

HB Arnett's



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Vol. 34, Issue 9 – September 30, 2013

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USU is no MTSU

BYU 1-0 IN STATEMENT GAMES

BYU jumped out to a 1-0 record in “Statement” games this season with a 37-10 win over Middle Tennessee last Friday night in LaVell Edwards Stadium.

This Friday will be another “Statement” game for the Cougars as they travel to Logan to face the Aggies of USU. In case you missed BYU’s “Statement” schedule of this season, it includes Middle Tennessee State, Utah State, Boise State and Idaho State.

Speaking of statements, here is one from Rick Stockstill, the head coach of Middle Tennessee State in his post game comments after losing to BYU. “I thought we battled and competed against a really, really good football team,” he said. “That quarterback is special. I said it coming in: he was a better passer than he was given credit for.”

Stockstill continued saying, “I can't say enough good things about how good that [BYU] football team is. It's a physical, tough football team. The quarterback makes their offense so dang hard to defend. I think he's a special player.”

If you are looking for Stockstill's definition of special here it is. How about 165 yards rushing on just 18 carries? That is 9.2 yards per tote. In the passing game Hill completed 14-19 throws for 177 yards. He had one pick which bounced off the hands of Paul Lasike.

Hill's pass efficiency rating for the win over MTSU was 141.41. That is almost double what his season rating had been after the first three games. The BYU throw game was back in business last week. The difference was Hill being on target and receivers catching the ball. Hill also had another explanation for the improvement. "I thought our passing was really good. I think that's traditional BYU football; we threw the ball on first and second down and avoided third which kept their defense off balance"

Rejuvenation

The rejuvenated passing game flourished even without Cody Hoffman, the Cougars best receiver. Hoffman was suspended for the one game against MTSU by Bronco Mendenhall for a violation of team rules.

BYU was also missing two other key offensive cogs in this game because of injuries. Jamaal Williams, the Cougars' best running back, didn't play because he is still nursing a concussion suffered against Utah. Adam Hine, the reserve running back was set to receive most of Williams carries against MTSU, but had only one carry before also suffering a concussion blocking on a kickoff return for BYU.

Hine, before he headed to the sideline with the head injury, ran back BYU's opening kickoff 90 yards before being caught from behind. The Cougars special teams' play was extremely good in this game. JD Falslev capped BYU's scoring barrage with a 71 yard punt return for a touchdown. He also muffed two punts and was part of a barrage of BYU turnovers that kept this game from becoming a runaway route.

BYU had a total of 5 turnovers in the contest, two of which were coughed up by Taysom Hill and Michael Alisa inside the five yard line of Middle Tennessee. Those were two gimme touchdowns that would have put the game out of reach in the first half.

Defensively, BYU continued their strong play led by all everything Kyle Van Noy's play. His performance was highlighted by producing a safety against MTSU early in the second quarter. With BYU trailing 10-7, that play ignited BYU both offensively and defensively.

AGGIES 6 POINT FAVORITES OVER COUGARS: HERE'S WHY

1. Chuckie Keeton. He is to Utah State what Taysom Hill is to BYU. As he plays and produces, so go the Aggies. Keeton is elusive and able to make plays when the offensive scheme breaks down. He also has proven to be a passing threat.

2. Logan and Frothing Fans. The game is at Romney Stadium and the USU fan base has been waiting for a game in Logan for what seems like decades. The place will be juiced. If you are a faint hearted BYU fan brace yourself for the environment.
3. If it turns out to be a battle of passing games, USU's cornerbacks are much better than BYU's. It will take an extra special scheme from Bronco to contain the Aggie passing attack.
4. Taysom Hill can't do it himself. He will need help from the running back position. Jamaal Williams is set to play, but just how he plays coming off a concussion remains to be seen.
5. Did I mention that the Utah State offense really is that good? Now what is to be determined is if the BYU defense is really that good. Good defenses like USC can contain the Aggie offense. Utah also managed the game well defensively against USU. BYU needs to prove they are in the same category as the Utes and Trojans if they expect to win.
6. The last appearance in Logan by a BYU football team resulted in a 31-16 loss. BYU was not a very good team that year finishing 7-6. The Aggies were even worse with a 4-8 season record.

Objectivity is what Las Vegas odds makers live on. BYU as a six-point underdog is reasonable considering what the two schools have shown this season. Quite frankly, the Cougars are feast or famine offensively. The Aggies offense has been much more consistent and productive.

This game will be won or lost by the BYU defense. That is a scary proposition because of suspension and injury. Spencer Hadley is still out of action for another three games and his replacement, Tyler Beck, suffered a hamstring injury against Middle Tennessee and is suspect for the contest.

Bronco may try to sell his cornerback play, but I'm still not buying. It is still very suspect and we expect Chuckie Keeton to be able to extend plays and find his receivers running behind the Cougar corners.

I see it USU 31 BYU 20.

How's this playing in Antofagasta?

IF YOU BUILD IT, WILL HE STILL COME?

In the movie *Field of Dreams*, Ray Kinsella builds a baseball diamond in his Iowa corn field based on the premise that if he builds it, he will come? It was a great movie, but will that same premise work with the current BYU offense?

Bronco Mendenhall and Robert Anae have plowed up their productive passing game corn fields of the past and built a go fast, go hard read option offense. In my opinion, this new concept will more than likely work and win plenty of games...for the immediate future,

but the big question remains, will he come and continue to come in the future with this new offensive scheme installed?

The ‘he’ in the question, when it comes to BYU football, is the talented drop back passing quarterback. While we are wondering and wandering through corn fields, I wonder how this new read option offense is playing in Antofagasta, Chile. That is where Tanner Mangum, the ultra talented pure passing quarterback from Eagle, Idaho, is currently serving an LDS mission. For that matter, will any future passing quarterback recruits now seriously consider BYU a viable option for their skills?

Here’s the dilemma as I see it. BYU’s offense, past and present has always been quarterback centric. In the past when the likes of McMahon, Wilson, Young, Bosco, and others graduated, you could always plug in a Max Hall or John Beck. Those guys produced most of the offense with their throwing skills. They were like spark plugs in a car: easy to replace and readily available on the recruiting trail.

Quarterback Centric

Now we have Taysom Hill and the read option offense. It is still quarterback centric. As Hill goes, so go the Cougars in the win-loss column. He currently has all the BYU passing yardage stats accumulated this season. He is also BYU’s leading rusher with 565 yards in four games. That is 141.2 yards per contest.

I believe Robert Anae when he says that this new offense will continually get better and more productive. I believe that Taysom Hill will be a very good quarterback before the season ends. I believe, by next season, he will be an exceptional college quarterback and during his senior season, there might even be a hint of Heisman in the air for him.

Here’s the problem. Hill is a freak athlete with freakish athletic skills. He is perfect for this new offense, but unlike the old offense of old, he is not replaceable. Hill is a once in three decades athlete playing quarterback at BYU. This new offense is tailored to fit his skills.

The question remains, in my mind, however, what happens if Hill gets reinjured sometime before he graduates in 2 ½ years? If he continues to carry the ball himself with the current frequency with which he does, a ding or worse would be a disaster for this offense.

And what happens to the offense when the eligibility of Hill expires. Will there be a plug and replace quarterback already on the shelf. I doubt it. BYU can’t and won’t be able to attract the caliber of quarterbacks that can efficiently run the read option offense. That won’t happen. Hill is not only a freakish athlete, his being at BYU is a once in a lifetime freakish occurrence.

Next Level?

If Bronco Mendenhall seriously believes that this switch to the read option offense is what will take the Cougars to the next level and challenge for national honors, then he will have to make it happen in the next two seasons. Once Hill is gone, so is any and all production with the read option.

There will be no plug and replace quarterbacks on the recruiting shelf with whom to replace Hill. As a matter of fact, there is no replacement that can do what Hill does currently on the roster.

Let's be real. The Mormon market is still BYU's recruiting life line. It has proven that it can produce passing prodigies. But, in my opinion, the likelihood that it can consistently produce legitimate read option quarterbacks is slim to none.

Which returns us to the question, will he come? Will the top rated LDS passing quarterbacks in the country continue to look at BYU as a legitimate place to ply their trade under the current offensive system?

Bronco and Anae are the Ray Kinsella and Terence Mann of this *Field of Dreams* BYU football story. They see things that I don't.

This new offense may very well turn out to be a blockbuster movie for BYU. I just don't expect any successful sequel once Taysom Hill isn't available in the starring role.

Grumpy, Gauche, Gaudy and Gone Too Far

I readily admit I'm a grumpy old man so take this gripe with a grain of salt and glass of Metamucil. Here it is.

BYU's marketing in LaVell Edwards Stadium is on Meth. It is gauche, gaudy and gone too far. It makes NASCAR marketing look nuanced. Every inch of the stadium and every second of time during the game are now sponsored by something or somebody.

The only thing not sponsored is the opening prayer. And if the Masters Tournament would agree, it wouldn't surprise me to soon see the Amen Corner Opening Prayer.

I'm all for BYU milking money from the game experience, but not on the back of paying customers who have to sit through the bombardment. That said, if you can't beat them, join them. Here is my suggestion for another in stadium promotion and advertisement.

Why not the Kohler Urinal Flush? After 20,000 flushes, fans get a free soft drink in hopes of surpassing 40,000 flushes before the game is over. All that is needed is a flush counter on the end zone video ribbons. I can hear the chants now as the Flush Counter approaches 20,000. "Flush, Flush, Flush". If they get real creative, they could also combine the Kohler spot with first downs. "That's another Kohler Flush Down."

In my opinion, stadium marketing is on the verge of becoming a strip tease act where we see and hear too much. Less is better. Be more selective with advertisers and charge more, but quit the bombardment. It cheapens the game experience.

If you vehemently disagree with my assessment, you can contact me personally at the Wal Mart parking lot in Orem. I will be the guy with the sign that reads: "Silence is golden, but if you don't have gold, will accept all currency."

Television Timetable

BYU vs. Utah State

Friday, Oct 4 at Logan

Kickoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: CBS Sports Network

BYU vs. Georgia Tech

Saturday, Oct 12 at Provo

Kickoff: TBA (Game time and TV will be announced later today)

TV: TBA

BYU vs. Houston

Saturday, Oct 19 at Houston

Kickoff: TBA

TV: TBA

Boise State vs. BYU

Friday, Oct 25 at Provo

Kickoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPN

Wisconsin vs. BYU

Saturday, Nov 9 at Madison

Kickoff: TBA

TV: TBA