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I Passed the Joy Test

Decluttering Me and BYU Sports

Here's an update on our mission plans. We are still going and report to the Provo MTC on May 9. We also sold and closed on our home a week ago and need to be out later this month. (I still plan on returning and resuming the newsletter, but I just don't know from where and in which basement in which home in which city in Utah County I will be doing it.)

To accommodate those deadlines, we currently have a dumpster parked conspicuously in our driveway. I thought that would be the easiest way to declutter what we have accumulated over the past 34 years we have lived in our home.

Wrong! What I thought was junk, my wife thought was an heirloom. I quickly learned that before I threw anything away, it needed to be approved by a higher power.

We were getting nowhere fast. We then bought a book on the Japanese art of decluttering and tidying up. The book has 206 pages of methods and ideas, but the one that I thought was most salient and useful was this one: ***Take each item in one's hand and ask: "Does this spark joy?" If it does, keep it. If not, dispose of it.***

I'm happy to report that my wife took my face in both her hands, studied me for a few minutes and then declared, "I'll keep you...now let's take a look at your golf clothes."

Fortunately, my dad helped me declutter decades ago when it came to golf pants. When I was single and still a student at BYU, I bought a pair of maroon polyester hounds-tooth patterned pants. I thought they were nice. I took them home to California for the summer and when my dad saw me wearing them, his only comment was to ask me if I had to squat to pee, oops, I mean evacuate my bladder, in them. I quickly discarded the pants but kept the faded blue adult leader cub scout pants and red, tan and blue size 9 bowling shoes that I purchased at Deseret Industry during my sophomore year.

That was my official school uniform while attending BYU. My time as a student in Provo was full of joy. I wouldn't discard any memories or clothes from that period of my life.

Since this will be my last issue that I send out until December, 2017, I thought it would be appropriate to declutter the Cougars. What sparks joy and what doesn't? I can only speak from my perspective, so here goes.

Football...It's a keeper. I have no idea what the record will be in the next couple of seasons, but I already sense a joyfulness in the program that I didn't feel the last few seasons. When I get back I am going to look for another pair of cub scout pants and start wearing them to games.

Basketball...There is no way that Cougar basketball is going in the dumpster, but it will never be considered an heirloom either. On paper, especially next season and for the next few years, it looks like big things are ahead. On the court, however, and especially when it comes to capturing titles and competing in NCAA post season play, it has been a different story. That said, maybe someday, probably while I'm gone, the projections will actually match the performance. My joy is a little jaundiced, but that has never stopped this team from being fun and entertaining to watch and root for.

Baseball...There is nothing that would give me more joy than to drive from Lansing to Omaha in June (on a preparation day, of course) to watch the Cougars in the College Baseball World Series. As much joy the current 23-3 and 7-2 WCC records give me, this team is still a legitimate and consistent closer and another starting pitcher away from Omaha. That said, they are now a lot closer to Nebraska than they have been since the last appearance at the CWS in 1971. Mike Littlewood is on the right track to produce some joy in Mudville when it comes to BYU baseball.

Men's Volleyball...There's enough juice and joy on this team to see another National title on the horizon. I was full of joy reading this quote from the UCLA volleyball coach, after his then ranked No. 1 Bruins were swept in two matches in Los Angeles by BYU this past weekend. "We haven't played a team like that," said coach John Speraw. "They're the best team in the country and significantly more physical in the way they play the game. The interesting thing is that they're more physical but they're also better at serving and passing, and you're not going to win a match if they're better at serving and passing." Joy to the World, it sounds like it will be an early Christmas for the Cougars.

Rugby... This is BYU's version of the old Negro Leagues in baseball decades ago. Those leagues had some of the best players who ever played the game, but they weren't allowed to get complete credit for their accomplishments and talent. Ditto for BYU Rugby. All they do is win national championships and go undefeated, but do it as a club sport without scholarships. They deserve better and have earned better. The only opponent that has been able to stop BYU Rugby is Title IX. If Cal can play football and sponsor women's rowing and rugby, why can't BYU find a way to copy that model? That's a joyful question that nobody at BYU wants to answer publicly.

Covering my Chauvinistic bases... I rate my joy scale in BYU women's sports by what I watch. I watch almost all BYU women's soccer and volleyball games...on TV. I watch an occasional BYU women's basketball game. It appears my joy stick gets stuck in first gear when it comes to female hoops. I don't dismiss their talents, just their appeal on my joy meter and what sells subscriptions on my income meter. Tennis, golf, cross country, swimming and diving, track and field and gymnastics in both men and women BYU sports don't register on any of my marketing meters or metrics. In retail, if it doesn't sell you declutter and put it on clearance. In my defense, I am a major buyer of Girl Scout cookies and producer of actual girls. I have five daughters and one wife. They are all keepers, so in deference to the distaff side, I am keeping all women's sports at BYU too.

Sorry... Now seems like a good time to apologize for anything offensive I have said or written in the letter over the years. I am hoping to become a better person in private than I am in public through missionary service. I am thinking that putting the newsletter on hiatus for 18 months will be a good step in that direction. For those who are wondering about their current subscriptions and status, here is what I wrote in December. It still applies today:

As for Cougar Sportsline, here's the plan. Beginning now, I will suspend publication for 18 months. Upon our return, I will resume publishing. You have two options. You can either send me a Dear John or email and tell me we are breaking up and I will send you a refund for the remaining issues and balance on your account after May. The other option is that you can wait for me to return and we can hopefully resume our relationship again when I again start publishing. The same holds true for Cougar Clicks subscribers.

Schwarzenegger and So Long... As Arnold famously said, "I'll Be Back" and I'm hoping you will also be back as a subscriber upon my return. If not, keep checking random dumpsters to see if that is where I end up. I'll be the guy wearing maroon hounds-tooth pants.

Television Timetable

BYU vs. Arizona (Baseball)

Monday, April 4 at Provo

First Pitch: 2 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

Radio: ESPN 960 – Provo

BYU vs. SUU (Softball)

Tuesday, April 5, at Provo

First Pitch: 5 and 7 pm MDT (Doubleheader)

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. San Diego (Baseball)

Thursday, April 7 at Provo

First Pitch: 6 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

Radio: ESPN 960 – Provo

BYU vs. San Diego (Baseball)

Friday, April 8 at Provo

First Pitch: 6 pm MDT

TV: TheW.tv (streaming)

Radio: ESPN 960 – Provo

BYU vs. USC (M Volleyball)

Friday, April 8 at Provo

Start Time: 7 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. San Diego (Baseball)

Saturday, April 9 at Provo

First Pitch: 1 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

Radio: ESPN 960 – Provo

BYU vs. USC (M Volleyball)

Saturday, April 9 at Provo

Start Time: 7 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv