

HB Arnett's



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BYU 60 SMC 57

Winning Solves Everything

After BYU's perplexing 89-82 loss to Pacific last Thursday night in Stockton, BYU's bracket bubble had burst and Dave Rose was a bozo coach.

Two nights later with the same team on the floor and the same coaching staff on the bench, BYU is now back in the NCAA post season mix and Rose is suddenly coach of the year.

Winning does that. It solves all issues. Winning is what the Cougars did against St. Mary's on the road in Moraga. The final was 60-57.

BYU suddenly went from a team that was an enigma to sole possession of second place in WCC play with the team in first, Gonzaga, coming to Provo this Thursday.

Just win and all the enigmatic questions of poor free throw shooting, Matt Carlino coming off the bench, inconsistent play, poor post defense etc. suddenly go away.

What won't go away is BYU's penchant for early foul trouble with their front court players, especially Eric Mika.

That has gone from an enigma, to an expected enema delivered weekly by WCC officials that BYU, Mika and Rose have to endure.

But even inconsistent officiating is flushed away by winning. It solves everything. Winning, especially after trailing by 14 points in the first half and 12 in the second half against the Gaels of St. Mary's escalates to euphoria. BYU's post game celebration was a perfect example of that. It also exemplified the heart and tenacity of this team.

The only alliteration left is ecstasy. That would be on the docket if the Cougars can find a way to beat Gonzaga in Provo later this week.

Actually explanation would also fit this alliterative theme. Could somebody explain the following?

2013-14 WCC Men's Basketball Standings

Team	WCC	PCT	Overall
<u>#24 Gonzaga</u>	13-1	.929	23-4
<u>BYU</u>	10-5	.667	18-10
<u>Saint Mary's</u>	9-5	.643	19-8
<u>San Francisco</u>	9-5	.643	16-10
<u>Portland</u>	7-7	.500	15-11
<u>Pepperdine</u>	7-8	.467	14-13
<u>Pacific</u>	5-9	.357	14-11
<u>San Diego</u>	5-10	.333	14-14
<u>Santa Clara</u>	4-10	.286	11-16
<u>Loyola</u>	3-12	.200	11-16
<u>Marymount</u>			

How does a team go 4-1 (soon to be 5-1 after Gonzaga leaves town on Thursday) against clubs in the conference with winning league records and still manage to lose to teams like Loyola Marymount, Pacific, Pepperdine and Portland?

Even if all those losses were on the road, it is still puzzling. Again winning solves all. If the Cougars can win out during the regular season they will finish the year with a 13-5 league mark and a second seed in the upcoming WCC post season tournament in Las Vegas.

Speaking of post season conference tournaments, Dave Rose's record is not only puzzling, but sobering.

He has never won a league post season title since taking over the BYU program in 2005. His WCC post season tournament record is 1-2. In MWC tourney action his record was

8-6. He got his teams to the MWC championship final 3 out of 6 times, but never captured the hardware.

In WCC post season action, in BYU's two previous years in the league the team has never made the championship game. Last season they were early-outed by San Diego in the first round.

Again, winning solves everything. A post season WCC championship will wash away all records and remembrances of Rose's resume in league post season play.

Gagging on Gonzaga

A win over Gonzaga this Thursday would be nice, but it would be an aberration. Empirically speaking, any way you dice it, slice it or run it through the Cougar Public Relations meat grinder, Gonzaga is a better basketball program than BYU.

Hopefully, someday that will not be a true statement, but today it is. The Bulldogs have dominated the West Coast Conference and they have dominated BYU.

In seven games played, BYU has won just 2 contests. One of those wins came in Denver in NCAA play when Jimmer Fredette was a team unto himself.

The other win was two seasons ago in the Marriott Center. In the first two years of WCC play between the two teams the Zags are 3-1 against the Cougars.

Gonzaga has put more players into the NBA than BYU. Their best NBA player, John Stockton, was better than BYU's best NBA player, Danny Ainge. Both Stockton's and Ainge's sons played for the dad's alma maters. David Stockton, currently playing for Gonzaga, is better than Austin Ainge was when he played for BYU.

Mark Few, the Gonzaga coach has more NCAA tournament wins than Dave Rose. Few's NCAA post season record is 15-14. Rose's record is 4-6.

Currently, Gonzaga shoots the ball better than BYU. In overall field goal percentage, the Zags shoot it at a .500 clip. BYU currently is shooting the ball overall at a .469 pace. When it comes to three point shooting. Gonzaga is hitting beyond the arc at a .404 rate. BYU converts at a .363 pace.

Three-point shooting will probably be a contributing factor to the outcome of this contest between the top two teams in the league. In the last outing, BYU was killed by Kevin Pangos from beyond the arc. The Bulldog guard was 6-10 from long range and scored 18 of his 24 points from distance.

This game should be a re-run of that scenario. The team that shoots it the best from beyond the circle will win. On paper, that should be Gonzaga.

But this game will be in a packed and raucous Marriott Center. That should mean something and I think it will. BYU gets a one game aberration from Gonzaga dominance and pulls this one out.

Perplexing Post Play

BYU's history of post play has been perplexing. Greg Kite was an under appreciated and non scoring post for BYU that has had the longest journeyman NBA career of any Cougar post player.

Raphael Araujo had a sure-fire NBA body and was BYU's only lottery pick in the post. He is now plying his trade for a team in Brazil. To me, Trent Plaisted had the look of an NBA player inside. He has never yet made it to the big leagues.

Keena Young had what the NBA is looking for, a consistent low block scorer. Young had it all...except size. At 6-6, he was too small for the big boy play of NBA basketball.

Brandon Davies, according to all fans and scouts wasn't good enough to play at the next level. Yet he is now drawing a paycheck from Philadelphia and the 76ers.

Eric Mika is a guy I had pegged as a future NBA prospect and player coming out of high school. I think he still will have a future in the league, but he has no current presence on the court for the Cougars.

He can't stay out of foul trouble and stay on the court long enough for BYU or Mika himself to take advantage of his natural skills.

And what about Luke Worthington? He looked like a total recruiting bust a month ago. Now he looks like he will be at least a rebounding and defensive factor in the post next season for Dave Rose.

Nate Austin has gone from a whipping boy for BYU basketball fans' frustrations to an actual factor on the court. I can think of at least 5-6 games this season that BYU doesn't win without Austin.

While BYU's post play might be perplexing it does have one ingredient that other coaches envy: Size.

Two weeks ago here is what San Francisco coach Rex Walters had to say about BYU bigs. "There are two teams in our league (the other is Gonzaga) that have that size and that athleticism. When you talk about Mika, Sharp, Austin, they're a really big team across the board."

Size does matter, but when it comes to scoring, BYU's inside scoring next season will primarily come from a smaller guy. That will be Jamal Aytes, the 6-6 low post scoring machine that transferred in from UNLV.

He won't be eligible to play for BYU until late December, but when he does hit the court, he should remind many of Keena Young. Throw in Austin to continue to rebound and make hustle plays and Worthington to get stronger and even more physical and BYU has a nucleus that actually could be very productive next season.

BYU also gets bigger and deeper in the post with 2 newcomers for next year in 6-11 Isaac Neilson, the returned missionary and Ryan Andrus, the incoming freshman from American Fork HS.

For the immediate future, the perplexing problem in the post for BYU is how to keep Eric Mika, Luke Worthington and at times Nate Austin on the floor. That's because BYU is a much better team with them on the floor than they are without them on the floor.

As of now, the resolution to that problem will be determined by the WCC office and league supervisor of officials. Who the league sends to officiate the remaining BYU games and how those officials call the game still has a major impact on BYU's post play. That's a perplexity that can't be solved in Provo.

Women Wake Up...So Should We

While many of us were sleeping, especially me, BYU's women basketball team has gone from a team that couldn't get the ball inside to Jennifer Hamson, its low post scoring and rebound machine to a team that is on a roll.

The Lady Cougars have reeled off five straight wins and taken sole possession of second place in the WCC standings. The latest win was over No. 20 Gonzaga, the current league leader. That game was played in Provo.

In those last five wins, here are Hamson's scoring and rebound stats: Pacific, 25-18; Santa Clara, 25-18; San Francisco, 25-13; Portland, 27-13 and Gonzaga, 20-8.

BYU is now 21-5 overall and 11-4 in WCC play. They finish up with road games this week against Pepperdine and LMU and then return for the final game of the regular season in Provo against San Diego.

Diamond Duds

Diamond Duds is the appropriate description of the early season for both the BYU baseball team and the women's softball team.

BYU is 0-3 in baseball, losing three straight to Kansas in games that were played in Arizona over the weekend. Mike Littlewood's Cougars play KU again today, and then stay on the road to face Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, TCU and UT Arlington.

The softball Cougars have played more games, but fared the same. They are currently 4-6 on the year and coming off a three-game losing streak in a tournament in Las Vegas. Those losses came at the hands of UT Chattanooga, Nevada Reno and Minnesota.

Volleyball Studs

The BYU men's volleyball team, currently ranked No. 4 in the country cleaned up in California the last couple of weeks. The Cougars notched wins over No. 5 USC, Cal Baptist, Pacific and No. 8 Stanford.

BYU finally will return home on February 28 and March 1 to face USC again and Pepperdine, the only team to beat the Cougars in MPSF play. Both games will be televised live on BYUtv.

The Cougars are currently 10-3 overall and 10-1 in league play.

BYU Television Timetable

Men's Basketball

BYU vs. Gonzaga

Thursday, Feb 20 at Provo

Tipoff: 9:00 pm MST

TV: ESPN2

BYU vs. Portland

Saturday, Feb 22 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. San Diego

Saturday, March 1 at San Diego

Tipoff: 2:00 pm MST

TV: TWC and Root Sports

Women's Basketball

BYU vs. San Diego

Saturday, Mar 1 at Provo

Tipoff: 1:00 MST

TV: BYUtv

Men's Volleyball

BYU vs. USC

Friday, Feb 28 at Provo

Match Start: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Pepperdine

Saturday, Mar 1 at Provo

Match Start: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv