

HB Arnett's ***COUGAR SPORTSLINE***

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IS THERE ANY ROOM FOR FAT IN FOOTBALL?

Finally, after what has to be one of the dullest spring football camps in BYU history, we have some fat to chew on.

Thank you Brandon Doman.

The second year BYU offensive coordinator sparked some interest in BYU football during this annual spring rite of passage and preservation. If you haven't noticed, if a player is any good and proven, he is preserved and doesn't play in the spring.

No squabble with that. You don't put out the best china for hot dog eating contests.

Speaking of high caloric intake, Doman said last week that BYU's offensive linemen were too fat.

Here is his actual quote:

"One of the biggest weaknesses we've had, particularly on the offensive line, has been their fitness level. They're big and they're strong, but they've been carrying too much weight. I don't mind saying that. Their fitness level hasn't been where I would like to see it as offensive coordinator. There's a concerted effort to help the fitness level of those guys while they're gaining strength. They're older. We should be really strong. They've got more time to be in the weight room and their bodies are more mature. But I also want them to be lean, with lean muscle mass and be fit. We're getting close to that ... Hopefully we can build that fitness in and we'll see less injury in years to come."

That is an interesting concept. Can you be a good football player generally and a good offensive or defensive lineman specifically, if you are overweight?

Speaking as one who has eaten his share of hot dogs, Oreos, ice cream and cheese cake, and as one who has seen all different body types on the gridiron, I consider myself pretty well versed in all things fat and football.

Fat is certainly not healthy, but when it comes to football, I would rather have a fat guy that can play and produce than a fit guy who can't.

Football isn't about physique. Fat, or more specifically, too much fat is overrated...on the football field. It's about making plays and production.

Generally, Doman's thoughts when it comes to those fat aspirations on the team to which he referred are sound. But making plays and finding players who can make those plays regardless of paunch and pounds is more important, especially on the offensive and defensive lines.

Can you be fat and athletic at the same time? Ask Gilbert Brown and Nate Newton of NFL fame and fortune.

They likely weren't doing themselves any health favors in carrying big time weight, but you certainly can't disparage their productivity on the field.

In defense of overweight offensive linemen everywhere, if they were big, strong, sleek and quick, they would be defensive ends instead of guards and tackles on the offensive side of the ball.

Fat and or fit is all about the final score. If you can make plays and produce wins, then nobody cares.

Was Alabama's offensive line overweight or super fit? Don't know and don't care because they are National Champions. Was Utah's offensive line too fat? Who cares? They fat out, or was it flat out, beat BYU to a pulp on the line of scrimmage last season.

Speaking of fat, or more to the point, cutting the fat, that is what Doman intends to do this coming season with his offense. He says he is going to simplify it. [Click here for details.](#)

Wasn't simplifying the offense what caused Bronco Mendenhall to remove Robert Anae as offensive coordinator and replace him with Brandon Doman? Just wondering.

Anae's big deal was execution. He openly stated that he didn't have a big playbook, but they were going to win by executing those few plays to perfection.

Summer Sustainment

As I have stated many times in this letter before, my two favorite sporting events are the Ryder Cup and the Breeders Cup. I love golf and horse racing at its competitive best.

I am not a big fan of Greyhound racing, but for some reason it reminds me of BYU football this coming fall.

In my opinion, Greyhound racing is all about sandbagging and sand paper. It isn't unusual for some dogs to have their paws sand papered to make their feet tender and unable to run at full throttle.

When the odds on a dog get high enough, the paper is put away and paws are allowed to heal just in time to see a long shot dog pay out big at the pari-mutuel window.

This spring, BYU football has been a lot like sandpaper. There are plenty of sore knees, feet, shoulders and other ailments.

The good players are back in the kennel getting ready and staying healthy for the fall. A year ago, it was just the opposite.

Bronco Mendenhall was full throttle in his assessment of BYU as a very good team.

This year, because of injuries and getting burned by his optimism last year, he has the sand paper and sand bags out in full force this spring.

If BYU was a greyhound, I would be looking for a big payout at the pari-mutuel window this fall.

This is not a dog team. Bronco has players and play makers.

A year ago, we thought we had the big dog in the race in Jake Heaps. He has since clicked his heels and gone to Kansas.

Bronco has the ultimate alpha-male in Riley Nelson. He also has the alpha-male heir in freshman Taysom Hill.

Like a good greyhound, it all starts with their feet. Both Nelson and Hill can make plays with their feet. Heaps couldn't. It made all the difference in the world last year.

It doesn't hurt that Nelson will have guys to throw to. Specifically play maker supreme, Cody Hoffman.

The offensive backfield will never be NFL flashy, but it will be better next season. The tailbacks will be about the same, but the fullback position will have a major upgrade with Iona Pritchard returning from his sand-blasted ankle injury of last fall camp.

Kyle Van Noy is still the premier play maker on defense. He rested and recuperated from shoulder surgery this spring. He has help on defense this fall.

There are more playmakers in the secondary this coming season than last year. There are young players like Manoa Pikula at linebacker, waiting to get to the gate.

While it is a pretty sound bet that Van Noy will end up in the NFL, the intriguing exotic bet for us would be Ezekial Ansah. The 6-6, 270 pound senior from Ghana is the most physically gifted football player we have seen at BYU.

He just needs time to learn the game. His time in eligibility at BYU is running out, but bet on this. Pro Scouts will go ga ga over him next spring at BYU's pro day.

Depending on what he shows as a pass rusher this season in spot play at defensive end, he could be a late round draft pick, but for sure somebody will sign him as a free agent.

He will be the perfect practice squad player for an NFL team. He won't cost much and his upside is so big, that he will be worth the gamble for some club.

It might be too much to expect another Jason Pierre-Paul of the New York Giants, but Ansah has that same type of athletic ability. He just needs more time to learn how to play the game.

Blame it on BYUtv and Boredom

I confess.

I had never watched an entire BYU softball game until this past weekend. I was forced into it.

My options for the weekend were burning the back field, tilling the garden or watching BYU softball. Golf would have trumped all three, but I have a sore shoulder that I am waiting on to get better.

I chose softball and was pleasantly surprised. It was entertaining and occasionally riveting. A three game sweep against New Mexico State that included good pitching and the long ball by BYU was fun to see.

It was good enough on Friday that I tuned in again for both games of a doubleheader on Saturday.

It was the opening of WAC play for the Lady Cougars who are now 3-0 in league action and 19-8 overall.

She is no Barry Bonds... she is much better looking, but Delaney Willard, the senior from Camarillo, California, put the team on her shoulders offensively in this series.

She hit three home runs in the three games. The last was a walk off game winner. The Cougars swept the Aggies, 3-2, 9-1 and 6-3.

Volleyball

We were taken to task last week for not giving a BYU volleyball update. We repent. Here are the latest two stories from BYU concerning the weekend split with Long Beach State last Friday and Saturday.

LONG BEACH, Calif. - To extend its winning streak to seven matches, the No. 4 BYU men's volleyball team swept (29-27, 25-11, 25-16) No. 9 Long Beach State on the road, Friday.

Freshman Josue Rivera led all players with a career-high four service aces while also contributing eight kills, six digs and two blocks.

Three Cougars recorded double-digit kills in the victory, led by senior Robb Stowell's 14. Taylor Sander and Futi Tavana contributed 13 and 10, respectively. Tavana also added a match-high six blocks.

With Stowell's 14 kills in the win, he moves into fourth place all-time in BYU history for total kills and is just four away from third place.

The 49ers jumped to an early 3-0 lead in the first set and continued to lead until a kill from Russ Lavaja tied the score at 8-8, and a Rivera ace gave BYU its first lead. The Cougars held onto the lead through the rest of the match despite Long Beach State coming within one point on three different occasions. Late in the set, the 49ers tied the score at 27-27 but the Cougars took the 29-27 set victory behind a kill from Sander and block from Stowell.

BYU took sets two and three in commanding fashion behind a blistering .750 team attack in the sec-

ond set and .452 in the third. The Cougars' 25-11 victory in the second set is the largest margin of victory this season and a 25-16 win in the third would give them the match.

LONG BEACH, Calif. - In five sets (17-25, 25-22, 25-23, 21-25, 18-20), the No. 4 BYU men's volleyball team lost on the road to No. 9 Long Beach State, Saturday, to split the pair of matches this weekend.

Taylor Sander led all players with 25 kills to tie his season high. Teammates Robb Stowell, Russ Lavaja, Josue Rivera and Futi Tavana joined Sander in double-digit kills with 14, 11, 10 and 10, respectively.

Tavana led all players with eight blocks while Rivera led the squad on 11 digs.

The 49ers took set one, 25-17, after a 5-2 run to finish out the play. The set was tied at 9-9 early on but two-straight points for Long Beach State would give the 49ers a lead they would not relinquish.

BYU bounced back in the second set, winning 25-22, and tied the match at 1-1. Riding the momentum, the Cougars took set three 25-23 and a 2-1 lead in the match.

Set four, similar to the first three, was back-and-forth all the way to the end but the 49ers pulled out the 25-21 win to send the match to a fifth set.

In a competitive fifth set, the teams traded points for the first few possessions until BYU went on a 4-0 run to take the lead at 10-8. Long Beach State responded and tied the set at 14-all to force the play into extra frames. Again the teams traded points but, in the end, it was the 49ers who were able to get back-to-back points for the 20-18 victory.

The Cougars return to Provo next weekend to host Cal State Northridge on March 29 and 30. Both matches will be live on BYUtv and BYU Radio.

BYU Baseball

The BYU Cougars took two of three games over the weekend from WCC foe Portland. The Cougars split a double header on Friday winning the first game 3-2 and losing the nightcap 3-1.

Vance Law's club came back on Saturday to take a 7-4 extra inning game from the Pilots. The Cougars are now 9-9 on the year and 4-2 in WCC play. That is good enough currently to put BYU in second place in the conference standings. San Diego leads the league with a 2-0 conference record and a 20-6 overall mark.

Here is BYU athletics' report on the Saturday game.

PORTLAND, Ore.—Clutch pitching and defense late in the game helped BYU baseball secure a 10th-inning 7-4 victory Saturday afternoon over the University of Portland.

BYU (9-9) improves to 4-2 in the West Coast Conference battle for first place and several Cougars helped keep them there as they won the three-game series over the Pilots (14-5 overall, 1-2 WCC).

While three unearned runs in the 10th inning provided the BYU victory, the impetus started in the third inning when relief pitcher Desmon Poulson took the mound and promptly retired the Pilots in order. Poulson repeated that feat in the sixth and eighth innings. Among the seven Pilots fanned by Poulson were key strikeouts in the fifth, sixth and eighth frames.

While reliever Chris Howard got the win by virtue of throwing four pitches in two-thirds of the ninth inning and 5-foot-8 freshman Mason Marshall picked up his third save, Poulson's pitching helped keep the score knotted at four-all for the final five innings of regulation.

"Our pitchers kept us close and right in the ball game," said BYU coach Vance Law. "Our team has ground it out and they never give up, they weren't going to give in as long as our pitcher was keeping us in the game."

Three BYU defensive plays in the seventh and ninth innings extinguished Portland rallies.

The first came when right fielder Jaycob Brugman helped throw out Turner Gill at second as he tried to extend a single. Not to be outdone, two batters later teammate Stephen Wells made an over-the-shoulder catch to end the seventh with a runner on third base.

"Wells made an unbelievable play in center field," said Law. "Then Tanner Chauncey made a heads-up play, knowing we couldn't make the double play at first base."

Freshman shortstop Chauncey touched second base for out number two off a slow roller, then faked to first before firing home to catch the Pilot runner in a ninth inning-ending pickle to complete one of three Cougar double plays.

That set up Austin Hall, who moved from short to center field, leading off the 10th by beating out a bunt single down the third base line, followed by a Wes Guenther walk. BYU then took a 6-4 lead off a wild throw by pitcher Owen Jones fielding Brock Whitney's's bunt. Whitney advanced around the horn and was later ruled safe at the plate off of Brugman's sacrifice fly.

BYU's next action is Tuesday, March 27, when it plays at Spring Mobile Ballpark in Salt Lake City at 6 p.m.MT against Utah in the first of three non-conference games with the Utes.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. CS Northridge (volleyball)

Thursday, March 29 at Provo

Time: 7:00 pm Mtn Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. CS Northridge (volleyball)

Friday, March 30 at Provo

Time: 7:00 pm Mtn Time

TV: BYUtv