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Best Not Good Enough as BYU Falls to Irish 17-14

We saw the best BYU had to offer this season in South Bend last Saturday afternoon.

In my opinion, Riley Nelson actually played his best game ever as a BYU quarterback. The BYU defense played hard and up to their ability. And the BYU coaches actually had very good game plans on both offense and defense.

From my vantage point, it was the best of BYU this season. It's just wasn't good enough against Notre Dame and resulted in a 17-14 loss.

Had BYU put this effort and production up against Utah, Boise State and Oregon State, the Cougars would now be 7-1 instead of a mediocre 4-4 on the year.

Notre Dame is a good football team. They are not a great football team and not a top ten football team. Neither is Oregon State. I think year end records and results will prove me out on that assessment.

Again, this is my opinion based on watching tons of college football this season.

BYU's four losses are at the hands of Utah, currently 2-5 and Boise State, currently cruising again against cupcakes. And if the Irish are not great and neither is Oregon State, where does that put BYU on the national scale?

Wait to Answer

Before you answer that question, you should know that of the four wins on BYU's record this season, three came against Hawaii, Washington State and Weber State.

The combined win-loss record for those three teams as of late Saturday night is 4-17 on the year. BYU's lone win against a decent team was a 6-3 victory over Utah State. The Aggies are currently 6-2 on the year.

As good as Riley Nelson played Saturday, he wasn't good enough to get a win. As good as BYU thought they were at the beginning of the year and as many times as Bronco Mendenhall wants to play the National Championship card, BYU is very ordinary this season.

Pick any of the BCS leagues. Based on what has been shown on the field, the Cougars would be a middle of the pack or lower team in any of those six conferences.

That is a hard dose of reality to swallow, but bad breaks, bad injuries, bad coaching and bad calls can only be used for excuses for so long. Eventually reality and records end up being the true judge of where you stand nationally.

This is a stand down year for BYU football.

Bright Spots

Despite not being good enough against Notre Dame, there were some very bright spots for the Cougars.

Nelson cut way back on his turnovers. He had two interceptions. The first was on a deflection thrown behind the receiver and the last was a heave ho desperation lob with just seconds remaining on the game clock.

He was elusive and effective in keeping drives alive with his scrambles. He made some nice throws. He also missed some wide open throws.

The made throws include two touchdown passes. He hit Cody Hoffman from six yards out and Kaneakua Friel on a 2-yard scoring toss. Nelson was 23-of-36 for 177 yards.

Hoffman accounted for most of those completions by catching 8 balls for 86 yards and the one touchdown. Jamaal Williams was the only other offensive player making a contribution. He rushed for 64 yards on 14 carries and also had 7 catches for 42 yards.

Defensively, BYU was credible, unless you count the vulnerability to the vertical and over the top passing game of Notre Dame. The Cougars have touted their ability to stop the run all season. That wasn't the case against the Irish. Notre Dame gashed BYU on the ground with 270 yards.

Next up for the Cougars is Georgia Tech. The Yellow Jackets are coming off a 37-17 win at home over Boston College. That gives Georgia Tech an overall record of 3-4 with a 2-3 conference mark.

The Tech option offensive attack should give BYU's defense a chance to regroup after facing the vertical passing game challenges of Oregon State and Notre Dame.

Despite the 270 yards given up on the ground last week, stopping the run in any and all forms is what Bronco and his defense hang their hats on.

If Riley Nelson and BYU can produce another offensive game like they did against Notre Dame, the results should be more positive. That isn't what the Las Vegas odds makers think. They have the Cougars as an early 2-point underdog.

We call this one in favor of the Cougars. BYU 28 Georgia Tech 17.

Georgia Tech Cougar Coverage is Convoluted for TV

You may need more than your remote this Saturday to watch the BYU-Georgia Tech Football game. You will also need some resiliency. Here is the official TV coverage blurb from BYU. Good Luck.

Fox Sports, ROOT Sports and ESPN today announced broadcast plans for the BYU vs. Georgia Tech football game on Saturday, Oct. 27 at 3:00 p.m. ET. The game will be shown live on the ACC Regional Sports Network, which includes the following:

- ROOT Sports (Utah – Directv: 684; Dish Network: TBD; Comcast: 52/693)
- FOX Sports Arizona Plus (AZ, NM)
- FOX Sports San Diego
- FOX Sports Prime Ticket (Southern CA, Southern NV)
- FOX Sports South (GA, AL, MS, TN, KY, NC, SC)
- Comcast SportsNet Mid-Atlantic (DC, VA, MD, DE)
- FOX Sports Southwest Plus (TX, OK, AR, LA)
- Sun Sports (FL)

- FOX Sports Midwest Plus (MO, southern IL, IN, IA, NE, KS)
- FOX Sports North Plus (MN, SD, ND)
- NESN (New England states)

In addition, the game will be broadcast to other areas of the country on ESPN3 and ESPN GamePlan. A detailed map of the ESPN options will be available on Thursday, Oct. 25.

Information about ESPN3 and ESPN GamePlan can be obtained by clicking on the links below.

ESPN3: <http://es.pn/BYUvsGT>

ESPN GamePlan: <http://proxy.espn.go.com/ncf/gameplan/>

IS BYU FOOTBALL IN BUSINESS OR OUT OF BUSINESS?

If your definition of BYU being in the football business requires having a quarterback that can hit open receivers, then the Cougar football assembly line was closed 3 years ago.

In my opinion, BYU went out of the quarterback business when Max Hall was let go due to graduation.

Offensively, it always boils down to having a quarterback that can consistently hit an open guy. If that doesn't happen, BYU is out of business.

It might be time to take a good hard business look at BYU football. Here's our review and forecast for BYU business:

Quarterback...Riley Nelson brings a lot to the BYU table, but throwing the ball accurately isn't one of those things on that table.

He can scramble, he has guts, grit and all the other adjectives that Bronco Mendenhall cherishes. Throw in leadership and loyalty. All are good, but don't mean squat in the BYU offensive scheme unless you can throw the ball accurately and hit open receivers.

Based on three years of trying, Nelson being able to hit open receivers isn't something he can do. He just doesn't possess the throwing skills to make it happen. As they say in the NFL, he can't make all the throws.

Jake Heaps, in NFL jargon, had the arm to make all the throws. He was great in 7-on-7 drills, but in games, he like Nelson, couldn't consistently put the ball on the receiver. He

couldn't hit the open guy consistently enough and it cost him his job to another guy who also couldn't hit the open guy.

And apparently BYU coaches didn't think James Lark or Jason Munns could consistently hit open receivers either. If they did, those guys should have and would have seen the field sometime in the last three seasons.

Consequently, in my opinion, BYU has been out of the quarterback business for three years.

What are the chances of BYU getting back in the quarterback business?

Who knows? What we do know is that Heaps, Nelson, Lark and all the other lemons who couldn't hit an open guy will be gone by December.

That leaves Taysom Hill, Ammon Olsen and incoming recruit Billy Green to prove they can put the ball on the receiver next season. Munns has another year of eligibility, but if coaches didn't see fit to let him see the field the last three years, nothing will change next season.

Down the road, there are guys who proved in high school that they can hit the open guy. That would be Tanner Mangum, who leaves on an LDS mission in December and Alex Kuresa, who also will be leaving on an LDS mission after the first of the year.

The sooner Cougar offensive coaches can find and identify a quarterback from among this group that can consistently hit an open or even semi-open receiver, the sooner BYU will be back in the quarterback business.

My money for the early favorite is still on Taysom Hill. That is assuming that he returns in the spring healthy. He has the arm to be able to make all the throws. He just now needs to do it and be permitted to try to do it by coaches.

Much has been written, even by me, as to Hill being susceptible to injury because of having to run the ball in the current offense.

That is probably true. But if he can prove that he can put the ball on receivers this spring, he won't have to continue to run the quarterback draw. The only running he will be doing is when he scrambles after pass protection breaks down

In my opinion, after a little seasoning, Hill could be like Nebraska's Taylor Martinez. The Husker junior quarterback is a gifted runner and that is what he did early in his career in Lincoln.

But it is his passing now that has made him one of the top quarterbacks in the country. For example, in NU 29-28 comeback win over Northwestern last Saturday in Evanston, it was Martinez and his 342 yards and 3 touchdown passes that won the game. He still has

his legs and running game, but Nebraska is in the quarterback business because of Martinez's arm, not his legs.

I think Hill is the guy. But if he isn't and can't consistently be a qb that can hit the open receiver, then hopefully BYU coaches won't again become enamored with his running ability and tailor an offense around Hill's athletic ability.

If he can't throw it, then go down the line to Ammon Olsen or freshman Billy Green until you find a quarterback that can.

That is the only way BYU will get back in the quarterback business.

Tailback...BYU was out of the tailback business for the last two years after Harvey Unga was gone. They are now back in business with Jamaal Williams.

Wide Receivers...BYU is never out of the wide receiver business. They have had possession type guys forever and with Cody Hoffman, have another game changer. Regardless of the talent level, all this group needs to stay in business is a quarterback that gets the ball in the vicinity or right area code.

Tight End...Dennis Pitta locked the door behind him when he left for the NFL. A boatload of guys has tried knocking on the tight end door for BYU in the last two years, but none have found the right key yet.

Offensive Line...BYU has tried a leaner cut of meat here this season, but like different grades of meat, BYU is a long way from being classified as prime. At times they are good, but most of the time they are just commercial. BYU certainly can't win with cutter and canner types here, but with a prime quarterback, they can survive and even thrive with out the prime NFL type cuts on the offensive line.

Defensive Line...There is a clearance sale taking place. BYU will have to replace and restock almost the entire defensive line for next season. Based on this year's inventory, however, this has been a good solid and fundamental subsidiary of the Cougar conglomerate.

Linebacker...This would be a fortune 500 company for BYU. They are good this year and will be good next year, even with the loss of Ogletree, Kavienga and possibly Van Noy.

Defensive Backs...Still in business, but like all mom and pop operations, will always have trouble getting the inventory they need to compete with the big box stores.

Special Teams...File for bankruptcy and start over. Punting is okay, but the kicking game is the perpetual loss leader. Management is suspect. Who is the guy that decided Joe Sampson would be a good kick returner?

Coaching....It's just like Chick-fil-A...Very polarizing. You either like them or hate them. Management of assets has been questionable and stock holders are getting restless.

Firesides...Still great, just like the pro bono work of major law firms. To finance the pro bono work, however, somebody has to pay the bill. For firesides to be meaningful, you have to have a winning and ranked program to provide the platform needed for the message. Otherwise you are just preaching to the choir. The choir seats will be all that is needed to hold the fireside if BYU is putting together 5-6 or 6-6 seasons.

Over Analyzing Dates?

In case you missed it. Here is a recap of the current recruiting situation for LDS prep basketball star Jabari Parker.

He has narrowed his choice of college down to five schools. You can now include a sixth choice if you consider the new changes made in LDS mission service.

All five of the schools will receive official campus recruiting visits according to Parker's father.

Last weekend, Parker and his parents visited Michigan State. They will visit Duke (Oct. 26-28), Florida (Nov. 2-4), Stanford (Nov. 9-11) and Brigham Young (Nov 16-20) according to ESPN Chicago.

Maybe there is nothing to read into it, but we do find it interesting that Parker's last visit will be at BYU and coincides with the early signing period for basketball which runs from Nov. 14-21. How convenient for the Cougars.

Who knows what will happen. There is talk now that Parker will not sign at all during the signing period, but make a commitment in December and then sign during the spring signing period which runs from April 17- May 15.

This is just a personal observation from a guy who has followed this whole deal for the last four years. I think that the lowering of the age of serving an LDS mission to 18 is a major plus for BYU's chances.

If Parker decides to serve, it makes BYU a serious player in the process, in my opinion.

Television Timetable

BYU vs. Southeastern Oklahoma State (*B-Ball*)

Friday, Oct 26 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Georgia Tech (*F-Ball*)

Saturday, Oct 27 at Atlanta

Kickoff: 1:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: See Details Above

BYU vs. Findlay (*B-Ball*)

BYE (Football)

Saturday, Nov 3

BYU vs. Tennessee State (*B-Ball*)

Friday, Nov 9 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Idaho (*F-Ball*)

Saturday, Nov 10 at Provo

Kickoff: TBA

TV: Most likely BYUtv

BYU vs. Georgia State (*B-Ball*)

Tuesday, Nov 13 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Florida State (*B-Ball*)

Friday, Nov 16 at Brooklyn

Tipoff: TBA

TV: truTV

BYU vs. San Jose State (*F-Ball*)

Saturday, Nov 17 at San Jose

Kickoff: 2:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPNU and ESPN3

BYU vs. Notre Dame or Saint Joseph's (*B-Ball*)

Saturday, Nov 17 at Brooklyn

Tipoff: TBA

TV: truTV

BYU vs. UT-San Antonio (*B-Ball*)

Wednesday, Nov 21 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. New Mexico State (*F-Ball*)

Saturday, Nov. 24 at Las Cruces

Kickoff: 1:30 pm Mountain Time

TV:ESPNU and ESPN3

BYU vs. Cal State Northridge (*B-Ball*)

Saturday, Nov 24 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Montana (*B-Ball*)

Wednesday, Nov 28 at Salt Lake City
Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time
TV: BYUtv