before signing day in February.

First Class

That first class of Mendenhall/Crowton still has players with another year or more of eligibility remaining. They include Matt Reynolds, starting offensive line, Harvey Unga, starting tailback, Russell Tialavea, starting nose guard, Vic So'oto, backup defensive end, Luke Ashworth, starting wide receiver, Shawn Doman and Terence Hooks, linebackers, Jan Jorgensen, starting defensive end and Stephen Covey, backup wide receiver.

Mendenhall will very soon be riding only his own horses that he recruited and roped. In our opinion, the bottom line is not coaching, it is recruiting. If his horses aren't good enough, this BYU coaching staff and their unique model and mode of management won't be in the BYU barn forever.

Most fans that we talk to think that the last two recruiting classes of Mendenhall and his staff have been very good. Those same fans think this incoming class that will sign in February is phenomenal

and indicative of great things ahead for BYU when it comes to horses and high expectations.

We tend to agree on those assessments, but differ on when the influx of better talent will actually kick in and be seen on the field.

The reality of BYU recruiting has taught us that despite how highly touted a BYU recruiting class is, only two or three new high school recruits ever see the field as true freshmen and it is a very rare exception to have a true freshman start and make an impact.

Impact

The last true freshman offensive recruit to start and make a difference was Austin Collie.

Harvey Unga was not enrolled at BYU the year after he graduated from high school and saw only limited action the following year because of a hip injury. It wasn't until the third year after high school that he made an impact as a redshirt freshman.

No true freshman quarterback has ever made a contribution at BYU. Not Ty Detmer, not Steve Young, not Jim McMahon, not anybody in the last 30 years.

No true freshman linebacker has started for BYU in the last 20 years. No true frosh has started as a defensive back.

As highly touted as Craig Bills was last year, he isn't starting for the Cougars this season.

Other than wide receiver, the only other place where true freshmen make an immediate impact at BYU is on the defensive line. Eathyn Manumaluena earned a starting spot his freshman year a few seasons back.

What we are saying is that as good as the new incoming class looks to be, it won't be much, if any, immediate help for next season.

In our opinion, the two areas that need the most help are defensive line and linebacker. The defensive secondary is what it is. It will never be great. Great defensive backs and BYU recruiting are not compatible. If there is going to be a good defense for BYU, it will require good defensive linemen and linebackers.

Influx

If there is going to be an influx of talent next season that will make BYU better on both side of the ball, it won't be from the much anticipated, but yet to sign, 2010 class. That will be a talented group, but history shows it won't seriously help for at least two or three years.

That means any help for next year will have to come from the recruiting classes of 2006, 2007 and 2008.

These guys are already in the program, or soon will be when they all return from missions.

The 2009 class and the much anticipated 2010 recruiting class are exciting and good for future hope, but the reality of any real help next year will have to be found in the three previous classes and the development of those players or the influx of talent that has yet to see the field.

Here are those classes.

2006 Class

Brandon Bradley, DB, started at boundary corner this year.

Rhen Brown, WR, redshirted this year.

Robbie Buckner, DB, was slated to start, but was sidetracked by injury in the fall.

Sam Doman, QB/TE, no longer in the program.

Ian Dulan, DE, serving an LDS mission. Former starter. Won't be back until 2011.

Moses Foketi, DL, no longer in program.

Ryan Freeman, OL, sees backup action this season on o-line.

Romey Fuga, DT, starts as a sophomore now.

Mike Hague, RB, was backup running back, but gone for the year with injury.

Max Hall, QB, will not be in the program next year.

Braden Hansen, OL, starts as a redshirt freshman.

McKay Jacobson, WR, starter at wide receiver, but currently injured.

Matt Johnson, Deep Snapper, never enrolled.

Walter Kahaialii, OL, on an LDS mission, due back in Jan of 2010.

James Lark, QB, redshirted as a frosh, on LDS mission, due back Jan of 2010.

Nate Moncur, LB, was injured and never enrolled.

Michael Moore, DB, no longer in program.

Mike Muehlmann, TE/DE, true frosh this season after serving mission.

Brandon Ogletree, LB, a backup middle linebacker this season after returning from mission.

Tico Pringle, DB, no longer in program.

Jordan Richardson, DL, backup nose tackle. Switched to O-line for two weeks this season because of injuries.

Andre Saulsberry, DB, no longer in program.

Tom Sorensen, OL, no longer in program.

Riley Stephenson, K/P, after mission punts this season as true frosh.

Matangi Tonga, DL, no longer in program.

Rick Wolfley, DL, no longer in program.

2007 Class

Famika Anae, OL, back from mission as true frosh next season.

David Angilau, DL, no longer in program.

Tyler Beck, LB, back from mission next season, will be sophomore.

Brannon Brooks, DB, no longer in program.

Braden Brown, TE/OL, see playing time this season as backup o-lineman, te and blocking back.

J.J. Di Luigi, RB, currently a backup running back.

Scotty Ebert, WR/DB, never enrolled in school.

Kaneakua Friel, saw action as blocking back, due back from mission in 2011.

Austin Jorgensen, LB, saw special teams action as frosh, back next season from mission.

Ryan Kessman, WR, no longer in program.

Aveni Leung Wai, LB, still needs academic work after returning from mision. Is currently at Grossmont JC in California.

Levi Mack, OL, no longer in program.

Devin Mahina, TE/DE/LB, will enroll next year after mission and should be part of spring drills.

Eathyn Manumaleuna, DL, started as frosh, will be back from mission next season.

Marcus Matthews, WR, redshirting this year after mission.

Jason Munns, QB, will be back from mission next season.

Gary Nagy, DB, no longer part of the program.

Jordan Pendleton, LB, starts for the Cougars.

G Pittman, DB, no longer part of the program.

Houston Reynolds, OL, redshirting this year after mission, tore ACL early in the fall.

Jordan Smith, WR, back from mission for next season.

Steven Thomas, DB, current reserve defensive back.

Manaaki Vaitai, OL, back from mission next season.

2008 Class

Bernard Afutiti, DL, if he can solve academics, will be back on field for next season.
Michael Alisa, LB, back in 2011 from mission.
Kevan Bills, LB, back in 2010 after mission, will likely redshirt next season.
Cameron Comer, DB, back from mission in 2011.
Spencer Hadley, LB, back from mission in 2011.
Austin Holt, TE, back in 2010 after mission, will likely redshirt next season.
Solomone Kafu, OL, back from mission in 2011.
Jake Murphy, WR/LB, back from mission in 2011.
Iona Pritchard, LB, back from mission in 2011.
Daniel Sorensen, LB, back from mission in 2011.
Justin Sorensen, K, back from mission in 2011.
Brock Stringham, OL, back from mission in 2011.
Michael Yeck, OL, back from mission in 2010, will likely redshirt next season.
Atem Bol, WR, never qualified for enrollment academically.
Jerry Bruner, RB/LB, no longer in program. Now at Washington State.
O'Neill Chambers, WR, currently a starter.
Garett Nicholson, DB, no longer in program.
Shiloah, Te'o, DB, no longer in program.
Jesse Taufi, OL, academics still a problem.

How about it? See any major help on the horizon for next season from these classes? We do. We mentioned that we think the two areas that need the most help are the defensive line and linebackers.

The names that pop out to us are Eathyn Manumaleuna and Bernard Afutiti on the defensive line. Devin Mahina is a player and could help at defensive end, or at linebacker.

Speaking of linebackers, Tyler Beck, Austin Jorgensen and Aveni Leung Wai, will help.

The class of 2009 will give the Cougars their starting quarterback in Riley Nelson, and a very talented linebacker in Kyle Van Noy. He will be enrolled in January, and with a spring practice under his belt, could be one of the true freshmen to make an impact.

We have mentioned before that we expect Ross Apo, the wide receiver from Texas, to have the best chance of making an impact from the yet-to-be signed 2010 class.

FOOTBALL FLUFF AND STUFF

BYU is back in the top 25 after taking a week off. If the Cougars had two more byes in November, they could be BCS bowl eligible.

The national ranking won't last if BYU can't win in Laramie this Saturday. Based on the way Wyoming is competing and playing this season, and the way BYU looked when it last took the field, a win for the Cougars will be like the weather in Wyoming.

You never know what you will get.

We will find out in a hurry if BYU has folded its tent after the TCU debacle.

The Cougars will have to play well in Laramie if they are to get their seventh victory of the season.

The Cowboys are still not a very good team, but new coach Dave Christensen has them playing hard and with heart.

When Wyoming plays with those two attributes at home in front of their fans, they are dangerous.

We expect Wyoming to trot out a few touchdowns against the Cougar defense, but we also expect the BYU offense to show up in force.

This is the kind of team that the BYU offense should light up.

We call it BYU 37 Wyoming 17.

QUARTERBACK QUEUE

Max Hall...An avid and good golfer, Hall may have played nine holes somewhere. If he did, he likely scored less than the 38 TCU put up on the Cougars a week ago.

Riley Nelson...No game, no stats.

James Lark and Jason Munns...See recruiting class breakdowns above.

Jake Heaps...He threw three touchdown passes, but it wasn't enough as Skyline lost 25-20 to undefeated Bothell HS.

Tanner Mangum..Completed 19-42 for 208 yards and 3 touchdowns in a 24-27 loss to Caldwell. Mangum's season stats for this year as a sophomore are: 165-of 312 for 1995 yards with 17 touchdown passes and 8 interceptions. As a freshman, he was 214-of 333 for 2845 yards with 29 touchdown passes and 8 interceptions. It was pretty obvious that he didn't have the same surrounding cast this year that he has as a true freshman starting for Timberline HS.

Alex Kuresa...Kuresa doesn't have the prototypical size or arm of a Division I quarterback, but he certainly plays like one as a high school junior. Last week in the first round of the state playoffs, he was 12-18 for 320 yards passing. Mountain Crest toured Salem Hills 55-6 and sat down early as his team was up 48-0 at the half.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Trinity Western

Thu, Nov 5 at Provo (exhibition game)

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUTV (live)

BYU vs. Wyoming

Saturday, Nov 7 at Laramie

Kickoff: Noon Mountain Time

TV: The Mtn

BYU vs. Central Washington

Tue, Nov 10 at Provo (exhibition game)

Tipoff: 7:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUTV (live)

BYU vs. Bradley

Fri, Nov 13 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: The Mtn

BYU vs. New Mexico

Saturday, Nov 14 at Albuquerque

Kickoff: Noon Mountain Time

TV: The Mtn

BYU vs. Air Force

Saturday, Nov 21 at Provo

Kickoff: 1:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: CBS C

BYU vs. Utah

Saturday, Nov 28 at Provo

Kickoff: 3:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: The Mtn and CBS C