

HB Arnett's



801 372 - 0819

hbarnett@fiber.net

1391 West 800 South – Orem, Utah 84058

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Fight Hunger Bowl

Thought and Plot the Same for Both Huskies and Cougars

When BYU takes on Washington this Friday in San Francisco in the Kraft Fight Hunger Bowl the offensive philosophy of both teams will be eerily the same.

Both teams have quarterbacks who can hurt you with their feet by keeping plays alive with their athleticism. For UW that would be Keith Price. For the Cougars it is Taysom Hill.

Both teams want to run the football. There is no secret strategy for either club. On paper, the team that runs the ball more effectively will win this game. BYU brings Jamaal Williams and Washington will counter with Bishop Sankey. On paper, both backs statistically are similar.

In 12 games Sankey carried the ball 306 times this season for 1775 yards and 18 touchdowns. Williams countered with 206 carries for 1202 yards and 7 touchdowns in just 11 games. If you extrapolate Williams numbers and give him another 100 carries to match Sankey's totals, the total yards would be extremely close.

Taysom Hill is clearly head and shoulders above Price of UW in rushing stats. Hill finished the year with 215 carries for 1211 yards and 9 touchdowns on the ground. Price was a more pass first quarterback and his rushing stats bear it out. He rushed just 75 times for 78 yards. His job was throwing the football.

In the air, Price was 216-330 with 5 picks for 2843 yards and a pass completion percentage of 65.5. He had 20 touchdown passes and averaged 258 yards per game with a pass efficiency rating for the season of 154.8.

Hill hit on 211 of 390 throws for 19 touchdowns and 2645 yards. His pass efficiency rating was 120.48 and his completion percentage was just 54.1.

Bode Well?

While the run games of both teams seems to be the critical factor in the outcome of this game, more than likely it will be the passing game that wins this contest for either BYU or Washington.

That doesn't bode well for the Cougars. They are short on play makers in the receiving category and short on cover guys at corner in attempting to solve UW's passing game.

There is a reason that the Huskies are a 3-point favorite in this matchup. Physically, they appear to be the more talented team. Their four losses were to Stanford, Oregon, ASU and UCLA. BYU's four losses came at the hands of Virginia, Utah, Wisconsin and Notre Dame.

If the Cougars have a wild card to play in this game, it may be with coaching. The Huskies are going interim with Marques Tuiasosopo manning the Seattle ship while Chris Petersen is waiting in the wings for next season.

While UW goes interim, BYU is going interesting with Bronco Mendenhall. You can debate Mendenhall's bowl preparation model and you can sometimes wonder about his candor and cantankerous quotes to the media, but you can't debate his bowl game record.

If you are looking for a place on which to hang your hat for this bowl game, logic would say you hang it on the Huskies and their athletic team from a tough Pac 12 conference.

History, however, says you hang your hat on Mendenhall and his 6-2 bowl game record. The rap on Mendenhall among some fans is that he can't win the big games in the regular season. The actual resume of Mendenhall in bowl games, however, says he is very good when it comes to post season contests.

That's why I'm hanging my Fight Hunger fedora on Mendenhall in this one. I call it BYU 27 UW 24.

The game will be televised live on ESPN with kickoff set for 7:30 pm Mountain Time.

Ducks Defeat and Deflate Cougars 100-96 in Overtime

With the clock expiring in overtime last Saturday in Eugene, it was the Oregon Ducks doing the quacking and once again BYU doing the lacking. The final was Oregon 100 BYU 96.

The loss puts the Cougars at 8-5 on the year with WCC play beginning this coming Saturday against Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles. Lacking and losing could very well continue in league play for BYU unless they find a way to stop grasping defeats from the jaws of victory.

The Cougars were led in scoring by Tyler Haws with 32 points. His play, especially in the first half with 18 points, was magnificent. Turnovers and free throw shooting for BYU, especially late in the contest, were simply maddening.

With a four point lead with two minutes to go in regulation for BYU, shot selection for the Cougars was poor and the time on the shot clock remaining when those poor shots were selected was mind boggling. Hanging on to the ball was also baffling with crucial and game changing turnovers taking place.

For Oregon, if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it results in an 11-0 record and national ranking. For BYU, at times it walks like a good team and plays like a good team, but when it counts, the Cougars aren't.

Hopefully that will change as conference action begins. LMU is on tap for Saturday and then Pepperdine will be next up for the Cougars the following Monday in Malibu.

My Golf Game Explains BYU's 5 Losses in Basketball This Season

I'm an ok golfer. Not great, but I don't embarrass myself on the course. For those that golf, the best way to explain it is that my handicap is 11. A few years back I was a 7.

When I play golfers worse than I am with higher handicaps, I win. When I play golfers better than I am with lower handicaps I lose. That explains my golf game and BYU basketball. They beat bad teams and lose to good teams.

Here's a little background on my golf game. Most of the time I golf and hit balls off the driving range at a place called Sleepy Ridge. Most of the time I play with two guys, One named Walters and the other Barthel. The third guy in our foursome is usually some random person that one of us invites.

The biggest attraction of Sleepy Ridge for me is that it is only ½ mile from my front door. The biggest attraction of golfing with Walters and Barthel is that I can consistently beat them. Plus, they are pleasant guys to be around.

At Sleepy Ridge, there is a flag on the driving range usually set at 150 yards. Eight out of ten times, I can hit an easy 7 iron to within 15 yards of that flag. The number 4 hole at Sleepy Ridge is a par 3. From the whites, it is usually about 150-160 yards. It's a cupcake hole. More on that later.

Here's a little of my ecclesiastical history to go along with my golf history. I am a practicing Mormon. I don't gamble, except on golf. On every par three, we all put down a quarter (I said I gamble on golf, I didn't say I was a high roller) on the tee box and the guy closest to the hole picks up the money. Here's where it gets interesting. It only takes wagering a quarter and I immediately go from hitting a seven iron to within 30 feet or closer to the flag 80 percent of the time to only hitting the green 60 percent of the time. Yes, just a quarter and bragging rights can make a difference. It's called pressure.

Now let's talk real pressure. I home teach a guy named Stephenson. His back yard is, give or take a few feet as the crow flies, close to 150 yards from my front yard. It should be an easy 7 iron. The problem is that between my front yard and his back yard there are three other homes; the Whiting's, Allen's and Eddy's.

I've checked and there are also at least 16 windows exposed on those homes sitting between my front yard and his back yard. Even more daunting, depending on the time of the day and if school is in session, there could be between 3-4 kids running around between my front yard and Stephenson's back yard.

Take away the windows and kids and I hit Stephenson's back yard at least 8 out of ten times. The fact that I haven't attempted the shot in the 20 years we have been neighbors, explains how pressure affects my golf game.

That's why I can easily understand a skilled college player or even pro player who is normally an 80 percent free throw shooter, clanging balls off the iron when the game is on the line. With scholarships, coaches' jobs and NCAA invites worth big time money at stake, the pressure is real.

I still think I could hit the shot into my neighbor's back yard even with windows and kids in the way. If I ever try it, it will be when nobody is watching. Unfortunately for BYU basketball players, when they are attempting a free throw that can win a game, there are thousands watching and yelling in the stands and maybe millions viewing on television.

Discerning why BYU is currently 8-5 on the year is not like discovering cold fusion. It is simply cold shooting from the free throw stripe. Take away Tyler Haws and here are the free throw stats of BYU's four other starters in the five losses.

Eric Mika...10-25 – 40%

Kyle Collinsworth...20-35 – 57%

Matt Carlino...10-15 – 66%

Nate Austin...2-4 -50%

Rose Refuses to Lay Up

Here's another reason BYU has lost five games this season. Dave Rose refuses to lay up.

In golf parlance, the 9-year BYU head basketball coach refuses to keep his driver in the bag. There have been multiple times, most recently at Oregon, when Rose had the game and bet won. All he has to do is club down and trade distance for accuracy and consistency and in my opinion, three of those 5 losses this season would be wins.

If you are up by two holes with three to play, why take chances? Throttle and club down and let the clock work in your favor. If that means pulling a starter who won't throttle back and club down, so be it. If you watch BYU basketball games, you know the player of whom I am referring.

Rose's strategy with a lead seems to be that if there is water surrounding the green and all you need is to be on in two and two putt for the win, you still swing as hard and as fast as you can and take your chances with the water and weak free throw shooting.

That's Bubba Watson golf. Rose should occasionally try Jim Furyk golf and he might be 11-2 instead of 8-5 at this point in the season.

If we are betting quarters on free throws, my money is always on Haws. If I am betting on BYU's late game management style regardless of the score, there will still be plenty of broken windows and hearts along the way this season.

CALENDARING THE COUGARS IN BASKETBALL

You can't talk the past, present and future of BYU basketball without talking about missionaries.

Dave Rose and BYU basketball fans got their *Dear John* letter last week from Oregon. The letter and loss to the Ducks said goodbye to any hopes of a romantic run this season by the Cougars.

That means once again, as fans and coaches, we turn our hearts to the future and fantasize again that there is some Cougar basketball player that will return from an LDS mission and make BYU basketball meaningful on a national stage.

For those calendaring those Cougar hoop hopes, here are some dates and names to jot down.

Eric Mika will be leaving for two years of missionary service after this season. Jordan Chatman and Issaac Neilson will be returning from their missions and joining the team next season as true freshmen.

Mika is part of the Lone Peak list of high hopes for BYU basketball. Except for sketchy free throw shooting, Mika has shown that the Lone Peak list is legit.

Nick Emery is still 1 ½ seasons away from putting on a BYU uniform. He returns in May of 2015 from Germany after a stellar Lone Peak career.

TJ Haws and Frank Jackson are two more Lone Peak hopefuls that eventually will give BYU some much needed hot shots in the arm. Haws has signed with BYU and Jackson has verbally committed to the Cougars. Haws is a senior and will be at the earliest, 2 ½ years away from wearing a BYU uniform. Jackson will be 4 ½ years away from playing for Dave Rose. He is only a sophomore and also has LDS mission plans.

Both Haws and Jackson had big numbers last week playing in a showcase tournament in Las Vegas. In 4 games at the Jerry Tarkanian Classic, which featured 44 teams, Lone Peak HS went 3-1. Haws scored 31, 25, 15 and 24 points. Jackson was equally as good. He scored 24, 25, 20 and 15.

Both Haws and Jackson notched some news nationally for their performances. You can read it for yourself [here](#).

Jake Toolson re-introduced himself as one of the best prep basketball players in Arizona recently when he scored 39 and 30 points. Here are his [headlines](#).

One of the least talked about future BYU players is Zac Seljaas, a 6-7 forward from Bountiful HS in Utah who has verbally committed to the Cougars. In the same Las Vegas showcase last week Seljaas put up nice numbers against very good competition. Bountiful also went 3-1 in the tourney. Seljaas is 3 ½ years away from wearing a BYU uniform.

BYU Television Timetable

BYU vs. Washington (Fight Hunger Bowl)

Friday, Dec 27 at San Francisco

Kickoff: 7:30 pm MST

TV: ESPN

BYU vs. Loyola Marymount

Saturday, Dec 28 at Los Angeles

Tipoff: 2:00 pm MST

TV: Time Warner Cable and Root

BYU vs. Loyola Marymount (Women's BB)

Saturday, Dec 28 at Provo

Tipoff: 2:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Pepperdine

Monday, Dec 30, at Malibu

Tipoff: 8:00 pm MST

TV: Time Warner Cable

BYU vs. Pepperdine (Women's BB)

Monday, Dec 30 at Provo

Tipoff: 5:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Pacific (Women's BB)

Thursday, Jan 2 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. St. Mary's (Women's BB)

Saturday, Jan 4 at Provo

Tipoff: 2:00 pm

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. San Diego

Saturday, Jan 4 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Pepperdine

Thursday, Jan 9 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Loyola Marymount

Saturday, Jan 11 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv