

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

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BYU GETS A WYOMING WASH AND WAX WITH 44-0 WIN

BYU has a big trip before them on their journey to a potential BCS bid.

Most of that trip will take the Cougars through the Mountain West Conference with some tough pit stops at TCU and Utah.

Before any trip, it is always good to top off the gas tank and check the oil and air pressure of the tires.

It doesn't hurt to buy a few snacks for munching along the way and then get a quick wash and wax.

Wyoming was the perfect 44-0 one-stop convenience store for the Cougars.

What BYU found was that they still have plenty of high-octane fuel in their tank for the upcoming trip.

They also found that the left front tire was a little low on air pressure. That may have accounted for the Cougar's slow start offensively in the first quarter against the Cowboys.

Once that minor correction was made, the only thing left was a nice Wyoming wash and wax.

Except for a few minor water spots, BYU came out of this game looking pretty and poised for the long trip ahead.

A Little Air

Until BYU added a little air to the offensive tires in the opening quarter, it was the BYU defense that was providing the munch and crunch for the upcoming trip.

Wyoming was an offensive bag of Cheetos full of mostly puff and fluff. The BYU defense ate them up. That tell-tale yellow-orange dust could be found on many BYU defender's hands.

Scott Johnson, the BYU defensive back, put BYU on the board with its only score of the first quarter with a 64-yard score off a recovered Wyoming errant backward lateral.

David Nixon hands weren't clean either. He left his mark on the game with a third quarter interception that he returned 19 yards for a score.

Max Hall and company finally got untracked in the second quarter when the Cougars scored three touchdowns and put the game away.

It started with a methodical 14-play, 86-yard drive that ended with a Harvey Unga 1-yard scoring plunge.

That was followed by a 2-play scoring blitz culminating in a 62-yard scoring strike from Max Hall to Austin Collie.

BYU finished its work in the first half with another 8-play, 59-yard drive. That ended with Hall's second and final TD toss of the game, a 7-yard scoring strike to Collie.

Early Exit

Hall, who once again made an early exit from the game in the third quarter, finished with 189 yards passing and two touchdowns. He was 16-27 on the day with no interceptions.

Austin Collie accounted for most of Hall's passing yardage and completions.

The junior receiver had 8 catches for 122 yards and two scores. He has put together two consecutive games that are as good as a BYU receiver has had in some time. Last week, you may remember, he hauled in 10 passes against UCLA for 110 yards and two touchdowns.

Harvey Unga continued his steady work on the ground. He had 95 yards on 19 carries. Unga also had 3 receptions from Hall for 37 yards.

BYE BYE FOR BYU

Officially, on the schedule, this coming week for BYU is listed as a bye.

Unofficially, with Utah State next up on the docket for a game set for Friday, October 3 in Logan, it looks like the Cougars will have a two-week bye.

That is good news for Michael Reed.

The steady senior receiver, did not play against Wyoming after undergoing arthroscopic surgery last week to repair a torn meniscus in his knee.

He will likely be back in time for the New Mexico game on October 11. The prognosis was for his return in 2-4 weeks.

The one-week layoff will also benefit other Cougars who have been nursing some bumps and bruises incurred in the first four games of the year.

BYU will practice four days this coming week, but all will be scaled back in intensity and physical play. Bronco Mendenhall will give his players the weekend off and then have them return for a regular week of practice the following Monday.

Utah State also will not play a game this week and will have two weeks to prepare for the Cougars.

The Aggies are currently 1-3 on the year after notching their first win of the season over Idaho, 42-17, in Logan last weekend.

The losses for USU were to UNLV, 27-17, in Las Vegas, Oregon, 66-24 in Eugene and Utah, 58-10 in Logan.

Television coverage of the game has been altered. According to BYUTV, their web site shows the game being televised live on that station.

Both the BYU and Utah State athletic web sites, show no firm plans for televising the game.

Earlier, the game was being advertised as being shown on KJZZ, a local channel in the Utah market. It could be that the game will be shown on both stations. That was the case last December when the BYU-Michigan State basketball game aired on both KJZZ and BYUTV.

The only thing firm is the start time. It is 6 pm Mountain Time.

For those with Dish Network, BYUTV is on channel 9403. It is channel 374 on Direct TV.

MADDEN, MENDENHALL AND JAMES

It sounds like a formidable law firm, but all three football coaches, John Madden, Bronco Mendenhall and Don James, have their own ideas for what makes successful teams.

The venerable NFL color commentator and former coach of the Oakland Raiders, Madden made an interesting point Sunday night and it implicated BYU.

In the pre game chit chat between Madden and Al Michaels about the match up between the Dallas Cowboys and Green Bay Packers, Michaels asked Madden what made the Cowboys such a potent offensive machine?

Madden replied that the Cowboys had all the ingredients necessary to be a great offense. They had a big and tough offensive line. They had a bruising and tough running back in Marion Barber III. They had a playmaker outside in wide receiver Terrell Owens. They had a big physical tight end who could catch in Jason Witten. And then he concluded by saying the Cowboys also had a quarterback in Tony Romo who could deliver the ball to those playmakers.

Where Are We Going?

Can you see where we are going with this?

Just as soon as Madden made his remarks, we immediately thought that his description of Dallas also applied to BYU.

If we need to make a case for BYU as a great offensive team, you haven't been watching much college football this season.

The Madden model for a great offensive team, certainly describes BYU this season.

The Cougars have a big, physical and tough offensive line. They have the big bruising back in Harvey Unga. They have the outside playmaker in Austin Collie. They have a big tight end who can catch in Dennis Pitta and in Max Hall, they have a quarterback who makes sure they get the ball delivered to them in the right spots to make plays.

The day before Madden made his comments, Bronco Mendenhall made some of his own concerning the state of BYU's football program.

He said BYU was now in the "flywheel" mode and had enough inertia and momentum going to sustain a successful program for some time to come.

We buy all of that and all that Mendenhall has established in returning BYU back to the national stage in football.

Don James

As much as we like Mendenhall's model, we still like Don James' mantra more.

James, you may remember, was the longtime successful coach of the Washington Huskies when they were playing in Rose Bowls and competing for national championships.

He used to say that you could tell how good a team was by how many NFL prospects they had on the roster.

James used to say that you needed at least 7-8 NFL caliber players a year to be good.

You can pick and choose which model you want to use. Take Madden, Mendenhall or James. They all point out the same thing. BYU is a very good offensive football team.

We prefer to use the Don James model.

If a team needs at least eight NFL prospects on the roster to be good, BYU has at least that many on offense alone.

Remember, James didn't say you needed eight first round picks, he simply said you needed eight or more NFL caliber players.

On BYU's offense, of the five current offensive line starters, at least 4, and maybe 5, will either be drafted or sign as free agents in the NFL. We mentioned last week that we think Matt Reynolds could be the next John Tait for BYU.

Fit Mold?

Max Hall doesn't fit the prototypical NFL quarterback mold of a 6-5, rocket-armed qb, but he will play in the league or at least hold a clipboard and cash checks from the NFL.

Harvey Unga is a big back that the NFL wants. His bonus is that he is big and can catch the ball out of the backfield. If you don't think he can play in the NFL, you haven't been watching much professional football.

Fui Vakapuna, at first glance, doesn't seem like an NFL running back. We agree. What he can do is be a blocking fullback. Fahu Tahia has been cashing checks in that role for Minnesota for several years.

Austin Collie will likely never be a big-time pro receiver, but he certainly has enough talent to make an NFL roster.

Dennis Pitta is a pass-catching phenom in college. If he can bulk up and block, he has a shot at the NFL.

First and foremost, the pros want a tight end that can block. That is why Dan Coats stuck in the NFL and Jonny Harline didn't.

We like Madden and Mendenhall's theories, but we like Don James perspective more.

The more NFL prospects you have, the better you will be. BYU has plenty on offense and that explains simply and succinctly why they are so good this year.

ENJOY IT WHILE IT LASTS

For the first time in MWC history, three teams from that conference are all listed in the AP and Coaches top twenty five rankings.

BYU is ranked No. 11 in both polls. Utah is No. 17 in both rankings and TCU is ranked No. 24 in the AP and No. 23 in the coaches' poll.

Enjoy it while you can because TCU is likely to slip out of the polls next week. The Horned Frogs will travel to Oklahoma to face the Sooners this Saturday. OU is an early 18-point favorite.

Utah will be at home and play Weber State and BYU, of course, has a bye.

The fact that there are three MWC teams ranked would seem to indicate that the league has made some serious strides in garnering national respect and recognition.

What is interesting is that this early in the season, six non BCS schools are currently ranked. In addition to the three from the MWC, Boise State and Fresno State from the WAC are in the top twenty five and Eastern Carolina from C-USA is still in the polls.

The MWC, with its three ranked teams, has more schools in the polls than leagues like the Big East (1, South Florida), ACC (2, Wake Forest and Clemson), and the PAC 10 (1, USC).

The SEC leads all conferences with 6 ranked teams, four of which are in the top ten. The Big 12 has 5 ranked teams and the Big Ten has 4 teams ranked.

FLUFF AND STUFF

Chris Washington, the defensive back from Northridge HS in Utah, has proven that the Mendenhall model for BYU football isn't for everyone. Washington committed to Utah and chose the Utes over BYU.

According to Washington in an interview with the Rivals Network, an internet site that covers recruiting, he said, "It was nothing that Utah did any better than BYU. They were both nice and I like both schools a lot, but when it comes down to it, Utah, I thought, was the place for me and I just don't think BYU had an appealing experience with it."

Washington continued by saying, "It's not that I'm not LDS that was a deal-breaker, because most of my friends, living in Utah, are LDS. I just didn't think I wanted to be in such a strict environment for the next four to five years of my life."

BYU still has at least three other scholarship offers on the table for Utah high school prospects. Here they are:

Latu Heimuli, DL, 6-4, 305, Highland HS
Richard Wilson, TE, 6-4, 225, Spanish Fork HS
Xavier Su'a Filo, OL, 6-5, 265, Timpview HS

Of the three, Wilson seems the most likely to accept the Cougars offer. He will likely chose between the Cougars and LSU.

Heimuli will be tripping to Nebraska, but BYU is still chasing him.

Su'a Filo seems set on going to a BCS school and is a long shot to sign with the Cougars.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Utah State

Friday, Oct 3 at Logan

Kickoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: KJZZ (tentative) and BYUTV

BYU vs. New Mexico

Saturday, Oct 11 at Provo

Kickoff: 4:00 PM Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. TCU

Thursday, Oct 16 at Fort Worth

Kickoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Versus