

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

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As a subscriber, you are allowed to access our new blog. You can view it by going to www.cougarsportsline.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.

NONE BIGGER IN BYU WIN OVER UTAH

In BYU's 17-10 win over Utah last Saturday at LaVell Edwards Stadium, Max Hall completed 17 passes for 269 yards against Utah. None of those completions was bigger than his second to last.

It came on fourth and 18 on BYU's own 12-yard line with less than a minute remaining in the game and with Utah holding a 10-9 leading.

Hall escaped the pocket and found Austin Collie behind the Utah defense for a 49-yard completion and new hope for a BYU win.

Austin Collie had 5 catches for 126 yards. His second to last catch was the big 49 yarder for the first down, but almost as big was his last for a two-point conversion after BYU scored a touchdown with just 38 seconds remaining.

The two-points meant that a Utah touchdown couldn't beat them.

Harvey Unga had 141 yards rushing on 23 carries. None were bigger than his last. That was when he scored a game-clinching touchdown on an 11-yard run.

Those last or next-to-last heroics by BYU's offensive stars were desperately needed to overcome BYU's inability to score when the opportunities were there to put up at least 35 points on the scoreboard.

It was obvious from the get go that Utah couldn't stop BYU's ground game. They didn't need to. BYU's brain trust did that job for them.

BYU squandered at least three more touchdown scores when they refused to run the ball when it was clearly dictated by the BYU's offensive line's dominance over the Utes and Harvey Unga's ability to run between the tackles.

Late-Game Heroics

Thanks to the late-game heroics of Hall, Collie and Unga, the Cougar coaches not only notched their second consecutive win over Utah as a staff, but softened a lot of second guessing.

That still doesn't make it less puzzling, but certainly more palatable.

Except for the late-game touchdown of Utah which was made relevant and real by BYU's squandered points on offense, the Cougar defense played superbly in this contest.

They allowed just 244 yards of total offense to the Utes. A third of those yards were the 69 Utah amassed on their late td drive.

During that drive the Utes converted on 5 third-down situations.

BYU had 424 yards of total offense.

The Cougars, with the win, are now 7-0 in Mountain West Conference play and are 9-2 overall.

They will finish the regular season next Saturday against San Diego State in San Diego.

The game was originally set to be played in October but was postponed because of the fires in that area.

A let down by the Cougars is certainly possible, but what isn't possible is BYU not moving the football offensively against the Aztecs.

Even with a sub par or non-emotional effort by BYU, they should still rack up big numbers offensively.

SDSU Defense

The SDSU defense is not very good and absolutely bad against the run.

This is the game that BYU backup running backs have been dreaming about.

In the last three games for San Diego State, the Aztecs have been abysmal. They gave up 694 yards of total offense against TCU last week. The Horned Frogs rushed for 376 yards in a 45-33 win.

The previous week, it was a 55-27 loss to Air Force. The Falcons had 569 yards rushing against SDSU and 670 yards of total offense.

Even in a 38-30 win over UNLV, the Rebels gashed the Aztec defense for 275 yards rushing and 482 yards of total offense.

This is a game that BYU should win handily. Just run the ball and keep the clock moving and get back on the plane and back to Provo for rest and recuperation before the Las Vegas Bowl.

It is the simplest and safest game plan yet.

We call it BYU 42 SDSU 20.

At 9-2, BYU is currently ranked No. 21 in the AP poll, No. 19 in the USA/Coaches poll and No. 19 in the BCS standings.

EVENLY MATCHED. WE DON'T THINK SO

We continue to get a kick out of pundits and fans saying that BYU and Utah are evenly matched in football.

That couldn't be farther from the truth, in our opinion.

The only place where they were close is on the scoreboard and that is because of baffling and befuddling offensive play calling by BYU's sideline.

We give Utah credit. They play hard. But BYU's stumbles and bumbles and befuddling offensive play calling when inside the twenty was what made this game close.

Just run the ball when it was called for and BYU has at least 21 more points.

That said, the game was entertaining and BYU was again lucky to overcome offensive coaching lapses, but the two teams are certainly not even.

Look at the stats and then look at the personnel.

If the two teams are so even and you could select players from either team in a mock college foot-

ball draft, who would you choose?

For example, if you could choose between Brian Johnson and Max Hall, what's your pick?

Would you take Darrell Mack over Harvey Unga? Would you take Ben Godfrey at tight end over Dennis Pitta? Would you take any receiver Utah has on their roster over Austin Collie?

It doesn't stop there. BYU's offensive line dominated the Utah defensive front. Do you still think it is even?

Would you take Utah's defensive line and linebackers over what the Cougars put on the field? We didn't think so.

Quite frankly, if you are objective, it is fairly obvious that BYU has the best qb, tight end, offensive and defensive line and best defensive lineman and linebacker in the league. That would be Jan Jorgensen and Bryan Kehl.

There is a reason that BYU is 7-0 in MWC play and Utah is 5-3. These two teams are not evenly matched. The only place where we would pick the Utes is in the defensive secondary and kicking game.

BYU has done well with what they have in the secondary, but in case you missed it, they started four former walkons in the backfield against the Utes. Even then, it was the Ute secondary, not the BYU walkons that allowed the opponent to get behind them and convert the now instantly famous 4th and 18.

And correct us if we are wrong, but as bad as BYU's kicking game is, who was it that made three field goals?

We understand rivalry games and we understand poor play calling, but Bronco Mendenhall and his Cougars have overcome it all.

It is not even remotely even between the Cougars and Utes when BYU is currently 15-0 and soon to be 16-0 and Utah is 10-6 the last two years in MWC play.

Again, we will be the first to admit that the two games between BYU and Utah have been entertaining and close, but we maintain our opinion that the two football programs are definitely not even when it comes to talent and personnel.

COUGARS MAKE MILLIONS WITH SHOWING IN LAS VEGAS

BYU's 78-76 win over sixth-ranked Louisville and the strong 73-63 showing against No. 1 ranked North Carolina the following night was worth millions of dollars for the Cougars.

Most of those millions will go into the pocket of Trent Plaisted, but some of that basketball bonanza will also eventually trickle down to the BYU basketball coffers.

What Plaisted did against UL and UNC was show the 40-50 NBA scouts who were in attendance that he is NBA material. The fact that what he did was done against sure-fire future first round picks in Tyler Hansbrough and Derrick Caracter, showed why Plaisted's future finances will be soaring.

Against Louisville, Plaisted scored 21 points and pulled down 12 points. He was even better against North Carolina. Despite a dismal start in the first half, the 6-11 junior exploded in the final twenty minutes of action.

He finished with 24 points and 17 rebounds.

Against North Carolina, which was a game that was nationally televised, Dick Vitale was constantly saying that Plaisted was the best big man in the nation that you had never heard of.

It would have been more accurate to have said that he was the best big man outside of the Mountain West Conference footprint that nobody had ever heard of. NBA scouts certainly knew about him and you can bet that sports agents are now trying to become better acquainted with him.

That's the good news for Plaisted and his family. The bad news for BYU is that, barring a serious

injury, it is almost a no-brainer that this will be his last season in a BYU uniform.

While Dave Rose and his staff would undoubtedly love to have Plaisted back for his senior year, aving a player leave early for the NBA actually provides long-term recruiting benefits that the Cougars have never experienced before.

If you think that leaving early for the NBA is a bad decision, you haven't seen the money involved. It is something we all would do if we were guaranteed that we would be a first round pick.

Here's a little clarification on the cash for those selected in the first round of the NBA draft.

There is a salary cap in place for first round picks and the money diminishes as a player drops in the first round, but even at the No. 30, the last pick in the first round, the money is still serious.

According to what we found from the NBA, Here is how the money goes for the 2008 draft this coming spring.

The No. 1 pick will get \$4,019,000 for his first season. The No. 15 pick gets \$1,353,000 and the No. 30 pick will *only* gets \$797,600 in salary for his first year.

When it comes to basketball, what happened to Trent Plaisted in Las Vegas won't stay there, but will launch a nice NBA career and paycheck.

Let us to be the first to say goodbye and good luck to him after the end of this current season.

The BYU basketball program also cached some cash with their performance against two of the elite national programs.

The Cougars impressive performance will show up in the NCAA seedings in March. A better seed means a better chance to advance beyond a first round game. Advancing beyond the first rounds means more cash payouts to the conference and Cougar coffers.

The downside to this effort is that it will now be almost impossible to ever get any BCS basketball team to agree to play in Provo.

For BYU to continue to play "name" teams, it will have to be in affairs like the Las Vegas tournament or on so-called neutral courts like the Energy Solutions Arena in Salt Lake.

RETRACT AND RECALL

We want to officially retract all the doubts we had concerning Ben Murdock playing and producing at the point for BYU. He is much, much better than we thought he was.

As a matter of fact, if it wasn't for Murdock, neither Trent Plaisted nor Jonathan Tavernari would have had the numbers they put up against Louisville and North Carolina.

We admit to being shocked at how well Murdock held up under the quickness and pressure of UL and UNC.

You can make a case for him actually being the MVP for BYU in the games against Louisville and North Carolina. His play and production against the Cardinals and Tar Heels left us dumbfounded. We were wrong, wrong, wrong about him.

While we are retracting, we are also recalling Jonathan Tavernari from A ball and bringing him up to AA ball. Here is how we described the 6-5 Brazilian a month ago when we wrote our initial preview of BYU basketball for this season:

Jonathan Tavernari; 6-6, 215, SO...Okay sit down. Tavernari is BYU's Larry Bird. He is he closest thing Dave Rose has to that former NBA great. Bird was exactly that; an NBA great. Using baseball as the metaphor, think Tavernari and Bird in baseball. Bird was Major League. Last year Tavernari was Bird in rookie ball. This year think of him as Bird in A ball. We don't expect to ever see more than Tavernari as Bird at the AA level, but that is still very, very good for BYU.

Like Bird, this guy only has a three inch vertical on his jump shot, but both can get it off before it gets blocked.

When Tavernari is hot and stays that way, he can demoralize teams. He has never met a shot he

doesn't like and has the accuracy to back up that axiom and stay on the court.

Where he is extremely underrated, is with his inside game with rebounding and put backs.

He will be the hardest match up for opposing teams in the Mountain West Conference. He is big enough to post up inside against guards and bigger defenders will have to play him tight out to 30 feet to defend his outside shot.

We have also rethought our earlier assessment and think it is not unreasonable to see Tavernari at the AAA level based on his early season showings.

BASKETBALL BRIEFS

BYU's next game will be on the road against the University of Portland on Saturday, December 1. Tip off is set for 8 pm Mountain time.

No television coverage is presently planned.

With Trent Plaisted likely gone from the picture and on to the NBA after this season and with Vuk Ivanovik set to graduate,, where does that leave Dave Rose and the Cougars with big men for next year?

It leaves him with only Chris Miles, Gavin MacGregor and redshirt freshman David Anderson in the post. We also expect Chris Collinsworth to depart after the season for an LDS mission, but Noah Hartsock will replace him by enrolling in the fall after serving his mission. Hartsock is 6-9 and was the 6A player of the year in Oklahoma two years ago.

In our opinion, we would not be surprised to see BYU try and find another big from the juco ranks this coming spring.

BYU's play in Las Vegas had to make an impression on future recruits for Dave Rose and his staff.

With Charles Abouo already signed for 2008, BYU will still be looking for prospects for the spring signing period, but their next big push will be for 2009 prospects.

Their top two 2009 targets are still Tyler Haws, the 6-4 guard from Lone Peak HS and Jeremy Olsen, the 6-10 post from Collins Hills HS in Suwanee, GA.

Haws scored 25 in his opener against Provo HS. The Bulldogs defeated Lone Peak 64-62. Provo was led by two BYU recruits, Brandon Davies and Kyle Collinsworth. Davies is a 2009 prospect and Collinsworth, who sources tell us has already been offered by BYU, is a 2010 recruit. He is the younger brother of current Cougar Chris Collinsworth.

Kevin Lloyd, the younger brother of current Cougar point guard, Michael Lloyd, Jr. averaged 10 points and 7.5 assists last year while playing with Jonathan Tavernari at Bishop Gorman HS in Las Vegas. He will be a senior this year.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. San Diego State

Saturday, Dec. 1 at San Diego

Kickoff: 4:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Portland

Saturday, Dec. 1 at Portland

Tipoff: 8:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: None

BYU vs. Weber State

Wednesday, Dec. 5 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: None

BYU vs. Michigan State

Saturday, Dec. 8 at Salt Lake

Tipoff: 2:00 pm Mountain time

TV: Versus