

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

801 372 0819

hbarnett@fiber.net and hbarnett@xmission

PO Box 50424 Provo, Utah 84605

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As a subscriber, you are allowed to access our new blog. You can view it by going to www.cougar-sportsline.blogspot.com

Just a reminder that we are now sending the newsletter via two separate email accounts to help solve distribution issues that many subscribers experienced last year. That means you may receive two identical letters. If that is the case, please just discard the extra.

BYU THUMPS EWU 42-7

BYU got exactly what they scheduled this past summer with EWU. It was an Easy Win Understood. That was how it played out this past Saturday in LaVell Edwards Stadium with BYU easily whipping Eastern Washington 42-7.

The game and weather were both sloppy, but when the scoreboard and skies finally cleared, the Cougars were 5-2 on the year and just one win away from becoming bowl eligible.

Thanks to a stingy BYU defense and another outstanding day by Harvey Unga, this game was never in doubt.

The Cougars came up with three interceptions and held the EWU ground game to just 42 yards.

Against the Eagles, Unga had his second consecutive big rushing game of the season. The redshirt freshman churned out 145 yards rushing on just 21 carries. He also scored 2 touchdowns. One was a 22 yard catch and run and the other a 13-yard scamper.

Unga also led all BYU receivers with 4 catches for 57 yards.

At his present clip, Unga will become the most prolific freshman running back at BYU ever.

Ronney Jenkins holds the frosh running record with 733 yards which was established in 1996.

Plateau

After seven games, Unga has racked up 684 yards. He has topped the 100-yards rushing plateau in four games this season.

In conference games, he is averaging 114 yards per contest.

The emergence of Unga as the go-to-guy in the BYU offense is perfect timing.

It coincides nicely with the slowdown in production from the so-called BYU quarterback factory.

There have been no layoffs as yet at the factory, but there have been some consecutive lackluster

performances in the last two outings by Max Hall.

Based on the 15-30-1-156 numbers that were produced by Hall against EWU, there appears to be a kink in the assembly line.

No one is suggesting that the factory go off shore or Brenden Gaskins go off the bench to replace Hall, but passing production is definitely in a downturn.

Hall, who started his career looking like former factory executives Detmer and McMahon, now appears more lunchbox like as in Kevin Feterik and Steve Lindsay.

Management Meetings

You can expect some high powered management meetings this week by BYU coaches to try and identify the current slump in passing production.

It may be a lack of quality raw materials on the offensive line and at wide receiver.

It may be mismanagement from the sideline in play calling or it may be that Hall is still seasoning and assimilating the offense while getting his on-the-job training.

One thing is certain, if BYU hopes to reach its production goals of a MWC championship and Las Vegas Bowl appearance, the passing slump can't continue much longer.

San Diego State may be the perfect slump buster for Hall and his Cougar offense.

The Aztecs, whom BYU will face this coming Saturday in San Diego, are currently ranked last in the Mountain West Conference in pass defense. They are giving up an average of 295.4 yards per game. That is the good news for the BYU passing offense. The bad news for Max Hall is that SDSU is second in the conference in interceptions with 12.

Once a Game

After seven games Hall has thrown 9 picks and has been intercepted at least once in every contest as a Cougar in which he has played. We don't expect that to change against the Aztecs, but we do expect the BYU passing game to make a much needed resurgence.

New Mexico, whom we consider the second best team in the league, had to make a late-game comeback to secure a 20-17 victory over San Diego State last week in San Diego.

The Lobos threw for 239 yards against the Aztecs and rushed for 126 yards.

SDSU only had 133 yards passing against UNM but did rush for 166 yards. Aztec qb, Kevin O'Connell, was the leading rusher for SDSU with 82 yards.

He is the Aztec offense.

Until the last couple of games, Max Hall was the BYU offense.

With the emergence of Harvey Unga, that is no longer true, but Hall does have to find himself and the Cougar passing game soon.

San Diego State should provide some help in this area. We call it BYU 31 SDSU 17.

BYU VS. FLORIDA ATLANTIC IN LAS VEGAS BOWL?

Here's the good news for the Las Vegas Bowl which will be held Dec. 22.

The game is a sellout. The only tickets left are the allotments held back for the two participating teams.

You can thank BYU fans for the sellout. They have anticipated that BYU will be back in Las Vegas for its third consecutive appearance and have bought tickets accordingly.

As of right now, those buying BYU tickets look like they are brilliant strategists.

If BYU is the outright Mountain West Conference champ, they will be invited to the Las Vegas Bowl.

If the Cougars stumble and lose a game and end up as co-champions with either New Mexico or Air

Force, it won't be a slam dunk that the Cougars will get the nod over the Falcons or Lobos.

There are a couple of reasons. The Poinsettia Bowl, which has the second pick from the MWC would like to get the Cougars for the Dec. 20 date in San Diego.

If Navy can win one more game, they will be invited. Poinsettia people would love to match them up against the Cougars to help celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Holiday Bowl when Navy and BYU were the first invitees to that game.

Co-Championship

Unless there is a MWC co-championship, there is no chance of that happening.

If Air Force gets by New Mexico in Albuquerque this Thursday night, they will be 6-1 in league play with just San Diego State remaining on their conference schedule. That game is set for Colorado Springs.

All BYU has to do is stumble once against SDSU, CSU, TCU, Wyoming or Utah, and a co-championship is very conceivable.

With BYU already making two straight appearances in Las Vegas the last two seasons, and with Nellis Air Force base close by, an invite to the Falcons as MWC co-champions is not out of the question.

Admittedly, there are a lot of dominoes that have to fall just right for BYU not to be invited back for the Las Vegas Bowl.

If the Cougars are invited, just whom would they play?

Most automatically assume it will be a team from the Pac 10. Not so fast. There may not be enough Pac 10 bowl eligible teams available to fill the Las Vegas slot.

Fifth Pick

Most assume that the Las Vegas Bowl will get the fourth pick from the Pac 10. Not so. This year, the Emerald Bowl of San Francisco has the #4 pick with the LV Bowl taking the #5 pick from the Pac 10.

If the Pac 10 gets two teams invited to BCS bowls, the pickings and chances of there being a Pac 10 bowl eligible team for the Las Vegas Bowl are looking slim.

Arizona State and the winner of USC-Oregon game this weekend look the most likely to stay in the BCS sweepstakes.

In the most recent BCS Standings, Arizona State is ranked No. 4, Oregon is No. 5 and USC is currently No. 12.

The Holiday Bowl, Sun Bowl and Emerald Bowl all get to pick before the Las Vegas Bowl.

The way the current season is going for the West Coast conference, if two Pac 10 teams get BCS invites, there just may not be enough bowl eligible teams from that league to meet its Las Vegas commitment.

As of this week, here are the latest Pac 10 standings.

	League	Overall
ASU	4-0	7-0
UCLA	4-0	5-2
USC	3-1	6-1
Oregon	3-1	6-1
Cal	2-2	5-2
OSU	2-2	4-3
Stanford	2-3	3-4
UofA	1-4	2-6
UW	0-4	2-5
WSU	0-4	2-5

If the LV Bowl is shut out from the Pac 10's lack of bowl eligible teams, they could turn to the Sun Belt Conference for a team. Even the Sun Belt Conference Champion, however, which looks like it will be Troy, is already locked up by the New Orleans Bowl. The second place Sun Belt finisher would be available. How does BYU vs. Florida Atlantic in the Las Vegas Bowl sound?

FOOTBALL FLUFF AND STUFF

We always like to read the fine print when it comes to football rankings. A week ago in the AP poll under others receiving votes, UCLA was no where to be found. This week they were at the top of the list with 77 votes.

Two weeks ago, Air Force had 4 votes and BYU 2. This week, the Falcons received 11 votes and the Cougars 6. We prefer to call this part of the poll the David Copperfield list. How else do you explain the disappearance of UCLA's two embarrassing losses to Utah and Notre Dame from voters' minds.

We know we are advancing in age and our memory is borderline, but didn't BYU drub Air Force fair and square on the field on Saturday, Sept. 22?

It reminds us somewhat of the recent Iowa straw poll at the Values Voters Summit. It is all about who can pay the most for votes or who can deliver the most TV sets.

Before Mitt Romney supporters deluge me with emails, I have actually donated to his campaign. Of course, I have also been known to buy tickets to BYU sporting events. That doesn't mean I have decided to vote for Romney or decided that BYU is the best athletic program in the nation.

I am still evaluating those decisions.

What I have decided, however, is that there is a Mendoza line in baseball and for those working in sports media, myself included.

Most of us, and especially those voting in the polls, are working well below that line when it comes to rational thinking and rankings.

Mendoza Line

In baseball, the Mendoza line is an informal term used when a position player's batting average falls below .200. The term was supposedly named for former shortstop Mario Mendoza, who had a career batting average of .215 but actually hit .198 in the 1979 season.

The Mendoza Line in sports media is determined by I.Q. and waistline. When the waistline measurement is higher than the I.Q., you are officially a sports media person.

I am not going to disclose my waist line or I.Q., but I am going to let you decide for yourself if I am writing below the Mendoza line with the following observation.

Fui Vakapuna is one of the most popular players on BYU's roster. He is strong and tough and a leader on the team.

In my opinion, however, he is limited as a running back. I know he has been injured and know that there have been games when he has run over defenders and racked up some nice yardage.

Again, in my opinion, he has liabilities as a running back. He has power, decent speed and a big heart, but productive running backs don't have to come to a complete stop before changing directions.

With Harvey Unga, Manase Tonga, J.J. DiLuigi and Seta Pohahau all available next season, maybe Vakapuna would be more valuable as a middle linebacker for the Cougars next season.

He is a fine athlete with great football instincts. We think those attributes would benefit BYU more next year as a linebacker instead of a running back.

Below the belt or below the Mendoza line? You be the judge on that one.

Here are most of the missionaries for BYU that should be back in the program for the 2008 season. They include Stephen Covey, DB; Luke Ashworth, WR; Spencer Hafoka, WR; Terrance Brown, OL;

Rhen Brown, DB and Brandon Ogletree, LB.

Garrett Reden, the redshirt freshman offensive lineman, dislocated and broke his ankle against Eastern Washington. He will have surgery this week and will miss the remainder of the season. He started at left guard against EWU and had played in all seven previous games.

BASKETBALL BRIEFS

Local BYU basketball fans will get a first glimpse of the BYU men's and women's teams this Wednesday evening in the Marriott Center at the annual Cougar Tipoff.

The event begins at 7 pm, is free, and will feature a men's scrimmage.

One thing fans should see is plenty of offensive firepower from the wings on this club.

Cougar coach Dave Rose is loaded with productive players here.

He has enough to mix and match against almost any and all defensive combinations.

The two newcomers at the wing to keep an eye on are Archie Rose, the 6-5 transfer from Lee JC in Baytown Texas, and Jimmer Fredette, the true freshman from Glens Falls, New York.

While the Cougars appear to have plenty of possibilities in the front court and on the wing, the success or lack of, will be determined by the point guard play.

BYU will need someone to step up here and get the team into the offense, defend and produce points in the open court.

We should get an early peek to see if there is any hope of that occurring this Wednesday.

On the recruiting front, you can expect BYU to sign just one player during the early signing period in November. That player will be Charles Abouo, the 6-5 wing from Brewster Academy in New Hampshire.

Abouo graduated from Logan HS in Utah before starting at Brewster.

He is extremely athletic and should have his best basketball in front of him, beginning at Brewster where the basketball program has had 30 players in the last four years land at Division I programs.

This year will be no exception. Besides Abouo, who will ink with the Cougars, Arizona will sign Emmanuel Negedu, a 6-7 forward from Nigeria who is also at Brewster. Last year Brewster had players who signed with Texas, Vanderbilt, Creighton and CSU.

The next recruiting task for BYU will be to pull out all of the stops to land Tyler Haws and Jeremy Olsen.

They are the top two LDS prospects for 2009. Haws is the 6-4 guard from Lone Peak HS in Utah and Olsen is a 6-9 front court player from Collins Hill HS in Suwanee, Georgia.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. San Diego State

Saturday, Oct. 27 at San Diego

Kickoff: 7:30 Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Colorado State

Saturday, Nov. 3 at Provo

Kickoff: Noon Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. TCU

Thursday, Nov. 8 at Provo

Kickoff: 7:00 Mountain Time

TV: Versus

BYU vs. Wyoming

Saturday, Nov. 17 at Laramie

Kickoff: Noon Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Utah

Saturday, Nov. 24 at Provo

Kickoff: Noon Mountain Time

TV: Mtn, Versus, and CSTV