

**HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE**

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Vol. 32, Issue 32 – February 27, 2012

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SHRINKING MY BOX AND THINKING OUTSIDE OF IT

I decided at the first of the year that it was time to shrink my life box.

For decades it has been big enough that a refrigerator could fit quite comfortably. It was filled with extraneous and non-essential clutter. I now have my life box down to a smaller and more manageable letter-sized box.

At my age, it now contains only the essentials: Family, faith, prune juice and a nice southern exposure to sun.

I never thought serenity would be sitting on my haunches against the back wall of my home while sipping prune juice with the sun in my face. It's not a bad box to live in.

The other advantage of a smaller life box is that it makes it easier to think outside of it.

Consequently, I am inviting Tom Holmoe to come over to my home to sip some prune juice in the sun. It might help him think outside the BYU box when it comes to football scheduling.

BYU had a big box moment last week with the announcement that the Cougars will be playing Nebraska in Lincoln in 2015. That was a nice scheduling get for Holmoe.

Coming from a big box background, I'm aware that BYU big box boys in the athletic administration and BYU big box fans are still drooling over Big Box and Big 12 aspirations.

Before that happens, however, I expect to have downed many bottles of my new favorite beverage.

Outside the Box

BYU is already outside of the box with BYUtv. Quite frankly, after almost a year, in my opinion, the West Coast Conference also is a nice fit for the BYU athletic box.

Three or four big box opponents per year on the football schedule provide sunshine on the face of BYU and more than southern exposure.

Barring a Big 12 invite, finding fills for the rest of a 12-game season, still has Holmoe drinking Maalox instead of prune juice.

BYU needs an affiliation with a league in football. The box is shrinking fast for Holmoe. The Pac 12 is already intoxicated drinking its own kool-aid spiked with what we think is religious bigotry. The Big East saw its own box shrink through defections and dilution.

It has to be the Big 12 or bust; unless you start thinking outside of the BYU box.

Here are a few suggestions for Holmoe to ponder with his prune juice.

If BYU fans and administrators are nervous about the state of football scheduling, how do you think Boise State and San Diego State fans are feeling about now?

It appears to me that those two schools bought a pig in a poke and jumped way too soon in accepting a Big East invite for football only. The Big East and its big box dreams of big box television money seem to be shrinking.

Boise State moved its non-football sports to the WAC and SDSU went to the Big West with its non-football sports.

How long do we expect the WAC to survive?

The big box bottom line for BYU and some other western schools is that maybe forming a new conference or some sort of other alliance or affiliation would be worth exploring.

If Hawaii can be a football only affiliate in the MWC, why can't BYU be a football only affiliate in a new league?

Here's our initial outside the box new league members. BYU, Boise State, San Diego State and Hawaii as the core members. Bring back UNLV and New Mexico. Make Utah State's dreams come true and then put out for bid the final spot.

Don't expect BYU to lobby for Nevada or Fresno State because those two schools stabbed the Cougars in the back by defecting to the MWC from the WAC and upsetting BYU's initial plans to put all non-football sports in the WAC.

The irony of it all is that BYU should now thank those two schools for forcing BYU to look for other options.

The WCC is certainly a much, much, better option than what the soon to be non relevant WAC is now.

With the shaky ground all of these teams are all on with the WAC, Big West and Big County Conference (what we are calling the merged MWC-C-USA), there are possibilities.

The downside of all of this is that BYU won't budge without keeping its current television deal in place and without its BYUtv exposure. (Isn't that what is holding up any Big Box/Big 12 deal?)

That will be a hard sell to the other schools of a new league, but quite frankly, an easier sell than it is to the Big 12. These are desperate times for all of the aforementioned potential new league schools, but BYU has the leverage and the safe haven of the WCC.

A new league with BYU as a football only affiliate would give the Cougars a regular core of football games that then could be fleshed out with Big Box games such as Nebraska.

It will probably take Holmoe and me a case of prune juice and a month of sunshine to figure out the details, but it certainly is thinking outside the box and better than holding our breath waiting for a Big 12 invitation.

BYU AND WCC BRACKETS

It was a WH and BD finish in the WCC basketball chase for BYU last week.

Without Noah Hartsock, BYU lost 74-63 to Gonzaga in Spokane last Thursday night. Hartsock played just seven minutes before retiring to the bench with his injured knee.

Brandon Davies kept the Cougars in the contest against the Bulldogs with 23 points, of which, 20 came in the second half.

Two days later, without Hartsock again, BYU and BD (Brandon Davies) held off Portland for a 76-66 win. Davies was the key guy and unstoppable with 25 points.

With the split, BYU finished the regular WCC season in third place with a 12-4 record. St. Mary's finished in the top spot with Gonzaga securing a second place finish. Overall, the Cougars finished with a 24-7 record and are hoping that a good showing in this week's WCC tournament, will get them an NCAA bid next week.

Speaking of the WCC tourney, as the third seed, BYU will face the winner of the Pepperdine/San Diego game on Friday at 9 pm Mountain time. The game is set to be televised nationally on ESPNU.

A win Friday will put the Cougars up against Gonzaga again on Saturday. Below you can click for the complete brackets and television details for the WCC tournament.

In our opinion, BYU will need to get to the semis against Gonzaga and either win or put up a tough showing against the Bulldogs to insure an NCAA berth.

There is a chance that BYU could fall flat in the tourney and still get in, but it would be a very small chance.

The key is Hartsock. If he can't heal and can't play or plays ineffectively, all bets are off. If he is healthy, BYU will be successful. It's that simple.

For the BYU women, who finished second in the WCC after getting blown out by Gonzaga last week in Spokane, it is a win the tourney or go home deal.

The WCC will get just one bid in the Women's NCAA tournament and it will go to the tournament champion.

Click here, [tournament brackets](#), for complete women's and men's WCC tournament brackets, complete with television broadcast plans and starting times. All times listed are Pacific.

OH BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?

What is it with BYU basketball and brothers?

BYU added another BYU brother act to its long list of such tandems on the Cougar rosters.

The latest brother duo is from the Hartsock family.

Jakob Hartsock, a 6-7 junior forward from Bartlesville HS in Oklahoma, was offered a scholarship by Dave Rose last week. The younger brother of Noah Hartsock, immediately accepted and committed verbally to sign with the Cougars this coming fall.

Not only does the younger Hartsock play like his older brother and has a similar looking shot, he will follow his brother's BYU recruiting footsteps and serve an LDS mission out of high school before enrolling as a freshman in Provo.

Other brother packages that Dave Rose has snared include Tyler Haws and TJ Haws. Tyler will be back on the team next season after missionary service and TJ will be a junior at Lone Peak HS next year. He has committed to the Cougars.

Jackson Emery has graduated, but his younger brother, Nick, currently a junior at Lone Peak HS, has already committed to Rose and his program.

He will be a freshman at BYU beginning with the 2013-14 season.

Already in the fold are the Collinsworth brothers. Chris is still battling knee problems and younger brother Kyle still has another season to miss because of current missionary service in Russia.

Regarding BYU basketball recruits, almost all are involved in high school post season playoffs.

Both Nick Emery and TJ Haws begin their quest for a state title this week at the Maverick Center in Salt Lake City.

The Knights will open play on Tuesday at 9:30 am against Kearns HS. In Colorado, Chaparral HS in Parker, CO. is currently in the hunt for the state 5A title and being led by BYU signee Cory Calvert. He scored 13 against Dakota Ridge last Friday and his team will face Fountain-Fort Carson on Tuesday. Calvert is currently averaging 22.7 points per game.

In Washington, BYU signee, Jordan Chatman fulfilled one of his high school dreams when his team, Union HS, advanced in the state playoffs last week. They now get to play at the Tacoma Dome as one of the state's final eight teams in their classification.

Chatman was instrumental in getting his team to the final eight by scoring 21 against Curtis HS last week.

Jakob Hartsock and his Bruin teammates got the 6A state title hopes underway with a 48-14 win over San Springs and then waxed Bixby 54-35. Hartsock scored 21 in the Bixby contest.

The competition gets stiffer from here on out as Bartlesville faces Tulsa Edison on Saturday. Hartsock is currently averaging 19 points per outing during this his junior season.

Raul Delgado, the 6-3 guard from Western Nebraska, will sign with BYU in April. His team looks headed for the Region IX Tournament in March.

Delgado continues to be hot shooting the three ball. Against Eastern Wyoming last week, he nailed four three-pointers...in the first half.

NFL COMBINE

Two BYU football players showed their wares at the NFL combine last week in hopes of landing a job in the league.

Hebron (Loni) Fangupo and Matt Reynolds were both working out for NFL scouts and personnel directors.

Here is their evaluations according to the NFL combine people and NFL.com

Fangupo: **Overview...**Fangupo is a lane clogger, and although his play can seem uninspired at times, he actually is very effective in this role and should look to do the same for a 3-4 scheme at the next level. A transfer to BYU by way of USC and Mount San Antonio Community College, Fangupo is an older player who never got a strong chance to establish himself with any team at the collegiate level. He could be a late-riser, as he is said to have serious strength for the position. Look for a team with a scheme in which Fangupo would fit to select him in the late rounds.

Strengths...Fangupo does not display proper footwork and has limited athletic ability, but his strength is evident, as it looks like he is able to occupy two blockers with absolute ease at times. Strength is his whole game and will define his value and effectiveness at the next level.

Weaknesses...Fangupo is an extremely slow mover. He doesn't even show poor footwork; he shows no footwork. He is reliable only to come off the ball slowly and hold up blockers, and his size, body type and injury history don't indicate that he will get better here.

Reynolds: **Overview...**Reynolds has started at tackle for every game he's played in a BYU uniform after two years away on a religious mission, progressing into a quality prospect in this year's draft. He is a bit undersized for the position and could potentially be moved inside where his height wouldn't inhibit him. He has fifth- or sixth-round talent as a reliable option on the offensive line but could have trouble if kept outside to protect the quarterback at the next level.

Strengths...Reynolds shows power when run-blocking and is able to snap off the line of scrimmage into his man quickly and leg drive sufficiently to keep his man occupied. He has decent athletic ability but is able to get up field nicely and position on linebackers, which encourages a switch inside even more.

Weaknesses...Reynolds is quick off the ball but a bit of a slow mover once working up field. He can fall off blocks at times and needs to show that he can sustain at the next level. Like many BYU prospects, he will be older than the average rookie because of his Latter Day Saints mission.