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Will Cougars be Badgered, Bullied, Bloodied and Beat?

Something has to give when BYU travels to Madison this Saturday to take on the Wisconsin Badgers. It's simple. One of the two teams is going to see their season stats suffer.

The Badgers currently are ranked No. 6 in the nation in total defense. They allow giving up just 286.1 yards per game and are also No. 5 in the country in scoring defense. Wisconsin has allowed only 15 points per game. The Badgers are also No. 5 in rushing defense, allowing just 91 yards per contest.

Offensively, BYU is currently ranked No 12 nationally in total offense with 511.1 yards per game. In rushing, the Cougars come in at No.14 with 258.8 yards per game on the ground. Behind the arm of Taysom Hill, BYU is ranked 50th nationally at 252.4 yards a contest. The Badgers give up just 195.1 yards a game.

Wisconsin is currently ranked No. 21 with a 6-2 record. Both of their losses have come on the road, the first being a 32-30 loss at ASU in a game marred by horrible officiating late in the game that cost UW a win. The second loss was a 31-24 setback at the hands of currently undefeated Ohio State. In both contests, Wisconsin had game ending potential winning drives thwarted.

The conventional wisdom is that Wisconsin will pound the ball on the ground against BYU. I don't think so. BYU will commit their front seven to stopping the run and that leaves the BYU pass defense vulnerable. Let's face it; BYU's corners are not spectacular this season.

Look for Gary Anderson and his quarterback Joel Stave to make them even less spectacular in this game.

Surf Up, Falslev Down

For BYU it will be on Taysom Hill. If the Cougars are to win, Hill will have to have a "Hill" of a game.

I look for Wisconsin to scheme away Hill's rush game. That means it will be up to the Cougar passing game to come through if BYU hopes to snare a win on the road in the hostile environment of Camp Randall Stadium.

If special teams are going to be a factor, BYU will be without punt returner JD Falslev. He broke his hand and required surgery last week. He is expected to miss 3-4 weeks. The injury occurred at a team activity at an indoor pseudo surfing facility. Other than that, BYU should be mostly healthy for this contest.

I have maintained for decades that the Big Ten is overrated as a football conference with the exception of Ohio State. Wisconsin was for real two years ago when they inherited Russell Wilson for one season, but I'm still not a believer. I may be forced to be baptized a Big Ten convert if Wisconsin manhandles the Cougars. Las Vegas odds makers have the Cougars a 9-point underdog.

I have BYU winning this thing behind Taysom Hil. Since the game will be televised nationally on ESPN, it will be Hill's biggest stage yet. I call it BYU 31 Wisconsin 21.

BYU's Football Season May End Going Up in Smoke

Ask any politician and they will tell you that if you want to get elected, it helps to not have any skeletons in the closet, or have your name found previously on a police blotter.

If you are running for office, you can get away with smoking marijuana unless you have been arrested for doing so.

For BYU football this season, it looks like the Cougar are on the verge of throwing their hat in the Top 25 ring. A win over Wisconsin will make that happen. There was even a little talk last week about the Cougars being in consideration for a BCS bowl if they can beat Wisconsin and Notre Dame.

There's zero chance of that happening. BYU will still be hindered by being caught with their pants down and inhaling an incomprehensible loss to open the season against

Virginia. BYU's 2013 season is a long way from being on a police blotter, but they can never blot out their embarrassing loss to Virginia.

I call it the 4 C moment: Cougars, Cavaliers and Catastrophe in Charlottesville. Even if BYU finds a way to win out with wins over Wisconsin, Notre Dame, Idaho State and Nevada, pollsters and BCS match makers can never get over the fact that BYU losing to Virginia was downright criminal.

Yes, that Virginia. They are the team that only has two wins this season; BYU and Virginia Military Academy. Yes, they are as bad as their 2-7 current record indicates.

Come December, Virginia will be the lump of coal in BYU's Christmas stocking that the Cougars can't burn, camouflage, donate to charity or hide from pollsters and BCS big wigs.

BYU football coaches, administrators and fans, may try to put that game behind them, but unfortunately, Virginia is in full view of everyone else. As Mick Jagger says, 'It's enough to make a grown man cry.'

In order to solve BYU current penchant for early season offensive stumbles coming out of the gate in multiple seasons, maybe BYU sports marketing guys can make a video featuring Bronco Mendenhall and his offensive staff lip syncing to this [self starting song](#).

Just imagine Mendenhall as Mick, Robert Anae as Keith Richards, Garret Tujague as Ronnie Wood, Jason Beck as Charlie Watts and Mark Atuaia as Bill Wyman. I'd actually pay to see that video.

THIRTEEN MINUS TWO OR THREE PLUS SEVEN EXPLAINS BYU BASKETBALL'S RECRUITING AND ROSTER

NCAA rules allow Division I basketball teams to have 13 scholarships players on their rosters every year. You don't have to have all 13 grant in aids allocated every year. You can play with as few as you dare and still hope to win games.

Dave Rose currently has 10 scholarship players on whom he will count on to help the Cougars win their first WCC trophy and make a return to the NCAA tournament. If you count Wake Forest transfer and redshirt Chase Fischer, Rose has used 11 scholarships. The remaining two will likely be given for this year only to the two walkons who practice with the team and dress for games in case of emergencies and blow outs.

Had Rose been able to land Jamal Aytes in the late summer, he would have 12 scholarship players on the roster. Aytes turned down Rose and signed late with UNLV.

Here's the list of the current scholarship players that Rose will rely on this season.

Nate Austin, 6-11, 230, Junior
Frank Bartley, 6-3, 200, Freshman
Matt Carlino, 6-2, 175, Junior
Kyle Collinsworth, 6-6, 215, Sophomore
Skyler Halford, 6-1, 180, Junior
Tyler Haws, 6-5, 200 Junior
Eric Mika, 6-10, 230, Freshman
Josh Sharp, 6-7, 185, Junior
Anson Winder, 6-3, 195, Junior
Luke Worthington, 6-10, 245, Freshman

Throw in Chase Fischer, who will be a junior next year, and that will still give you just 10 scholarships allocated for next season. Fischer will take the place of Eric Mika, who still says that he will leave for an LDS mission after the completion of this season.

Now the scholarship math gets interesting. That's because Dave Rose and BYU should announce seven new recruits and signees during the early letter of intent signing period. Players can sign beginning Wednesday, November 13, 2013. The early signing period lasts just one week and expires Wednesday, November 20, 2013.

Here are the 7 new players that I expect Rose to announce:

T.J. Haws, 6-4, 170, Lone Peak HS, UT
Dalton Nixon, 6-7, 200, Orem HS, UT
Jake Toolson, 6-5, 205, Highland HS, AZ
Ryan Andrus, 6-9, 200, American Fork HS, UT...will play a year at BYU and then leave for an LDS mission.
Payton Dastrup, 6-10, 230, Mountain View HS, AZ, *Dastrup has his final list of schools down to BYU, Florida, Virginia and Ohio State. Dastrup says he will be serving an LDS mission before enrolling in college. Despite all the 4 schools saying they will save a scholarship for him, BYU is the only one that is likely to do so. Also, with Mika leaving after this season for his mission and Dastrup headed out next spring, that would mean that both would be back at BYU at the same time and could play together for 3 straight years.*
Isaac Neilson, 6-11, 220, Mission Viejo HS, CA...He will be back from his LDS mission from Alabama and on the 2014 roster.
Jordan Chatman, 6-4, 200, Union HS, Ridgefield, WA...He will be back from his LDS mission to Taiwan and enroll in school for the fall semester of 2014

If you do the math, assuming that Mika departs for a mission, BYU will again have 10 scholarship players returning for next season. Add Andrus and the 2 missionaries returning in Neilson and Chatman and Rose will be filled up again next year at 13 scholarships.

IF YOU WANT THE ANSWERS TO BE YES, YOU NEED TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Is BYU better than Alaska Anchorage? The answer is yes as evidenced by the final score of BYU 99 Alaska Anchorage 68 last Saturday night in the Marriott Center. The Cougars were led by Eric Mika and Matt Carlino. Mika came off the bench and had 17 points and 13 rebounds. Matt Carlino wasn't far behind. He totaled 17 points also and grabbed 10 boards.

Here are some other questions with yes as the answer. Can Kyle Collinsworth play the point and get to the rim and rebound? Can Eric Mika live up to his hype? Can Matt Carlino look spectacular? Can Tyler Haws lead the WCC in scoring? Can BYU get an invite to the NCAA tournament?

Yes, yes, yes, yes and yes. Unfortunately, there are also questions where no is the answer for BYU basketball this season. At least, until proven otherwise. Two exhibition wins over Colorado College and Alaska Anchorage and BYU still has questions to be answered.

Here are some questions with no as the answer, in my opinion. Can Kyle Collinsworth shoot the ball consistently from outside and at the free throw line? Can Matt Carlino look spectacular two nights in a row? Can Eric Mika control his foul trouble and stay in games. Can Tyler Haws be as productive in the WCC with defenses keying on him? Can BYU beat Gonzaga on the road? Can BYU win a conference post season tournament before Dave Rose retires? In my opinion, those are all no answers until proven otherwise.

The good news is we will know by December 1 if this team is a yes team or a no team. The talent seems to be in place for the Cougars to make some positive answers as to how the season will turn out.

Once again, my opinion on this team is that it will only be as good and consistent as Matt Carlino is. Collinsworth, Haws and Mika will produce. Carlino will be spectacular one night. The question is how he will perform overall during the season.

Will we get an exhilarating exhibition one game and a total clunker the next? Consistency is the key for Carlino and the Cougars. He has proven that he can be spectacular at times. Now he has to prove that he can get rid of the clunker games and just be consistent. If that happens, the upside for this team could be very high.

BYU opens the season for real this Friday in Provo when they face Weber State in the Marriott Center. The game is set for a 7 pm tip and will be televised live by BYUtv.

CROSS COUNTY CHAMPS

The BYU men won their second WCC Cross Country Championship in 3 years last Saturday at Pepperdine. Here is the official BYU release with details:

MALIBU, Calif.—Senior Jason Witt used a late surge to take first overall Saturday and lead a dominating team performance in Malibu, Calif., giving No. 5 BYU cross country its second West Coast Conference Championship in three years.

“It was a nice overall team performance,” head coach Ed Eyestone said. “We had five of our guys in front of their (Portland’s) third. Spencer (Gardner) had a nice run to be our fifth man and seal it for us. I knew that he (Witt) and (Tylor) Thatcher had a good chance to win. It looked like Witt might have been content to finish third at the end, but he found another gear that last 400 meters to take first.”

Witt held the lead for much of the race, but was passed by San Francisco’s Eric Causey and Portland’s Scott Fauble on the final lap. Fauble opened up a sizeable lead, but Witt’s late sprint to finish came just in time to take the lead and the victory.

“I didn’t feel like I was slowing down,” Witt said. “I saw them getting out to a lead, I just wanted to save my energy for the last 400 meters and give myself a chance. My highest goals were to be top 10 at Wisconsin, to win this meet, and to be an All-American at nationals. I have taken care of two of those, now I just need to do well at nationals.”

The Cougars finished with 30 points. No. 6 Portland finished with 48 points to come in second place and Loyola Marymount had 110 to finish third.

Steve Flint, Tylor Thatcher and Thomas Gruenewald finished in fifth, sixth, and seventh place, respectively, and as the second through fourth team finishers for the Cougars. Spencer Gardner was the last scoring runner for BYU, placing 11th overall.

Video of the race can be seen [here](#). The race begins at the 8:00 mark. It really gets exciting at the 28:15 mark.

The Cougars will compete next at the NCAA Mountain Regional Championships on Nov. 15 in Ogden, Utah and will hope to qualify to go to the NCAA Championships on Nov. 23 in Terre Haute, Ind.

On the women’s side, BYU didn’t fare as well as the men in the WCC championship. That’s because a tiebreaker didn’t go in BYU’s favor as the Lady Cougars finished third Saturday behind San Francisco and Portland at the West Coast Conference Championships.

No. 17 USF finished first with 39 points, followed by Portland, with 62 points. BYU and Portland both scored 62 points based on its top 5 runners. In a tiebreaker, the top runners from the two schools are compared, and Portland’s third runner finished in 12th, while BYU’s third runner finished in 13th, sealing third place for the Cougars

In other women's sports, the BYU soccer team defeated San Diego 1-0 last Friday on a late goal by Marissa Nimmer. The Cougars are now 12-4-1 overall and 6-1 in conference play. The Cougars finish out the regular season with two matches at home against Pacific and St. Mary's.

BYU still has a chance to finish tied for first place in the league standings if they win out at home. Portland also has a 6-1 record and Santa Clara currently stands at 6-0. Santa Clara finished out with Pepperdine at home and then two road games at Portland and Gonzaga. Portland finishes with two home games against Santa Clara and San Francisco. If the Pilots beat Santa Clara, it is likely that there would be a three-way tie for the league championship between the Cougars, Broncos and Pilots.

In volleyball, the Cougar women continue to hold on to their first place lead in WCC play with two wins last week over Loyola Marymount and Pepperdine. The Cougars are currently 19-4 over all and 12-1 in league play.

BYU Television Timetable

BYU vs. Pacific (Women's Soccer)

Thursday, Nov 7 at Provo

Match Start: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. South Dakota State (Women's Basketball)

Friday, Nov 8 at Provo

Tipoff: 3:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Weber State

Friday, Nov 8 at Provo **(Men's Basketball)**

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

Wisconsin vs. BYU

Saturday, Nov 9 at Madison

Kickoff: 1:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPN

BYU vs. Stanford (Men's Basketball)

Monday, Nov 11 at Palo Alto

Tipoff: 9:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPN

BYU vs. Mount St. Mary's (Men's Basketball)

Friday, Nov 15 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Idaho State

Saturday, Nov 16 at Provo

Kickoff: 1:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Colorado Mesa (Men's Basketball)

Saturday, Nov 16 at 7:30 pm Mountain Time

Tipoff: 7:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Iowa State (Men's Basketball)

Wednesday, Nov 20 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPNU

BYU vs. Texas (Men's Basketball)

Monday, Nov 25 at Kansas City

Tipoff: 5:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPNU

BYU vs. DePaul/Wichita State (Men's Basketball)

Tuesday, Nov 26 at Kansas City

Tipoff: TBA

TV: ESPN2 or ESPNU

BYU vs. Utah State (Men's Basketball)

Saturday, Nov 30 at Salt Lake City

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv