

HB Arnett's



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BYU 85 LMU 74

Cougars Grammar and Hammer Lions in Quarterfinals

I no never said what I has written over the last 30 plus years in this newsletter is good grammar, but me knows it when I sees it.

Good grammar, with all its components, is what I saw last Saturday in Las Vegas as BYU put down the hammer and grammar on LMU 85-75 in a quarterfinal win in the WCC post season tournament.

If you are keeping score, good grammar consists of verbs, nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, modifiers and other terms, which are mostly foreign to a guy like me, a prodigal product of a California State Public School education.

I can't diagram a sentence, but I can diagram BYU's recent winning streak, including the victory over LMU.

Tyler Haws is the **noun** around which the Cougars have constructed this winning streak. He is still the focus of this offense and opposing defenses. He was good for 21 points against the Lions.

Anson Winder is the **modifier** of this winning streak. Dave Rose decision to include Winder as an **interjection** into the starting lineup a couple of weeks ago is when BYU began its late season run of good basketball. Winder had 16 points and 6 steals against LMU. The modification of Winder into the starting lineup has paid definite dividends for the Cougars.

Dangling From Distance

Kyle Collinsworth seems like the perfective **adjective**. His play describes BYU's recent winning surge. His outing against LMU was not only descriptive, but devastating to any LMU upset hopes that the Lions held. Collinsworth led all scorers with 23 points and also led both teams with 16 rebounds.

Collinsworth also serves as BYU's **dangling participle**. He is a nightmare for opposing coaches who don't know what to do with him defensively. He can be a go-to guy as a scorer, penetrator, rebounder, and defender. He also is a dangling shooter, where his skills from outside and the foul line sometimes seem to dangle and hang by a thread. He is deadly at the rim, but from 8 feet out, his offensive game leaves a lot of punctuation and points on the table.

Despite leading BYU with 23 points, Collinsworth was just 3-8 from the charity stripe and 0-1 beyond the arc. If he can learn to pick up those dangling participles of his game, he, as LMU coach Max Good said post game, has NBA written all over him.

Matt Carlino provides the **conjunctions** for the Cougars during this current winning streak. Grammatically speaking, a conjunction is a joiner, a word that connects (conjoins) parts of a sentence. That's what Carlino does. He makes it all work. If BYU is struggling, he comes in and gives the team either an offensive or defensive lift.

When his game is on, especially offensively, Carlino can go from conjunctive to being a noun, adjective and definite game modifier in just a few quick minutes.

Prepositions describe the relationships between other words in a sentence. BYU's post play does the same with the rest of the team and its current success. BYU is certainly not dominant inside, but with the play of Eric Mika, Nate Austin and now Luke Worthington, they have to be reckoned with by opposing teams.

Without a post presence offensively and defensively, BYU would be struggling. Basketball is still a game played by big guys and BYU's big guys are playing well enough to be consistent contributors to the current string of wins.

A **predicate** can be a completer of a sentence. So here's my **predicate** and prediction for BYU in the coming week. The Cougars will win the WCC post season tournament and get an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament come selection Sunday on March 16.

Grammar that Gonzaga and San Francisco. You can check below for game and television times for San Francisco and potentially Gonzaga versus BYU.

WOMEN'S WINDOW NOT AS LARGE AS MEN'S

BYU's women's window to the NCAA tournament is not as big as the Cougar men's window.

The men still have a chance to get to the tourney if they can win one more game. For the women, they will need to win the WCC post season tournament to make the final field.

That won't be an easy task for this group. They are playing good basketball, but they now face Pacific and Gonzaga, both of whom they must defeat to keep playing meaningful games.

I like BYU's chances against the Tigers of UOP, but Gonzaga is tougher than BYU and will have a game plan to take away BYU's best options in Jennifer Hamson and Lexi Eaton.

That's just who Gonzaga is and how they play and are coached. There is always a chance for an upset, but not a big chance.

The Lady Cougars have had a nice season. With the win over Pepperdine last Friday, they are currently 25-5 on the year. Pacific is now 18-11 and Gonzaga is 26-4.

Spring Football Strengths

Critiquing spring football practice at BYU is like critiquing a movie before scenes are shot and editing done for the final product.

Bronco Mendenhall has some seasoned stars signed for leading roles, but nobody, including the BYU coach, knows what he will have as a team, until he gets a full cast of new recruits and returned missionaries on board in the fall.

That said, if a preview and trailer was produced to entice viewers and BYU football fans to get excited about the 2014 BYU football movie, here is what would be included and featured.

The running game. BYU has two proven stars that can rush the football. That would be Taysom Hill and Jamaal Williams. Their numbers last year were blockbuster, especially when you consider what they produced on the ground without the supporting cast of an offensive line.

You can count on Hill and Williams being pampered and protected from danger and harm this spring. Why expose them to paparazzi and pounding when they have nothing to prove?

A key ingredient of filmmaking is watching “dailies”. They are the raw, unedited footage shot during the making of a motion picture. These dailies are watch by the director after each day of shooting.

Heresy

I know this might sound like heresy, but the first “dailies” of spring drills that Bronco Mendenhall and his defensive staff are watching would indicate that cornerback might be the strongest and deepest spot on the roster for next fall.

Let me repeat that for long time followers of BYU football like myself. Cornerback could be the strongest and deepest position on the team. That’s like saying Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi are now Republicans.

This will require a major adjustment for Cougar fans when watching a game. Now instead of always looking 10-15 yards down field away from the line of scrimmage to find BYU corners, they won’t be there.

Press coverage is what movie stars and their agents want and it is also what BYU can now play with its corners. The ripple effect will make Mendenhall giddy while putting together his defensive game plans.

With corners that can cover, it means that Bronco can bring more pressure from the outside and blitz more frequently. He has to be licking his chops over his corners.

So who has Bronco salivating? Let’s start with the return of two proven players. Robertson Daniels showed he can play last year. Jordan Johnson was BYU’s best corner two years ago. Daniels is back and so is Johnson, who will return in the fall, completely healed from his knee surgery.

Throw in Trent Trammel, who was slated to start last season before busting up his knee last spring. He is back and making waves. New incoming freshman Michael Shelton from North Carolina is a star waiting to happen.

Look for Mendenhall to produce a defensive football film this fall that won’t be pretty...especially for opposing offensive coordinators.

Moving Bronson Kaufusi to outside linebacker should make him a pass rushing force off the edge. The key for him will hinge on being productive in pass coverage. His role will be limited, but as long as he isn’t a liability, this move could be a good one for Mendenhall.

Skinny

Here's the skinny on Alani Fua, the other returning outside linebacker. He's still skinny. Thick or thin, however, he can play and doesn't need to prove himself this spring. He is on the endangered species and special player list this spring.

On the defensive line, Bronco is going with a cast of thousands. As of one week of spring ball, there are no bona fide stars, but plenty of bodies that have Mendenhall smiling and missionaries returning.

Keep an eye on these returned missionaries. Graham Rowley, Travis Tuiloma and Kesni Tausinga. Rowley and Tuiloma both played significant minutes for BYU on the defensive line before opting for missionary service. Tausinga could be the surprise of the bunch. When Bronco talks about a player before he has never played a down, you know he has something. Bronco is talking about Tausinga, the returned missionary from Bingham HS. He will be a true freshman this season.

Okay, now it is time to address the two big issues of this spring; the passing game and the offensive line.

Most fans worry about Taysom Hill and his percentages throwing the ball. Don't count me as one of those fans. We can talk about mechanics, happy feet and presence in the pocket, but before I judge Hill as a passer, I want to see what he can do with playmaking receivers. So far, in two seasons, he hasn't had any and he won't have any this spring.

Yes Cody Hoffman was a consistent and reliable receiver, but he was not a game changing type receiver. Check out his NFL combine numbers to see why.

Nick Kurtz could be a play maker at wide out for BYU and he is participating in spring drills. Unfortunately, because of other play making receivers not arriving until the fall, Kurtz is relegated to running wind sprints this spring. You know, go deep, catch your breath and do it again.

If you are expecting big time passing improvement from BYU and Hill this spring, you will be disappointed. The real test will be fall camp when he finally will have several wide receivers that can get open and off the line of scrimmage. Then Hill will either show he can or can't hit those guys downfield. If he can, look out, this might be a special football team. But only if Hill can remain standing and in one piece.

That, of course, will depend on the offensive line and major improvement from that group of players. BYU's offensive line coach Garret Tujague returns plenty of experience from last season to spring practice. Experience is good, talent is better.

Bronco thinks he has more talent in the offensive trenches this coming season in two guys who should make a difference. We are talking Ului Lapuaho, the 6-7 300 pound tackle from Hunter HS in Salt Lake City. Lapuaho will be a true freshman and is returning from an LDS mission.

BYU has also moved Tuni Kanuch from the defensive line to guard on the offensive line. He is a big dude at 6-2, 325 pounds. He was making waves on the defensive side of the ball before he torn his pectoral muscles and missed last season.

The Cougars will be without Brayden Kearsley, the highly touted freshman from last season, during spring drills. He is experiencing some academic issues that have to clear up before he can play next season.

Is a better passing game and better offensive line play too much to hope for this spring and coming fall? Probably, but if we had to pick just one, it would be hope for better offensive line play. That, in and of itself, would make the passing game better.

Television Timetable

Men's Basketball

BYU vs. San Francisco

Monday, March 10 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 9:30 pm MDT

TV: ESPN2

Possible WCC Championship Game

BYU vs. Gonzaga or St. Mary's

Tuesday, March 11 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MDT

TV: ESPN

Women's Basketball

BYU vs. Pacific

Monday, March 10 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 3:00 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

Possible WCC Championship Game

BYU vs. Gonzaga or St. Mary's

Tuesday, March 11 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 2:00 pm MDT

TV: ESPNU

Baseball

BYU vs. San Diego

Thursday, March 13 at Provo

First Pitch: 6:00 pm MDT

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. San Diego

Saturday, March 15 at Provo

First Pitch: 1:00 pm MDT

Men's Volleyball

BYU vs. UC Irvine

Friday, March 14 at Provo

Match Start: 7:00 pm

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. UC San Diego

Saturday, March 15 at Provo

Match Start: 7:00 pm

TV: BYUtv