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A Fulton Fish Market Look at BYU Football

The Bronx is the home of the Fulton Fish Market. A quick tour down the aisles to peruse the Cougar catch of the day could give a pretty good perspective and prognostication for BYU football this upcoming season. Here we go, hook, line and ~~stinker~~ sinker.

Blue Fin Tuna... In 2013, the World's Most Expensive Fish Sold for \$1.8 Million. A 222-kilogram bluefin tuna was sold at Tokyo's Tsukiji market for an all-time high of 155.4 million yen, or 1.8 million dollars.

Taysom Hill is definitely BYU's big tuna this season. Actually Big Kahuna is a more apt description. Kahuna is a Hawaiian word, defined in *Pukui & Elbert* (1986) as, among other things, a magician, wizard and expert in any profession. That includes playing quarterback at BYU this season. \$1.8 million should be what Hill signs for as a rookie in the NFL this coming spring. That is contingent, of course, on his health during this season. Hill has hedged his bet on his football future (literally). [Check this out for details.](#) As BYU fans, Hill's health history should have us and Bronco Mendenhall also hedging our quarterback bets.

For me, if Hill goes down with a season ending injury, I'm drowning my sorrows in salmon and moving to Yemen to give fishing a try. One of the more entertaining movies I have seen was [Salmon Fishing in the Yemen](#). If that doesn't work out, I'm moving back

to my home town of Blythe, California and fishing in the Colorado River and irrigation canals for small mouth bass and catfish. Manti Teo and eight BYU coeds will be my tutors in the finer points of [“catfishing”](#).

For Mendenhall, he only has to stay in Idaho for his quarterback hedge. Tanner Mangum will get plenty of reps this fall camp. That’s as it should be because he is the next guy up. If he delivers on his talent and throwing skills that he displayed before his LDS mission and during his one stint at spring ball, barring health issues, he also should be signing for \$3.5 million as an NFL rookie. Yes he is that good.

If BYU is going to land the “big one” and reel in a national ranking and a Playoff Bowl game, it will be Taysom that will have to net this fantasy fish for BYU fans.

Red Herring....In my opinion, the story that broke last week about Jamaal Williams withdrawing from school for personal reasons is just a red herring for football this season. Williams is certainly a good college running back and he certainly would have helped BYU this fall if healthy. If healthy is the key phrase here. Let’s be brutally honest. Williams is not NFL material and his knee is still suspect.

He doesn’t have the breakaway speed the pros want and he isn’t big enough to block out of the backfield. He was a good back for BYU, but a good back at BYU doesn’t even make blip on the NFL radar. BYU has made a living with pedestrian running backs. They will revisit that scenario again this season. Pedestrian is good enough for BYU when you have a good senior quarterback which BYU does.

Williams is the distraction that takes our minds off what should really worry BYU fans. That would be the defense in general and the defensive backs in particular. Unless Bronco can beef up the back end of the defense this season, I don’t care how good the Cougar offense is (and it should be outstanding), it won’t be enough to compensate for the big play vulnerabilities we saw last year. Think Memphis, UCF, Boise State,, Utah State and Nevada from last season.

As announced by BYU in their release about Williams’ status, he is expected back in school next year. For those who are worried that he will transfer somewhere else, don’t. No program with any credibility will want a back with just one year of eligibility and a suspect knee. In case you forgot, that knee was still suspect at BYU for this season until the announcement of Williams’ departure last week.

Speaking of Williams’ departure, I found this on line about BYU athletic departures. I call it [A Trip Down Memory Lane](#). Don’t know how accurate it is, but it’s probably close enough to put some perspective on the problem BYU football has had, has now and will have in the future.

Flounder... Floundering is how I would describe the offensive line play of the last few seasons. It made some strides last year, but still will be a question mark until proven otherwise. Garrett Tujague has a good starting point with Tejan Koroma. He is BYU’s

Blue Marlin, one of the world's most sought after game fish because of the fight they put up.

Koroma is a gamer and a fighter. I mean fighter not in the Memphis post-game brawl sense, but in the way Koroma blocked, protected and had the backs of both Hill and Christian Stewart. BYU has brought in some new Texas freshmen this season that might actually live up to Koroma's freshman season standard. That would be Jacob Jimenez and JJ Nwigwe. Most likely, however, the offensive line will be filled with the familiar faces of Ryker Mathews, Ului Lapuaho, Kyle Johnson and Tuni Kanuch.

What should be interesting to watch this fall, especially on the offensive line, is the bait with which BYU is fishing for fitness. For the last 15 years, they have been using the same strength and conditioning coach. Now they have a new one in Frank Wintrich and all the early hype is that he is a miracle worker.

If he indeed is a miracle worker in the weight room, it should start to be evident with the offensive line play in the first four games of the season. We shall see in a hurry if BYU football has been fishing with strength and conditioning methods that they should have cut bait with years ago.

Chilean Sea Bass...I served an LDS mission to Chile a few decades ago and never ate Chilean Sea Bass. That's because there was no such thing before 1977. Chilean Sea Bass is very seldom caught off the shores of Chile and is actually a Patagonian Toothfish. It's all about marketing and selling a product. [Read this](#). It is fascinating if you are into sea food, fishing and BYU recruiting.

Chilean Sea Bass also describes BYU football and recruiting. The Cougars are trying to market themselves as a new product. Who needs 4-star recruits when we can get guys from Fiji, Tonga etc. and serve them up as hidden gems that Alabama and Ohio State couldn't find but you could.

I'm just saying that recruiting is still the key ingredient to being a good football team. For every Manase Tu'ungafasi from New Zealand and Motekiai Langi of Tonga that BYU signs there are some very good LDS players that the Cougars still strike out on.

It's interesting that Tu'ungafasi, although signed by the Cougars, couldn't get into school academically and will enroll at Snow College this fall to play football. Snow College is also where Garrett Bolles plays. He is the returned LDS missionary that committed to BYU a year ago, but after getting recruiting attention from the big boys now has crossed off the Cougars and made a list of his final 7 college choices. They include Arizona State, Auburn, Arkansas, Georgia, Ole Miss, Oregon and Utah.

Talk about a Chilean Sea Bass bite in the butt. This one left Patagonian Toothfish bite marks.

Cod...If you want to catch cod, you have to go deep...as in deep off the Atlantic Ocean. Fishing for Cod and going deep isn't exactly the description I would give the current crop of BYU receivers.

This is a good route running and pass catching group. They know what they are doing. Despite all the promises of every fall, BYU doesn't have a deep threat at wide receiver to make defenses play consistently with a safety over the top.

Mitch Mathews is a proven guy. He has great size and good hands. His speed is not NFL caliber, however. Nobody on this roster of receivers has that quality. Against good defenses there is not a game changer. There will be touchdowns caught and crucial receptions to keep drives going, but somebody is going to have to be a game changer. We have seen all BYU has at receiver for the last 3 years, and in my opinion, there are no game changers.

The hope is that maybe Nick Kurtz or one of the new wide outs from Texas will be that guy. After one initial practice, there are some who think that returned LDS missionary Moroni Laulu Pututau will be that guy. We will see, but what I expect to see is more of the same. A good group that can move the chains, but not on to the next level.

Like the last few fall camps, BYU will wow spectators and media guys by going long and deep in practice, but going long and deep against BYU's defensive backs, is a lot different than going long and deep against the db's of Nebraska, UCLA, Michigan and Missouri.

I may be wrong about this assessment and certainly hope I am. I still think with good but not great receivers, when teamed with an great to awesome Taysom Hill, BYU will still be good enough to win 9-10 games.

Crappie...Is one of the most common fish caught by beginning anglers. It also described BYU's front seven last season. It was not Crappie, but very common. For BYU to be good defensively this year, they need d-lineman to man and maintain their gaps and they need linebackers to make plays. Too few plays were made by the front seven last season. Bigger and better things are promised by Bronco this season.

We do know that the linebacking crew will be much more athletic this season. Guys like Fred Warner and Sione Takitaki are playmakers. Harvey Langi has been praised for his off season work in conditioning and workouts this summer.

Pass rushing was minimal at best and nonexistent at worst last season. It needs to get better. Bronco is pushing better leadership, improved culture and accountability as reasons for optimism in an improved defense this coming year. Sounds good, but leadership, culture and accountability has never led the team in tackles or interceptions. Making plays is what it is all about. If Bronco can deliver as his history has shown he can, then BYU may go from Crappie to gutting and fileting opposing offenses like they did before the aberration of last season.

Fishing for Compliments...In a recent Athlon's Sports article, coaches anonymously were asked to comment on BYU football's team. Here is what they said:

"Without Taysom (Hill), they were very average. I think he gives them a chance to be an elite team because he's a difference maker."

"It will be interesting to see if they can rebuild it around him (Hill) without having him full speed in the spring."

"They've got some dudes that when they walk off the bus, they look like the real deal."

"Offensively, their skill guys really stand out in some of the finer details. Their blocking out on the perimeter is really key to what they are able to get done with their style of offense."

"I love their center (Tejan Koroma). He was a freshman last year and he was just dang good already."

"It really hurt their running game when Jamaal Williams got hurt. Just like Taysom, if he comes back healthy, they've got a chance to be really good. But that's a big question mark."

"Their personnel can be tough to scout because they've always got guys coming back from (LDS) missions, but you know they're going to be loaded at linebacker. That's just who they are."

"They lose pretty much the entire back end of their defense. So they probably have some question marks there."

"I think they're a team that is a little bit up and down emotionally for whatever reason."

Looking at Lobsters...There's nothing like looking at lobsters in a tank before ordering them at your favorite restaurant. Unless it's looking live at BYU football practices and looking and licking your chops while observing your favorite Cougar players.

BYU released the following "Look for Yourself" schedule last week:

PROVO, Utah — Cougar fans will have four different opportunities next week to see this year's BYU football team prepare for the upcoming 2015 season. BYU starts fall camp this weekend as it prepares to open the season at Nebraska on Sept. 5.

BYU fall camp practice sessions on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (Aug. 10-12) and the team scrimmage on Saturday, Aug. 15, will be open to the public. Admission is free.

The open practices on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday will take place on the outdoor practice field located north of the Student Athlete Building. Fans can park in the parking lot to the west of the practice field and enter through the west gate to the practice field beginning at 10 a.m. The practice will begin at 10:40 a.m. and conclude at approximately 12 p.m.

The open scrimmage on Saturday, Aug. 15, will take place at LaVell Edwards Stadium. Parking is available in the south and southeast lots as well as the west lot. Gates 1, 5, 6, and 11 will open at 9:00 a.m., with the scrimmage getting underway at 10:20 a.m.

BYU's Football Fish Could Be This Big!...BYU football fans are tired of throwing back three straight 8-5 seasons. It's time for a whopper that is t-h-i-s big.

T-h-i-s big starts with 10 wins. We've had enough of the pan sized trout. We want a bigger than life Trout. Something along the lines of Mike Trout in baseball would do, but we would settle for Taysom Hill fish frying BYU to a 4-0 record to start the season..

He really is good enough to deliver BYU a Moby Dick whale of a season, provided he doesn't go Ahab again with his lower appendage injury problems of the past. With a healthy Hill, I'm looking for a very productive and happy BYU fishing season and finishing with a minimum of 9 wins and optimistically hoping for 10.

I'm all in with BYU football this season...hook, line and thinker of happy, if not hopeful BYU football thoughts.

Hootie and the Blowfish...Darius Rucker left this rock band formed in 1986 at the University of South Carolina to pursue a country career. Good for him.

Good for Bronco also. He has gone blowfish on BYU. I think it is obvious, at least to me that Bronco is trying to be more transparent, more accessible and more open to the Cougar fan base. Best of all he is more upbeat about Cougar football.

He made a good start after BYU's first fall practice. Like a good pufferfish, he certainly puffed up BYU football fans' hopes for the coming season with his post practice quotes. Smoked Salmon or just smoke blown to disguise deficiencies and placate a disgruntled fan base? You be the judge. Here is Bronco's first [post practice comments](#).

Television Timetable

BYU vs. Arizona (Women's Soccer)

Saturday, August 15 at Provo

Start Time: 7:00 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Colorado (Women's Soccer)

Friday, August 28 at Provo

Start Time: 7:00 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Utah (Women's Soccer)

Friday, September 4 at Provo

Start Time: 7:00 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Nebraska

Saturday, September 5 at Lincoln

Kickoff: 1:30 pm MDT

TV: ABC