

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

801 372 0819
hbarnett@fiber.net
1391 West 800 South – Orem, Utah 84058

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IT DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER THAN JUNE

Who doesn't love the month of June?

The tomatoes and corn are in the ground and growing. It hasn't yet turned really hot and the weather is perfect for golf.

It is a month of weddings and the promise of future bliss.

But best of all, BYU's athletic teams are exuding confidence and the promise of great things just around the corner for their upcoming respective seasons.

Nobody has lost a game they should have won. As a matter of fact, all BYU teams are currently undefeated. Once again, this could be the year that BYU is in a BCS bowl game or in the Final Four.

Better yet, it's only June and Riley Nelson reminds us of what BYU quarterbacks used to be. Jabari Parker hasn't even put on a BYU uniform, and may never put on a BYU uniform, but Cougar fans are already dreaming of the Promised Land.

That said, I hate to bring up another June item, but if you live in Utah, you should know that the June Sucker is a fish endemic to Utah Lake and the Provo River. It is an endangered species.

The BYU Sucker, however, is alive, well and thriving, especially in Provo in June and July.

Count me in this June as a fish still willing to take the BYU bait. I won't swallow it hook, line and sinker, but I know a good lure when I see it...especially in football and basketball.

Here is my current June Sucker cast on all things Cougar.

Football

I have been doing this newsletter thing now for 30-plus years. We can talk about NFL talent, coaching, home field advantage, the price of polish dogs etc, but successful BYU football always comes back to having a good quarterback.

I don't want to open any old scabs or wounds, but that was proven once again plainly and clearly last season. Cougar coaches started the year thinking they had a good quarterback. They didn't. They did find one, however, mid-season and the BYU is only as good as its quarterback theory was proven right once again.

Utah Lake may be lacking in June Suckers, but it still plentifully stocked with carp. If you are a Cougar carp just waiting with mouth wide open for something good to swallow for the coming season, you can honestly and historically gulp down Riley Nelson for starters.

Is he the next BYU NFL quarterback? No. Is he a BYU quarterback that can win lots of games in his coming senior season? Yes.

Historically he fits the mold.

When BYU has a returning starter as a senior quarterback, the results are better than stink bait.

Here's a smell and tell of the last 37 years on what BYU quarterbacks have done and produced in their senior seasons of wearing the Cougar uniform.

The last senior BYU QB before Nelson was Max Hall. He finished 11-2 and beat Utah in 2009. The two losses were to Florida State and TCU.

Before Hall it was John Beck. In his senior year, the Cougars finished 11-2 in 2006. He also beat Utah with the memorable Beck to Harline pass. The two losses were early in the season to Arizona and in overtime to Boston College.

Three was a potpourri of poor quarterbacks before Beck took over the job. Before Beck, it was Senior QB Brandon Doman in 2001.

He led the Cougars to a 12-2 record and a 24-21 win over Utah. The two losses were the last two games of the season and without Luke Staley. BYU was whipped soundly by Hawaii and Louisville in the Liberty Bowl.

Kevin Feterik was the senior QB fish that swam against the current of good and productive last seasons. BYU finished with an 8-4 record in 1999 with losses to Virginia, Wyoming, Utah and Marshall.

And who can forget 1996. With Senior Steve Sarkisian, BYU finished 14-1. The only loss was to Washington.

In 1994, John Walsh led the Cougars to a 10-3 record. I actually think his final season was as a junior as he left for the NFL draft early.

Ty Detmer won the Heisman as a junior, but as a senior he led BYU to an 8-3-2 record. I admit to being an old fish and follower of Detmer and am willing to be chummed and cheered by the fact that Detmer had nothing at all around him for his swan song as a BYU QB.

The three losses came early in the year to Florida State, UCLA and Penn State. The two ties were things of beauty, especially the 52-52 all timer against San Diego State. The other was in the Holiday Bowl against Iowa.

Starting in 1985 back to 1974, BYU has a serious run of senior quarterbacks. Robbie Bosco went 13-0 as a junior and then produced an 11-3 record as a senior. He did it with an injured throwing arm.

In 1983, it was Steve Young putting up big numbers as a senior. Young and BYU went 11-1. Two years previously, it was Jim McMahon making noise and a name for himself as a senior. The Cougars finished 11-2 that year.

Marc Wilson finished 11-1 as a senior QB in 1979. Gifford Nielson was 9-3 as a senior in 1976 and Gary Sheide got it started as a senior in 1974 with a 7-4 record and BYU's inaugural bowl appearance.

The fact that BYU returns Cody Hoffman and a pretty good receiving set is nice, but almost not relevant. Throw in the Cougars most talented defensive back unit in over a decade and that might have you nibbling at the bait.

There has been an upgrade at running back. Three starting offensive linemen return. BYU has started to get serious again in recruiting Polynesian players. The coaches were on a Samoan sabbatical for whatever reason the last decade. They are making a serious push and tug now for Tongans and Samoans.

Despite all that, whether you and I are June Suckers, carp or salmon swimming upstream against the odds of a heavily front-loaded schedule and games against the tougher competition almost all on the road, Riley Nelson will keep us biting at the BYU bait in football until the season kicks off in late August.

In other football news and as proof that BYU is trying to repair the Polynesian pipeline that has been leaking seriously the last few years, the Cougars have recent commitments now from Polynesian players who will be called on to fill the gaps for the 2013 season when BYU loses a boatload of defensive linemen.

Ma'ataua Brown is a 6-5, 360 pound defensive nose guard that has committed to BYU. He will play his sophomore season this fall at Cerritos JC in California. He originally signed out of Paramount HS in California with Washington. He has some academic work ahead of him this year before being able to get his AA degree and matriculate at the D-1 level.

His cousin, Kalolo Manumaleuga also committed to the Cougars. The 6-2, 250 pound defensive lineman/linebacker just returned from an LDS mission in Las Vegas. He prepped at Dominquez HS in Compton, Calif. He played one year at Compton JC before his mission and will play there again this fall.

Basketball

In basketball, you have to have options. Dave Rose restocked and revamped his backcourt during the last three months.

That has not only provided options, but a very optimistic outlook for Rose and his BYU Cougars, who are in line for making a seventh consecutive NCAA post season appearance.

Optimism may be an understatement when it comes to BYU basketball. Euphoria is more like it when it comes to Cougar fan's reaction and recruitment for the next few years.

The pipeline is loaded with legitimate LDS prospects. Rose already has a big bird in hand with Nick Emery due to sign this November. His teammate Eric Mika will also sign. The next season Rose gets T.J. Haws. We still think T.J. Haws could be the best player to come out of the Lone Peak pipeline before it is all said and done.

Brandon Davies is rated as one of the top 20 returning seniors nationally on the NCAA basketball scene.

Tyler Haws is back. Kyle Collinsworth will be back the following season. If he could somehow learn to be a 40 percent shooter from the field, he could play in the NBA.

Things are definitely rosy for Rose and his program.

As mentioned earlier, June is for weddings and future bliss. BYU and Rose have been on bended knee for the last 5 years making proposals to Jabari Parker. So have 300 other NCAA Division I coaches.

At least 25 of those coaches have bigger dowries to offer than BYU and Rose when it comes to college basketball.

That said, BYU is still in the hunt for the ***Jabari Jackpot***. As it relates to Parker, as they say in politics, I now have a minority opinion. To see what I really think about BYU's chances of landing Parker, click here: [***Jabari Jackpot***](#)

BYU should have and could have won the WCC basketball title if they had a semi-decent backcourt. BYU will face WCC foes for a second go around this winter, with a serious upgrade at the guard line.

Speaking of June and weddings, Jimmer Fredette and his long-time girl friend Whitney Wonnacott were wed on June 1.

It is likely that Dave Rose gave the Fredettes a nice wedding gift. After all, it was Fredette and his play that earned Rose a nice raise from BYU.

Fredette's wife reciprocated the gift by tweeting to Jabari Parker the following: @JabariParker22, fyi. 30 K mormon girls in Provo 6 at Duke!

Got some feedback from the Arizona HS scene recently on recruits BYU has on their recruiting radar.

Payton Dastrup, the 6-9 LDS post player from Mountain View HS in Mesa has had a big summer so far on the AAU circuit. He is getting attention nationally now with ASU the latest school to offer a scholarship.

He showed extremely well this past weekend in Long Beach at the Pangos camp.

Jake Toolson, a 6-5 guard from Highland is also having a productive summer and drawing national

interest. He is LDS. BYU is in no hurry to pull the trigger on either of these LDS prospects, but they may have their hand forced because of the increased interest from other schools.

We almost forgot about Cooper Ainge, the son of Danny and brother of Austin. He will walk on at guard this fall for BYU.

The word we get is that he is small, but as good as Austin, only with an upside to get better. Austin, in our opinion, never got better after his sophomore season.

Other Sports and Food for Thought

If BYU men's coaches were types of food, we would classify Bronco Mendenhall as Chinese. He is like fried rice at Panda Express. No matter how good the rice is or no matter how many wins Mendenhall produces, you always find yourself wanting something more to eat or wanting something more from Mendenhall.

Dave Rose is like a good Chile Relleno. He is hot and on fire. He will remain salsa salient in the future because he has guys like Nick Emery and T.J. Haws in the pipeline. If somehow he lands Jabari Parker, it will be holy jalapeno.

When it comes to BYU baseball and its coach, it's like a bad LDS Ward potluck dinner. You don't know what you are going to get. You just hope it meets health code standards.

BYU is currently looking for a new baseball coach after not renewing Vance Law's contract. We concur that it was time for him to go after a very commercial and sometimes dismal 13 years at the Cougar helm.

Barring BYU somehow finding a miracle worker, they need more than a new coach. They either need a domed baseball facility or Al Gore to work overtime and kick in the after burners on global warming in Provo.

Warm weather would do wonders for BYU baseball.

All other BYU men's coaches are like low-fat, low-salt and low-taste diets. They are good and good for you, but are pretty bland. Don't believe it? Name me one player from the BYU men's golf, swimming or track teams. Miles Batty doesn't count for track.

Now name me the coach from either of those teams.

The exception would be BYU's men's volleyball team. Taylor Sander is a big time name. The coach, however, stills needs to find his own food and flavor.

For Chris McGown, in his first year as head coach, it was obvious that he was taking liberally from the table of two of volleyball's best collegiate coaches in his father Carl and former Hawaii head man Mike Wilton. Both were on the staff this year.

It will take another season or two to see if McGown breaks the bland mold and can return the Cougars to a national championship.

The good news is, that with the exception of baseball, all programs are undefeated in June. BYU baseball is also unmanned at the head coaching position at the present time.

June Suckers may become extinct in the Provo River and Utah Lake, but when it comes to June and BYU sports, this month looks like it could be a very impressive spawn for BYU sports fans who, like me, are always suckers for success, or at least the promise of it.