

HB Arnett's ***COUGAR SPORTSLINE***

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BYU AND GUARD LINE EXPOSED BY LMU

Coaches are clones. Once one finds a way to beat a team, other coaches pile on.

It will begin to happen to BYU now. Loyola Marymount found the way to beat the Cougars in Provo last week. The final was 82-68 LMU.

The LMU formula was to take away, or at least make it difficult for BYU inside players to score and put the game on the shoulders of the Cougar guards.

They weren't up to the task against Loyola. BYU's front line is good enough to still carry this team against the lower echelon teams they will face the rest of the season.

That was evident two days later when BYU was just too powerful with their inside game against Pepperdine in Malibu. The Cougars defeated the Waves 77-64. They did it with their front line with Brandon Davies scoring 29 points, Noah Hartsock adding 20 and Charles Abouo chipping in 15.

Even in the loss to LMU in Provo earlier in the week, it could have been worse if not for Noah Hartsock carrying the Cougars on his back by scoring 28 points against the Lions.

But against the top tier teams remaining on the BYU schedule, you can look for coaches of Saint Mary's, Gonzaga and LMU again in the WCC post season tournament to put the pressure squarely on the BYU guard line to deliver a win

Based on the most recent performances against LMU and even Pepperdine, it doesn't appear that they will be up to the task.

Four Baskets

Against Loyola Marymount, BYU's top three guards, Brock Zylstra, Matt Carlino and Craig Cusick logged a total of 83 minutes on the floor between them. They managed just four baskets.

Against Pepperdine, they saw 79 shared minutes on the floor and only produced one field goal in all that time.

In NCAA tournament play, pundits like to say you will go only as far as your guards can carry you.

Based on last weekend, we don't have to wait for March. What we saw against LMU and Pepperdine from the guard play of the Cougars last week, BYU won't be in NCAA post season action and at this rate they won't be in contention for a WCC regular season or post season tournament crown.

There have been some nice offensive performances by the BYU guard line this season, but they all have been when Cougar guards were hitting wide open three point shots while defenses were sagging on BYU bigs.

They still had those wide open shots last week, but against LMU and Pepperdine Cougar guards came up short. In the two most recent games, Matt Carlino was 1-7 from beyond the arc against LMU. Brock Zylstra was 1-5 from the three-point line. Anson Winder and Craig Cusick were a combined 0-6 from long distance.

Atrocious

Even in the win on the road at Pepperdine, the outside shooting from BYU guards was atrocious. Carlino went scoreless against the Waves going 0-4 from the field.

Zylstra was zilch. He was just 1-6 from the floor. Backups Craig Cusick didn't even attempt any shots and Anson Winder took just one and missed it.

In the last two games, BYU guards shot just 20% from the field against LMU and just 9% against Pepperdine. In three-point shooting, they were 11% against LMU and 0% against Pepperdine.

Hopefully, last week was just an atrocious anomaly because you can bet opposing coaches now smell blood and are going to make BYU guards prove that they can do more than get the ball to Noah Hartsock and Brandon Davies.

With the split last week against LMU and Pepperdine, BYU is now in third place in the WCC standings with a 6-2 record. They are 17-5 overall.

On the Road

Dave Rose and his crew will travel to Blacksburg, VA to take on Virginia Tech on Wednesday, January 25. The Hokies started out their early season with an 11-3 record, but have hit hard times recently. They are currently only 12-7 and just 1-4 in ACC league play.

BYU will fly back and have a short turnaround for the all important return engagement with St. Mary's in Provo on Saturday, January 28.

The Gaels are currently in sole possession of first place in the WCC standings with a perfect 8-0 record. Overall they are 19-2.

Before facing the Cougars in Provo, the Gaels will have a big game on the road at Loyola Marymount on Thursday

For the Cougars, this is a must win if BYU entertains any serious thoughts of getting a piece of the

WCC regular season championship..

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

If we are honest, we all knew there would be a serious step down in guard play this season from the tandem of Jimmer Fredette and Jackson Emery.

What we didn't expect is to see the total mediocrity of the current guard line we saw last week.

And it could have been much, much worse. What if Matt Carlino hadn't fortuitously fell into Dave Rose's lap last year when he became disgruntled with UCLA and left the Bruins' program looking for somewhere else to play?

Carlino stunk it up last week along with every other BYU guard, but at least he has potential to be a good guard in the future.

What would it be without Carlino? It would be two walk-on guards starting for the Cougars. Brock Zylstra is a walk-on who earned a scholarship last year. Craig Cusick is a walk-on who will earn a scholarship next year.

Rose tried to re-stock the guard cupboard a year ago. He spent a lot of effort on recruiting two guards to help ease the transition from Fredette and Emery.

He pursued Damarcus Harrison and Brett Kingma very hard. Harrison signed, but has not delivered anything of consequence as yet this season. Kingma, a 6-2 guard from Washington, turned down the Cougars and signed with Oregon.

If you still wonder what Dave Rose sees in his current three-guard rotation of Zylstra, Carlino and Cusick, it is simple. All three are better than what remains on the bench in Anson Winder, Damarcus Harrison and Nick Martineau.

As mentioned, Zylstra and Cusick play because they are better than what is on the bench. It also doesn't hurt that both are tough and gritty and fit the history of Rose playing guys that remind him of himself when he was at Houston as a player.

Rose wasn't talented, but he was tough minded and played hard in his limited minutes for Guy Lewis. Rose was also a team captain for Houston and the ultra talented Phi Slamma Jamma team loaded with NBA talent.

Zylstra and Cusick fit that mold. So did Brock Reichner, Rose's son-in-law who also was a walk-on that ended up starting as a guard a few years back.

The question is how will BYU's guard line improve for the future?

Nothing will change next season. Barring an unexpected recruitment of a juco guard, the personnel will remain the same.

The only hope for better guard play next season will be improvement from Carlino and Harrison as sophomores.

BYU did sign two outstanding prep prospect guards in November. They won't be available for a couple of years, however. Both Cory Calvert, a 6-3 guard from Chaparral HS in Parker, CO and Jordan Chatman, a 6-4 guard from Union HS in Camas, WA, will serve LDS missions before enrolling at BYU.

Nick Emery, who can score, is still a season and a half away from putting on the BYU uniform. He currently is a junior at Lone Peak HS.

What it all means is that the next upgrade to the BYU guard line will be Kyle Collinsworth, when he returns from his LDS mission to Russia. He will be back in time for the 2013 season.

Tyler Haws returns next season from his LDS mission, but he will take over for Charles Abouo and likely only see limited action at the guard line.

Last week we talked about potential BYU players for the future. Several subscribers emailed us reminding that we left two guys off the future list: Eric Mika and Isaac Neilson.

We just spaced out and forgot about Mika, the 6-8 front court player, who has committed to BYU and will be playing his senior season next year at Lone Peak HS.

We didn't forget about Neilson. He is still at least two seasons away from playing. He worked out with BYU this past summer after graduating from Mission Viejo HS last year.

He was always ticketed to serve an LDS mission first and then enroll at Provo.

He received his mission call to Alabama in December, but won't enter the MTC until April.

We also received feedback from a subscriber last week about future players and recruiting of future players for BYU basketball.

He sent along a very nice spreadsheet that he put together that helps him track BYU basketball players.

We were impressed enough to pass it along as an attachment to this week's newsletter.

50 DEGREES DIFFERENCE IN TEMPERATURE ONE REASON THE WCC IS BETTER THAN THE MWC IN BASKETBALL

We are well aware of the fact that many think BYU took a backward step when it left the Mountain West Conference for the West Coast Conference in basketball.

That debate still goes on, but we guarantee that non-athletic BYU administrators are more than satisfied with the move.

The top two BYU administrators and their wives were all in attendance at the Pepperdine game in Malibu. President Cecil Samuelson and Keven Worthen were seated on the bleachers at Firestone Fieldhouse last Saturday in Malibu.

We can guarantee that they didn't just spend two hours in Malibu to watch the game.

We can't remember a sighting of a non-athletic BYU administrator watching a BYU basketball game in Laramie or Fort Collins in the last 30 years.

We can almost guarantee that those same administrators will now find much more business to conduct at WCC venues than they ever did at MWC venues. Plus, it is a great way for them to rack up bonus points for road trip date nights with their spouses.

RECRUITING RECKONING JUST NINE DAYS AWAY

Football recruiting letter of intent day is just 9 days away and set for Wednesday, February 1.

Basically BYU is set. They are still working on a few prospects, but all the heavy lifting is done.

As usual, there are always a few different and unusual stories surrounding the recruiting game and this year is no different.

This is the first time since we have been covering recruiting that the outcome of whether BYU will sign a particular recruit is contingent on his getting married or remaining single.

If he does marry, BYU is in the hunt. If he doesn't, the Cougars have no chance of landing him.

If he ends up married and at BYU, we won't say any more. If he lands elsewhere, we will give details.

Apparently BYU is still in a neck and neck battle for Hiva Lutui, a highly touted offensive lineman out of Texas. Reportedly, it is down to BYU and USC.

Count on USC. BYU's recruiting record against USC when the Trojans really want a prospect is 0-25.

We don't expect that to change anytime soon.

Once again, here is the latest list of commitments for Bronco Mendenhall and his program.

Marques Johnson, DL, 6-2, 305, El Camino JC, CA
Sawyer Powell, LB, 6-1, 205, Richland HS, WA
Troy Hinds, DL, 6-5, 230, Davis HS, UT
Jamaal Williams, RB, 6-2, 190, Summit HS, CA
Jherremya Leuta-Douyere, LB/FB, 6-0, 220, Servite HS, CA
Butch Pau'u, LB, 6-0, 215, Servite HS, CA
Micah Hannemann, DB, 6-1, 185, Lone Peak HS, UT
Steven Richards, TE, 6-2, 240, Alta HS, UT
Austin Hoyt, DL, 6-7, 240, Argonaut HS, CA
Phillip Amone, LB, 6-0, 220, Dr. Phillips HS, FL
Dylan Collie, WR, 5-10, 200, Oak Ridge HS, CA
Taysom Hill, QB, 6-2, 225, Highland HS, ID
Tanner Mangum, QB, 6-2, 185, Eagle HS, ID
Josh Weeks, WR, 6-4, 200, Show Low HS, AZ
Rhett Sandlin, DB, 6-3, 220, Alta HS, UT
Matt Hadley, DB, 5-11, 190, Connell HS, WA

Ammon Olsen, QB, 6-4, 210, SUU/Alta HS, UT
Roman Andrus, DL, 6-5, 235, Oak Ridge HS, WA

BYU SWEEPS USC IN VOLLEYBALL

The BYU Men's volleyball team swept two matches from USC last weekend in Provo.

The Cougars are now the No.1 ranked team in the country.

We don't often cover BYU volleyball, but it looks like we will be paying much more attention to the sport this year.

It is hard to ignore a team when they have their own Jimmer Fredette.

Taylor Sander is the equivalent, if not even better, than Fredette, in collegiate volleyball.

You don't need to understand the nuances of volleyball to appreciate the talent and dynamic play of the sophomore Sander.

It's good that there is no NBA equivalent in volleyball because if there was Sander would not be playing this season.

He is a one-and-done type of player.

With sold out crowds in the Smith Fieldhouse, the only way most of you will see Sander is on BYUtv. Check him and his team out the next time you get a chance.

BYU TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Virginia Tech

Wednesday, Jan 25 at VT

Tipoff: 5:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPN3

BYU vs. Saint Mary's

Saturday, Jan 28 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: ESPNU

BYU vs. Gonzaga

Thursday, Feb 2 at Provo

Tipoff: 9:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: ESPN2

BYU vs. Stanford (Men's Volleyball)

Friday, Feb 3 at Provo

Starts: 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Portland

Saturday, February 4 at Portland

Tipoff: 8:00 p.m. Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

