



801 372 - 0819

hbarnett@fiber.net

1391 West 800 South – Orem, Utah 84058

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Football

THE BIG BYU BET

I am intrigued as the next guy when I see what is happening with the recent hires of the football staff. I think this whole process has been in the works for a couple of years and carefully planned by Tom Holmoe.

I also think what is taking place is a big BYU bet, that will pay off handsomely, or implode and leave a huge Cougar crater that will take years from which to recover.

So here it is. These are solely my opinions, impressions and interpretations of what is happening right now in BYU football. I have no inside sources on this deal. I just have eyes and decades of observation of college football in general and BYU football in particular.

It is obvious to me that Tom Holmoe has had a change of direction for BYU football in mind for at least a couple of years. What BYU was doing under Bronco Mendenhall was nice and even sometimes spectacular, but it was producing a program that was losing traction and ground to Utah.

Emulating Utes

Yes, that Utah. I think that that once we took off our blue goggles, it was completely obvious. It had nothing to do with conference affiliation versus independence or disparity in revenues.

It had to do with philosophy and advantages. Utah had BYU up against the wall and was ready for the knockout punch unless Holmoe made some serious steps. He made them and now it will be put up or shut up time for BYU football.

If I could see that Utah was a superior football program to BYU over the last few years, I can guarantee that Holmoe, with all his football savvy and coaching experience could also see it.

He could also identify what his good friend and old college roommate and teammate, Kyle Whittingham, did to make it happen.

Now he wants it to happen at BYU.

It started for Utah by recruiting Polynesians to dominate the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball.

First Step

That will be the first step for BYU and the hires they have recently made were implemented to do just that. Again, that is my opinion.

Utah proved that they could play with anyone in the country, including the USC's and Alabama's of the world on the line of scrimmage.

And when they had a good to great quarterback like Alex Smith, they hit the big time jackpot.

Quite frankly, in my opinion, Utah should have won the Pac 12 title hands down this year, if they only had a quarterback.

And this is where it gets interesting. I think Holmoe realized that one thing BYU can do, most years, is produce a good to great quarterback. They just couldn't produce dominant lines on defense or offense.

If he could ever mesh the two components at BYU, then the Cougars would be back in the big time business of football.

That is why Kalani Sitake was hired. Again, in my opinion.

Sooner the Better

Based on what I have seen in hires and recruiting over the last month, Sitake is bent on upgrading the line of scrimmage for BYU. The sooner he can do it; the sooner big things will be on the horizon. Based on what Utah has done, can you imagine BYU with a dominant presence on the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball, with Taysom Hill or Tanner Mangum as the quarterback? I can.

You don't have to be culturally color blind to see where the easiest and fastest fix on the line of scrimmage will be for BYU. It will be by emulating Utah and their recruitment of big strong Polynesians to play up front on both sides of the ball.

It was obvious to me and I think also to Holmoe, that BYU wasn't equipped to do just that in the old regime. It is also obvious to me and I think Holmoe, that it would require some new salesmen/coaches to ever make that happen at BYU.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you Kalani Sitake and his new football staff. It is now complete and geared to go and get the Polynesians BYU needs to compete on the big stage.

[Click here](#) to see the introduction of BYU's football staff. [Click here](#) to see and hear Kalani Sitake address the crowd at BYU's basketball game against Pepperdine last Saturday.

Kalani Sitake...Head Coach

Ed Lamb...Assistant Head Coach and safeties (In my opinion, the key hire for logistics and for Sitake to lean on while experiencing his new head coaching gig)

Ty Detmer...Offensive Coordinator and QB coach

Ilaisa Tuiaki...Defensive Coordinator and Linebacker Coach

Mike Empey...Offensive Line Coach

Steve Clark...Tight Ends Coach

Ben Cahoon...Receivers Coach

Reno Mahe...Running Backs Coach

Steve Kaufusi...Defensive Line Coach

Jenaro Gilford...Cornerbacks Coach

**In some places keeping it in the same family is considered taboo. Of the ten coaches listed above 8 of them all played at BYU. Six were graduate assistants at BYU and four others all coached at SUU, BYU's second cousin when it comes to a coaching tree.*

Yes, I am well aware that there has been some hand wringing by some because of the lack of coaching experience or too much experience on the local scene at SUU.

I totally disagree on the consternation. What this staff has and what was desperately lacking is a group of salesmen that can make the pitch to the needed big guy Polynesians.

Position coaching is overrated...if you have big time offensive and defensive coordinators. Again, that is my opinion. I would take a recruiter over just a tactical coach any day. Especially at the college level where it is all about players.

Case in point. Do you think Ty Detmer would hesitate to go over to a wide receiver and tell him he cut off his route too short? He did that as a BYU quarterback. I can't count the number of times he would grab a teammate by the face mask and point out that he wasn't doing his job or wasn't doing it correctly. And can you imagine Detmer with a Hill or Mangum protected securely by an offensive line. Neither could Hill or Mangum the last couple of years.

Nothing against Cahoon, Clark, Mahe or Empey. Somebody has to run the position drills, but this will be Detmer's offense and he will be in charge. And you better believe that he signed off on all of these offensive coaches or they wouldn't have been hired.

Learned from the Best

Defensively, the guy in charge will be Sitake. He learned from the best. He learned from Kyle Whittingham who learned from his dad Fred Whittingham. One of these days, I will relate a Fred Whittingham story of when he was a player years ago at the Rams training camp in San Diego and one of his friends (and mine) went looking for him.

This friend found himself in trouble and being intimidated by some players he had encountered, until he mentioned he was Fred's buddy. Then the situation changed. These players suddenly became apologetic and friendly. They were intimidated by just the mention of Fred Whittingham's name. Oops, I guess I just told the story. The details of the story are even better, but I can't repeat them publicly.

Make no mistake. He won't have the title, but Sitake will be in charge of the defense at BYU. Can you imagine a defensive coordinator who could rely on just a four-man rush getting to the quarterback and applying pressure? Bronco couldn't but Sitake can. He had that at Utah and if he can get it at BYU, he won't need the exotic schemes that Mendenhall was forced to resort to.

I'm no Picasso, but I can paint you a picture. BYU hired four salesmen in Sitake, Mahe, Tuiaki and new director of recruiting operations Tevita Ofahengaue that can pitch and close the deal on Polynesians primarily on the line of scrimmage for BYU.

Again, this is all my opinion, but based on what I have seen so far, this isn't going to be a long term investment. I expect, and I also think Holmoe and Sitake expect immediate returns on their hiring of staff.

It is all about getting big tough Polynesians up front for BYU. This staff is still never going to get NFL caliber corners, running backs or wide receivers. But they can get big, tough and dominant Polynesians who will buy the story that Sitake and his staff are selling. Couple that asset with a great college quarterback, upon which BYU has built its story in the past and the future looks pretty bright to me.

Unfortunately, again in my opinion, this is a red or black bet for BYU. There is no win, place or show return on the bet. Its winner takes all or go home broke.

Again, this is just my opinion, with no empirical evidence to back it up, just decades of observation about BYU and Utah.

The question and white elephant in the room, is can BYU's new recruiting plan succeed with all the targeted recruits getting admitted to school and staying in school?

Attrition at any football program is anticipated. It will happen at BYU. It has in the past, is happening now and will happen in the future.

The difference between BYU and Utah and every other school that plays football is how that attrition occurs. At BYU it usually occurs over Honor Code or code of conduct issues. Sometimes it involves academics.

Because BYU brags about those two topics, and rightfully so, when attrition happens, and I guarantee it will happen, then this new approach to recruiting will either reap tremendous results, or it could eventually implode into a public relations nightmare that would make what happen during Gary Crowton's tenure look Pollyannaish.

For the last decade, if you have been reading my letter, I have said that BYU had to find a way to regain their Polynesian pipeline. I don't think I have been alone in that sentiment.

President Obama nixed the Keystone pipeline in November. In December, Tom Holmoe and his Board of Trustees approved the reconstruction of the Polynesian pipeline for BYU football.

Again, in my last opinion on this topic, this BYU pipeline will be a boon for BYU football, unless there is a major leak that erupts somewhere in the pipeline because of BYU's unique construction guidelines when it comes to academics and honor code blueprints.

I'm moving my chips from the red of Utah and placing them firmly on BYU's new and soon to be Black and Blue line of scrimmage. I expect to cash in big on Tom Holmoe's calculated bet. So should you. Spin that wheel Sitake and place your bets BYU football fans. I have.

Blue Chips and Salsa

BYU's final weekend for hosting recruits took place this past weekend. All that is now left is signing day set for this Wednesday, February 3.

Here is a list of recruits that are being recruited, have already committed and that Kalani Sitake hopes to sign. We are ranking them by salsa. **Habanero** = Signed, Sealed and

Tongue Searing Signed; **Hot** = Should Sign; **Medium** = Could go either way; **Mild** = Will not sign.

Habanero Supreme: Troy Warner, DB, 6-2, 190, Mission Hills HS, CA, enrolled
Habanero Supreme: Handsome Tanielu, DL, 6-3, 310, Snow College, UT, enrolled
Habanero: Skyler Southam, K, 6-0, 175, Wasatch HS, UT, Mission First
Habanero: Jaren Hall, QB, 6-1, 190, Maple Mountain HS, UT, Mission First
Habanero: Aleva Hifo, DB, 5-10, 180, Heritage HS, CA
Habanero: Jackson Kaufusi, LB, 6-1, 210, Brighton HS, UT, mission first
Habanero: Chris Wilcox, DB, 6-2, 180, Roosevelt HS, CA
Habanero: JT Gentry, OL, 6-5, 260, Columbine HS, CO, mission first
Habanero: Caden Haws, OL, 6-3, 270, Pulaski Academy, AR, maybe mission first
Habanero: Clark Barrington, OL, 6-6, 270, University HS, WA, mission first
Habanero: Lisala Tai, DL, 6-7, 290, Hawthorne HS, CA
Habanero: Max Tooley, DB, 6-1, 200, Bountiful HS, UT, mission first
Habanero: Keenan Pili, LB, 6-2, 200, Timpview HS, UT
Habanero: Drew Jensen, DB, 6-2, 195, Brighton HS, UT, mission first
Habanero: Hank Tuipulotu, TE, 6-3, 225, Nation Ford HS, SC, mission first
Habanero: Jonah Trinnaman, WR, 5-11, 185, Snow College, UT
Habanero: Darius McFarland, DL, 6-2, 250, Box Elder HS, UT
Habanero: Freddy Livai, DL, 6-4, 250, A.B. Miller HS, CA
Habanero: Atunaisa Mahe, DL, 6-1, 260, West Jordan HS, UT
Habanero: Solofa Funa, DL, 6-2, 230, Spanish Fork HS, UT

Mild: Mique Juarez, LB, 6-2, 210, North Torrance HS, CA, Former USC commit, should sign with Alabama or UCLA

Hot: Keanu Sealeapago, DL, 6-6, 265, La Mirada HS, CA, Between CU and BYU, former USC commit

Hot: Hirkley Latu, DB, 6-1, Kahuku HS, HI, now that BYU has gone all poly, will sign

Mild: Wayne Kirby, DL, 6-3, 305, Highland HS, ID, most likely Ute signee

Medium: Jaylen Morgan, DB, 6-3, 200, Paramount HS, CA, my bet is he signs with SDSU, son of former Cougar db Omar Morgan

Medium: Brad Anae, DL, 6-4, 230, Kahuku HS, HI, Utah involved, but has family connections as a Cougar

Habanero: Tyler Luatua, TE, 6-3, 255, Notre Dame Transfer

Hot: Sione Finau, WR/DB/ 5-11, 175 Kearns HS, UT, former commit to Oregon State pre poly staff at BYU

Medium: Simi Fehoko, WR, 6-4, 185, Brighton HS, UT...A Stanford commit being tempted by the Poly sauce at BYU

Mild: Johnny Maea, OL, 6-5, 280, East HS, UT, a Utah commit, but USC pursuing heavily. Courtesy call and visit to BYU. If Sitake gets this guy, he needs a recruiting bonus in cash

Medium: Fua Pututau, LB, 6-2, 230, Cottonwood HS, UT, BYU came from nowhere to compete with Utah and Colorado

Mild: Leki Fotu, DL, 6-6, 270, Herriman HS, UT, Double the Sitake Bonus if Fotu spurns Utah and USC

Medium: Alema Pilimai, LB, 6-4, 210, Tustin HS, CA If he signs with BYU instead of Utah credit Ilaisa Tuiaki. A multi-month Ute commit.

Medium: Cole Fotheringham, TE, 6-4, 220, San Clemente HS, CA, if he signs with BYU instead of Utah, credit Ty Detmer. A multi-month Ute commit.

Hot: Mack Richards, WR, 6-1, 195 Alta HS, UT... The player to be named later in the Dylan Collie BYU to Hawaii trade. Just kidding. Richards signed with Hawaii out of high school, but never enrolled and went on a mission instead.

Weekend by the Numbers

37 and 10: 37 is the number of points Lexi Eaton-Rydalch scored in BYU's 10th straight win, a 77-66 win on the road against Pepperdine. The women's basketball team is also tied for first place in the WCC standings with San Diego. The Lady Cougars will stay on the road this coming week with games against Pacific and Saint Mary's. BYU is 18-4 on the year and 10-1 in WCC play.

1: That's the spot Kyle Collinsworth now occupies when it comes to number of rebounds collected in a career. The 6-6 senior now hold the record for career boards and assists for BYU. He was instrumental in helping the Cougars sweep both Loyola Marymount, 87-62 and Pepperdine in Provo 88-77. BYU is now 16-7 on the year and 7-3 in WCC play.

2 & 3: As in a two-match sweep of No. 9 UC Irvine over the weekend for the BYU men's volleyball team. Three represents the 3-game sweep of the Cougars over the Anteaters in the second match held Saturday night. BYU is now 6-2 on the season and 4-2 in league action.

1:46.97: The turned in by Shaq Walker, BYU's Olympic hopeful for the games in Brazil in June. Walker set a BYU track indoor record with his 800 meter time at the Washington Invitational on Saturday in Seattle.

1 & 3: The spots occupied currently by the women's and men's basketball teams in the WCC standing as seen below.

Women's West Coast Standings

TEAM	CONF	OVERALL
San Diego	10-1	20-2
BYU	10-1	18-4
Saint Mary's	8-2	17-4
Santa Clara	8-3	17-5
Gonzaga	6-5	14-9
San Francisco	5-6	14-8
Pacific	3-7	10-11

Loyola Marymount	3-8	7-15
Pepperdine	1-10	5-17
Portland	0-11	2-20

Men's West Coast Standings

TEAM	CONF	OVERALL
Saint Mary's	9-1	18-2
Gonzaga	9-2	17-5
BYU	7-3	16-7
Pepperdine	7-4	14-8
San Francisco	5-6	11-10
Pacific	4-6	6-14
Santa Clara	4-7	8-15
Loyola Marymount	3-8	10-12
Portland	3-8	9-15
San Diego	2-8	7-14

Television Timetable

BYU vs. Saint Mary's (M Basketball)

Thursday, February 4 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. UC Santa Barbara (M Volleyball)

Friday, February 5 at Provo

Match Start: 7:00 pm MST

TV:BYUtv

BYU vs. Pacific (M Basketball)

Saturday, February 6, at Provo

Tipoff: 2:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv, Root RM/NW and TWC

BYU vs. UC Santa Barbara (M Volleyball)

Saturday, February 6 at Provo

Match Start: 7:00 pm MST

TV:BYUtv