

HB Arnett's ***COUGAR SPORTSLINE***

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Vol. 30, Issue 39 – June 3, 2010

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CONFERENCE REALIGNMENT IS ALL ABOUT EYEBALLS

The Big 12 conference meetings are already underway. The Mountain West will kick off their meetings in a few days and the Pac 10 and Big 10 are also ready to start their summits.

We will hear lots of stories coming out of these meetings detailing conference expansion and contraction and a little contradiction thrown in for good measure.

The bottom line, however, is the Big Ten and their big bucks.

What all conferences looking to expand, merge or stand pat want to know is how they can make the kind of money that the Big Ten has.

These meetings aren't about scheduling cross country meets, cultural diversity, research institutions or rowing teams. It is about how conferences can increase their television market share and consequently, generate more cash to be divided among member institutions.

Just like the dot.com era, leagues are looking for eyeballs. They want teams that control or own television markets that will give a league a bigger market share.

How to Do It

The Big Ten showed how to do it with their television network which reportedly gave the 11 teams in that league \$22 million each from the league's television network this year. The Big Ten Network is owned by the league and Fox Sports. The Big Ten has a 51% interest and Fox is at 49%.

And they want even more money. That means they are looking at Missouri and East coast schools to get a share of the St. Louis and Kansas City television markets and a piece of the lucrative New York market.

It isn't about athletics anymore. It is about eyeballs, television sets and future television contracts and the concomitant cash they will provide.

That is why bringing Boise State into the MWC mix is curious. Inviting Boise State to the club is about trying to crash the BCS and bowl games party, but is only a blip on the television and market share radar for the MWC.

The big money is made in television contracts. Boise State will be a nice addition athletically, especially in football, but as far as cash and clout needed for the next Mountain West Network television contract, they really don't increase the MWC's eyeballs needed to negotiate a better TV deal.

Big Boys

All of the big-boy conferences want to be like the Big Ten and get the same television cash they do. If, at the end of the day it happens through expansion, realignment or some other means, it will also mean that the Mountain West Conference and the other have not leagues in the land will fall father behind in the all important money game.

The following [article](#) does a nice job of describing the current disparity in dollars as it relates to regular students and fees and their subsidization of athletic programs.

Who knows how it will shake out? It is no longer about sports but television sets and who can deliver them.

Boise State will help as far as improving the chances for gaining an automatic bid to the BCS bowl bash, but that is just a one-time jackpot at best.

We still don't believe the BCS big boys will ever let a television-set-and-eyeball challenged Mountain West Conference unseat the Big East for an automatic qualifier spot because of their inherent and much larger television markets.

In our opinion, adding Boise State or any other regional team to the MWC is a nice cosmetic move and increases the occasional chance of a BCS bowl bid, but will not increase the cash needed by the league to keep up with the six BCS conferences. It will never result in the league eventually becoming an automatic qualifier.

Big Money

The money is too big and those holding the purse strings will continue to find a way to patronize leagues like the MWC with an occasional bone and BCS bowl appearance, but keep them away from the vault that holds the big money.

While \$15 million for a BCS Bowl appearance sounds like a lot of money to the have-nots of college football, it is a paltry payout compared to the cash kept in the coffers of the big canines in the perpetual dog and pony show called the BCS.

There just aren't enough MWC eyeballs and television sets within the geographical boundaries of the MWC conference to ever let them bark with the big boys.

That doesn't mean there won't be some exciting games and conference championships to be decided. It also means that there will be plenty of sports entertainment to go around. It just won't generate the same kind of revenue that teams in leagues with lucrative television contracts do.

That means that sooner or later it is inevitable that there will be a two-tier system of college football at the FBS level. Or worse yet, it could mean that only those premier conferences with the TV dollars will end up being FBS and the rest of the leagues such as the MWC, WAC, MAC, CUSA and Sun Belt will be left with the less enviable label of just BS.

NAMES AND GAMES

Is Bingham the new Timpview?...Only time will tell if Bingham HS in South Jordan, Utah takes over from Timpview as the football feeder school for BYU football.

Bingham is making a push for the title of BYU Lite when it comes to football. To date, Bronco Mendenhall and his staff have offered and received verbal commitments from four Bingham players. They include: Kesni Tausinga, a 6-0, 260 pound defensive lineman; Moses Kaumatule, a 6-2, 245 pound defensive lineman; Manoa Pikula, a 6-0, 210 pound fullback/linebacker and Baker Pritchard, another defensive lineman at 6-2, 240.

BYU still has their offer on the table for Harvey Langi, arguably the best prospect in Utah and one of the premier prospects in the country. Langi is the 6-2, 220 pound running back for Bingham and has offers from BYU, Utah and tons of other big name schools.

BYU has also gone to the futures market by offering another Bingham prospect. That would be Jared Afalava, a 6-2, 220 pound linebacker for the Miners who will be a junior this coming fall.

Timpview will still be in the BYU recruiting mix. They have a legit D-1 defensive lineman in Tevia Toletau. We are also hearing that the youngest of the Richardson brothers from Idaho Falls is headed Timpview's way. He will be a sophomore and is the younger brother of current Cougar Jordan Richardson. The father of the family passed away a few years ago and the family is now relocating from Idaho to Provo.

Top of the List...DeMarcus Harrison and Brett Kingma are the two players at the top of BYU Basketball list of recruits for this coming year.

Both have been offered by Dave Rose and the Cougar program. Kingma is a 6-2 scoring machine from the guard line at Jackson High School in Mill Creek, Washington. He is not LDS but has BYU at the top of his list of schools that interest him. He and his father made an unofficial visit to campus a few weeks ago. He already has an offer from Gonzaga among other schools pursuing him. He can really shoot it. You can check out some video of Kingma [here](#).

Harrison is LDS and is a 6-5 wing. He played a couple of years at Greenwood HS in South Carolina where his family lives, but played last season at a private prep school, Christ School in Arden, North Carolina. This team was loaded with D-1 talent.

He reportedly has offers from Wisconsin, Virginia and College of Charleston, in addition to the Cougars.

Sean McNaughton...The BYU outfielder set a new MWC record for career home runs this season, including a pair of grand slams in BYU's 25-18 win over Utah in MWC tourney play.

Too bad the league title wasn't decided by a home run derby contest this year as BYU had no trouble scoring runs and putting the ball over the fence and out of play with the long ball.

It still take pitching, however, and that was in short supply this season as the Cougars finished the year at 27-31.

Softball Strides...The BYU women's softball team continues to make significant strides in its program after just ten years of existence.

Under Coach Gordon Eakins, the Cougars made their sixth straight appearance in the NCAA Regionals. This year it was in Austin, Texas and featured the Cougars, along with Texas, East Carolina and Iona.

For the first time ever, the Cougars moved on to the Super Regionals after beating East Carolina, Texas and East Carolina again.

The faced Arizona in Tucson in the Super Regional last week and lost 2-1 and 10-2 to conclude their season with a 46-13 record. That is the most wins in Cougar softball history.

On Track to Oregon...Here is a list of BYU's men and women track athletes that have qualified for the NCAA National Championships to be held in Eugene Oregon June 9-12.

Sean Richardson, Javelin; Blaine Baker, Javelin; Chris Reno, Javelin; Leif Arrhenius, Shot put and Discus; Chris Little, Pole Vault; Oliver Whaley, Hammer Throw; Ryan Waite, 800m and Richard Nelson, Steeplechase.

Women qualifiers include: Nachele Stewart, 800m; Lacey Cramer, 800m; Angela Wagner, 800m; Mindy McClurkin, Long Jump and 200m; Kari Clark, Pole Vault and Ada Robinson, High Jump.

TICKETS I WOULD BUY AGAIN

The Florida Marlins are marketing geniuses.

Roy Halladay, the ace pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies beat the Marlins 1-0 last Saturday night in Miami. He threw a perfect game in the process.

Paid attendance for that game was listed at 25,000, an unusually good gate for the Marlins.

Those tickets that went unsold for the game are now being peddled by the Marlins at face value to any and all that want a legitimate and bona fide ticket to Halladay's gem.

Whether it is for a souvenir, memorabilia, or to fudge a little and say they were there, tickets have been moving at a brisk pace and Florida is pocketing the money.

It got me to thinking. What would be the hottest hindsight tickets to BYU games?

There aren't many BYU games that I would pay to see again in person, let alone remember, but here are my top ten games for which I would gladly open the wallet again.

Nine out of the ten games for which I would pay again are from football and basketball.

The one exception is from BYU baseball and also ranks at the top of my list.

Here it is.

1. I am double dipping here because this was actually a BYU baseball doubleheader. It wasn't any ordinary doubleheader.

Hawaii used to be a big-time collegiate baseball power. In 1981 they still were and traveled to Provo to face the Cougars for the WAC baseball championship and a chance to move on in NCAA action.

A single game was set for Friday, May 15 with a doubleheader, if needed, to be played on Saturday, May 16.

It snowed and sleeted both days and all contests were cancelled. Sunday was out so it was decided that BYU and Hawaii would play three seven-inning games on Monday. It was a one-day, two-out-of-three series.

Hawaii came loaded with first-class collegiate pitchers, including Scott Roberts, who was undefeated on the year.

BYU countered with Peter Kendrick. He was not imposing physically and it was a stretch to say he was 5-8. He also happened to be from Radford HS in Hawaii and a player that the Bows deemed not good enough for their prestigious program.

The lefty started the first game for Coach Gary Pullins and beat the Bows and Scott Crim 11-4.

Hawaii was going with undefeated Roberts in the second game. Pullins surprised everyone by putting Kendrick back on the mound for the start of the game.

He kept him there and stayed with him while he pitched another seven innings as BYU beat the Bows again 3-1. He allowed 12 hits total in the two games as the Cougars captured the championship and move on to NCAA tournament action.

It was an unbelievable moment in BYU athletic history. I have witnessed over 350 BYU football games and probably 800 or so Cougar basketball games during the 30 years I have published this newsletter. I would put Kendrick's performance in that memorable doubleheader in Provo on May 18, 1981 at the top of any and all BYU games I have seen.

The irony of the moment was that there was probably no more than a couple of hundred fans in attendance and a fourth of them were faithful Hawaii boosters.

In my opinion, it was the least viewed, but best BYU athletic moment I have seen and definitely one of the few tickets I would buy again.

It also would save money on movies. The feat produced by BYU and Kendrick was *Rudy*, *Hoosiers* and *Remember the Titans* all rolled into one.

2. 1980 Holiday Bowl...It was phenomenal and fabulous but Kendrick and Cougars still come out on top on my list.

3. 1997 Cotton Bowl...BYU's best ever football team, in my opinion, and next to the Holiday Bowl, BYU's most exciting game nationally and provincially.

4. Basketball, BYU vs. Utah, Feb. 23, 2002...BYU trailed by 21 in the second half in Provo only to

comeback and take a 63-61 win over the Utes. Unlikely heroes, Matt Montague, Dan Howard and Eric Nielsen made the headlines, but it was Travis Hansen's 17 points and play in the second half that fueled the win.

5. Basketball, BYU vs. Notre Dame, March 1981...A BYU basketball classic, but we still take the 63-61 comeback win over Utah in front of Ainge's heroics. You knew he was good, but to have non-descript players beat Utah and Rick Majerus was better.

6. Football, BYU vs. Utah, again and again...It doesn't get any better than BYU breaking Utah's heart. We would buy the following tickets again. Luke Staley scoring the go ahead touchdown on a pitch from Brandon Doman in 2001; John Beck hitting Jonny Harline in the end zone on the last play of the game in 2006 and Max Hall to Andrew George in overtime just last year. Utah, in all three games, thought they had the victory. You can't pay enough or buy enough tickets again and again and again to see that kind of stuff.

7. Football, BYU vs. Miami, September 1990...Ty Detmer was fabulous and probably nailed down his Heisman Trophy with this one performance. It was a 28-21 win over the Hurricanes in Provo.

8. Basketball, BYU vs. Arizona, December 2009...Jimmer Fredette lays 49 points on Arizona in Tucson. The Wildcats weren't any good, but who cares? Fredette is good and he showed it with his record-breaking performance. If we are going to buy a ticket to this game, we would also buy a ticket to the BYU-LaSalle game in Provo in December of 1979. BYU lost in double overtime, but LaSalle's Michael Brooks put on a show similar to Fredette's. He scored 51 against the Cougars.

9. Football, BYU vs. San Diego State, November 1991...If a tie is like kissing your sister, then pucker up because this game was a classic. BYU fell seriously behind in the first half and then mounted a monumental comeback. LaVell Edwards opted for the tie because it gave him a WAC championship. It was one of Ty Detmer's best performances. The Texan had many memorable games for which we would gladly dole out the dollars again. He also had at least two games in the previous 1990 season that we don't want to remember. How about Texas A&M in the Holiday Bowl when the Aggies shellacked the Cougars 65-14 and Detmer separated both shoulders? The day Detmer was announced as the Heisman Trophy winner, he was in Honolulu. The Warriors pounded BYU 59-28.

10. Basketball, BYU vs. Utah, January 31, 1980...Utah had Tom Chambers and Danny Vranes. BYU lost to the No. 9 rated Utes in Salt Lake City. The final score was 60-56. I only remember one thing about this game. My good friend and I went to the contest. I won't reveal his name because he is now a respected businessman, but before the game tipped off, the crowd was singing the national anthem and we were all standing. Just as the song concluded and it was quiet, he yells at the top of his lungs, "I hate Utah." I would gladly buy a ticket once more to hear him in the Huntsman Center again.