

HB Arnett's
COUGAR SPORTSLINE

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Just a reminder that we are now sending the newsletter via two separate email accounts to help solve distribution issues that many subscribers experienced last year. That means you may receive two identical letters. If that is the case, please just discard the extra.

COUGARS GET KEY ROAD SPLIT TO STAY IN MWC CONTENTION

It's still about holding serve at home and getting wins on the road if a team hopes to contend for the Mountain West Conference Basketball title.

BYU held to that formula with a road split last week against UNLV and Utah. BYU lost to the Rebels in Las Vegas 70-41 and eked out a 55-52 win over Utah in Salt Lake City.

That puts BYU at 2-1 in conference action and 13-5 overall.

Neither game was pretty, but the results keep the Cougars in the hunt for another league crown.

As a matter of fact, the UNLV debacle was so ugly that BYU coach Dave Rose gathered his team together the following day at practice and made a point of throwing the DVD of the game several rows up in the seats of the Marriott Center. He hoped to illustrate that the UNLV game was an anomaly and it was time to put it behind the team and move forward.

There was a reason that Rose was the one throwing the DVD into the stands. He reportedly at least drew iron with his toss.

Chick Peas

Meanwhile, in the last three Cougar road games, Trent Plaisted and Jonathan Tavernari have been proving Chick Hearn, the late LA Lakers announcer, right. Some players really do get into such dismal shooting slumps that they "can't throw a pea into the ocean." If they can't do that, how can you trust them to toss a DVD into the Marriott Center seats?

Just how bad have Plaisted and Tavernari been shooting in the last three road games?

Against Wake Forest, Plaisted was just 3-10 from the field and Tavernari was just 2-11.

Against UNLV, Plaisted was 2-3 from the floor, but a dismal 1-10 from the charity stripe. Tavernari

was 1-9 against the Rebels.

It didn't get better last Saturday against the Utes.

Tavernari was 0-6 and Plaisted was just 2-11.

There is hope however.

According to global warming prognostications the oceans are projected to get bigger. As BYU basketball fans, that means that with a little patience, a few more Plaisted peas and Tavernari tosses should have a better chance of finding water, especially in the Marriott Center.

The other encouraging news is that BYU was able to beat Utah without any offensive contribution from Tavernari and Plaisted, who have led the Cougars in scoring for most of the season.

Shooting Slump

If these two ever do emerge from their shooting slumps, the Cougars could return to playing like they did in the early going of the year.

Meanwhile, it was Lee Cummond who provided the win against the Utes. He tossed in 19 points, pulled down 9 rebounds and made two crucial free throws with 3 seconds remaining in the game to give the Cougars the win.

No Need To Wait for March

While the BYU win on the road against Utah was big, the game with San Diego State this Wednesday in Provo is bigger.

The Aztecs are currently leading the league with a 4-0 record.

In reality, however, SDSU and BYU are tied for the league lead.

We base that on road wins, despite the fact that not all conference road wins are equal. Road wins against Wyoming, Air Force and Colorado State are like winning at home this year. You have to have those just like you have to protect your turf at home.

The real contenders are going to win at home and at Fort Collins, Laramie and Colorado Springs.

The title will be won with road wins against five teams: BYU, Utah, SDSU, UNLV and New Mexico.

San Diego State notched a quality win over New Mexico in Albuquerque and BYU has its win over Utah in Salt Lake City.

TCU has a road win over CSU, New Mexico has a road win over Wyoming. UNLV has a road win over CSU, but a road loss to Air Force.

If BYU is going to be able to hold off the Aztecs in Provo, they will need some additional scoring from Tavernari and Plaisted.

Free Throws

More importantly, they will need some much better free-throw shooting from the Cougars' post players. You can go to the bank on the Aztecs putting a body on Plaisted and his backup Chris Miles.

Nobody is expecting Plaisted and Miles to be as consistent as Lee Cummond from the line, but shooting 40% from the line would be a marked improvement and give the Cougars a decent chance for a win against the Aztecs.

FACING THE MUSIC AND BASKET

We have heard Dave Rose say on many occasions that in recruiting, the hardest thing to find is a low-post player that can consistently score.

If you go back and take a look at BYU's post players, the most consistent scorers in the low blocks

have not been big.

Last season, Keena Young was just 6-6. A few years back, Mekeli Wesley was just 6-7. Both could score with their backs to the basket, but both could also face the hoop and force post defenders to step out and respect their offensive game.

It didn't hurt either that both were very good free throw shooters.

BYU has had some bigs whose offensive games were predicated on power and pushing their bodies to the rim.

Rafael Araujo and Trent Plaisted fit that bill.

While both have had some big scoring nights, they are not consistent low-post scorers.

That is why finding one is so hard.

It also holds true at the next level in the NBA. There are plenty of big guys who use raw power, but the better post players still can play with their backs to the basket and also still face the basket and shoot a jump shoot.

Future

The future in the post for BYU looks like it is set for the next couple of years with Plaisted and Chris Miles. We actually think Miles has a chance to be a consistent scorer in the post because he actually has a jump shot that he can shoot. He hasn't used it much and seldom turns to face the basket, but a jump shot is something he does have.

While low-block scoring seems to be better with smaller post players for the Cougars, you still need size to match up defensively with opponents' posts.

Speaking of smaller low-post scorers, Utah State has one in freshman Tai Wesley. He is the 6-6 brother of former Cougar Mekeli Wesley. He was a terrific low-post scorer in high school and on the AAU circuit when we saw him play.

His lack of size kept the Cougars from going after him aggressively and he signed with the Aggies.

We have had plenty of subscribers in the past ask us why BYU didn't offer Jaycee Carroll, the senior guard from USU? He just became the all-time scoring leader for the Aggies this past week.

It was a big mistake.

Steve Cleveland sent one of his assistants to Evanston to take a look at Carroll and he brought back his evaluation of Carroll which was that he didn't think he could play at the next level.

Back to low-post scorers. We think that Chris Collinsworth will wind up as a consistent scorer for Dave Rose.

He can bang, rebound and defend, but he can also put the ball on the floor and has an pretty decent jump shot with range to 18 feet. When he gets back from his LDS mission, look for him to post up more in the low blocks to take advantage of those tools.

BYU will also be getting a very consistent front court scorer on the roster next season in Noah Hartsock. He can play with his back to the basket and then presents major problems for defenders because he can step out and consistently hit his outside jumper.

Collinsworth will be leaving on his LDS mission in April and Hartsock will be returning from his mission in time for next season.

Two years from now, both Collinsworth and Hartsock should form a significant front-court scoring combo for Dave Rose and the Cougars.

PROVINCIAL PLAYERS?

It was a few years back and the subject was BYU recruiting an inordinate amount of football players from Utah county high schools.

More specifically, it was about the number of wide receivers who were on the roster from Orem HS

and American Fork HS.

Many, including us, were accusing BYU of being too provincial in its recruiting efforts.

Times and sports have changed and instead of pounding away at provincialism when it comes to recruiting, we are promoting it.

Dave Rose doesn't even need to leave Utah County or travel farther than 15 miles during the next two years, to find some big-time quality prospects for BYU basketball.

The premier player in the county, state and region is still Tyler Haws, the 6-5 junior wing from Lone Peak HS.

Not far behind is 6-6 C.J. Wilcox, a junior wing from Pleasant Grove HS. They faced each other last week in a region game played at Pleasant Grove.

Lone Peak won. Haws scored 29 and Wilcox had 30.

That has sparked some debate in chat rooms and in newspapers about who is the better player?

Some insist that is Haws is benefiting from a team that is loaded with Div. I talent while Wilcox has to carry the load by himself at PG.

Both are outstanding players and played together last summer in a tournament in Las Vegas.

Disadvantage

If you are going to make your judgment based on scoring, in our opinion, Haws is at a disadvantage because he has to share the ball with so many other players.

As a matter of fact, we believe Haws' scoring is hindered because of the number of other shots that are taken by teammates, who are talented, but not anywhere near as dominating as Haws.

The irony of all the recruiting attention is that teams and their fans that have constantly demeaned Utah County for living in a "bubble", now are anxiously trying to find an entrance into that "bubble".

While BYU has offered both Haws and Wilcox scholarships, we would be surprised if they end up playing together in college.

While both have fathers who are former BYU basketball players, Dave Rose and his staff will have their work cut out for them in the next few months.

Haws is just getting better and getting more national attention. He reportedly will make a decision on college before the start of his senior year in September.

Provo HS still sports two top-notch Division I prospects in junior Brandon Davies and sophomore Kyle Collinsworth.

Both have already been offered by BYU.

More Football Recruiting

You can cross a name off BYU's commitment list.

Mangum Mauga, the 6-0 290 pound defensive lineman from Grossmont JC in San Diego, will not be on the BYU roster this fall.

Mauga was recruited by BYU a year ago, but had academic deficiencies to address. He was re-recruited and signed a JC mid year letter of intent in December, but did not enroll at BYU in January.

Mauga is now saying that BYU told him after signing the letter that they wouldn't have room for him on the roster until the fall.

He is now saying that he will re-open his recruiting and is looking for another school to sign with during the February signing period. According to Mauga, Oregon, Oregon State and UNLV are now back in the picture.

Uona Kavienga, the 6-0, 225 pound linebacker from Leuzinger HS in Torrance, committed to BYU a week ago while visiting Provo on an unofficial visit.

Despite that commitment, he also visited USC this past week and was wined and wooed by the

Trojans.

According to some reports, another recruit for USC was also on campus for his official football visit. That would be Jordan Cameron, the 6-5, tight end from Newbury Park HS.

Cameron was a freshman at BYU on a basketball scholarship before leaving BYU and resurfacing at Ventura College to play football.

The same reports say that Cameron had a chance to talk to Kavienga, and his report on playing in Provo for a prospect from Southern California weren't exactly glowing.

We still expect Kavienga to sign with BYU.

Hamani Stevens, the 6-2, 290 pound offensive lineman is still pondering his signing decision between ASU, BYU and Oregon.

Here is the updated commitment list for BYU Football. Letter of Intent can be signed in early February.

Michael Alisa, LB, 6-2, 225, Timpview HS, UT
Kevan Bills, LB, 6-3, 235, Timpview HS, UT
Atem Bol, WR, 6-2, 205, Bell HS, TX
Jerry Bruner, LB, 6-3, 225, Evergreen HS, WA
O'Neill Chambers, WR, 6-3, 205, Harmony HS, FL
Coleby Clawson, LB, 6-3, 225, Snow College, UT (already signed)
Cameron Comer, DB, 6-1, 180, Springville HS, UT
Spencer Hadley, DB, 6-2, 210, Connell HS, WA
Tevita Hola, DL, 6-1, 310, Snow College, UT (already signed)
Austin Holt, TE, 6-5, 235, Bingham HS, UT
Uona Kavienga, LB, 6-0, 225, Leuzinger HS, CA
Solomone Kafu, OL, 6-4, 315, Rio Linda HS, CA
Tolu Moala, LB, 6-1, 230, El Camino CC, CA
Jake Murphy, WR, 6-5, 215, American Fork HS, UT
Garrett Nicholson, DB, 5-10, 180, West HS, UT
Seta Pohahau, RB, 6-0, 200, Aragon HS, CA
Iona Pritchard, LB, 6-1, 225, Bingham HS, UT
Brock Stringham, OL, 6-6, 280, Mountain Vista HS, CO
Jessie Taufi, OL, 6-5, 320, Long Beach CC, CA
Shiloah Te'o, DB, 5-11, 190, Kahuku HS, HI
Masi Tuitama, LB, 6-2, 205, Pacifica HS, CA
Daniel Sorensen, DB, 6-1, 200, Colton HS, CA
Justin Sorensen, K, 6-2, 215, Bingham HS, UT
Michael Yeck, OL, 6-8, 265, Keller HS, TX

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. San Diego State

Wednesday, Jan. 23 at Provo

Tipoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs New Mexico

Saturday, Jan. 26 at Provo

Tipoff: 4:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Air Force

Wednesday, Jan. 30 at Colorado Springs

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: none

BYU vs. Wyoming

Saturday, Feb. 2 at Laramie

Tipoff: 2:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn