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Vol. 32, Issue 33 – March 5, 2012

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LESS IS SELDOM A GOOD THING

Most words when coupled with “less” do not have positive meanings.

For example: Homeless, toothless, useless, careless, restless, shirtless, winless, shiftless, pointless, listless, emptiness and breathless are among just a few words that when coupled with the appendage “less” usually is not a good thing.

It applies also to BYU basketball. We are referring to guard less.

Dave Rose should have been a unanimous pick for West Coast Conference coach of the year. To win 25 games with spotty guard play for almost the entire season, is to be commended. He did it with smoke and mirrors.

Just how spotty was illustrated quite nicely last week in BYU's two WCC tournament games.

BYU beat San Diego 73-68 to open the tourney on Friday, but were “clueless” the next night in getting blown out by Gonzaga 77-58.

Nobody, including me, is faulting the effort, heart or guts of BYU guards this year. They played hard and gave all they had to the team.

Body of Work

But as they say now that the NCAA tournament is just around the corner, it is all about your body of work.

Ask any neutral observer and the likely consensus would be that BYU's guard play this season was spotty at best.

Ask me about what I saw this conference season, and it looked to me like there were probably at least five WCC teams with better guard play than BYU had.

That assessment was probably exacerbated when Gonzaga's guard line eviscerated the Cougars

Friday night. It is also a testament to just how good BYU's front line of Noah Hartsock and Brandon Davies are. There was a very good reason why both were chosen last week as All-WCC first team selections.

And of course it doesn't help the perspective of BYU guard play this season when you compare it to last season and Jimmer Fredette and Jackson Emery.

That said, I am not ready to add "less" to hope when it comes to BYU's future guard play. It is not hopeless.

Matt Carlino will get better and more consistent. He just needs some outside shooting help from his back court compadres to help him out.

Reason

There is a reason Dave Rose and his staff will sign Raul Delgado to a letter of intent in April. He is a juco guard from Western Nebraska who went from a good high school player at Springville (Utah) HS a few years ago, to a legitimate Division I prospect because he can shoot the long ball.

He certainly is no Jimmer Fredette, but he will be an upgrade to the BYU guard line next season.

All Rose is trying to do is find a bridge for one more season to get him from now until the 2013-14 season. That is when Kyle Collinsworth will be back. We look for the 6-6 guard to play the point and for Matt Carlino to see more action as a shooting guard as a junior.

We also look for improved guard play with the arrival of Nick Emery. Beginning with Emery, BYU has the pipeline loaded for the future with guys like Jordan Chatman and Cory Calvert among others.

Back to Present

Back to the present, BYU is now 25-8. Whether that is good enough to earn a NCAA invite remains to be seen. A lot of upsets in conference tournaments this coming week certainly won't help BYU's cause.

Joe Lunardi, of ESPN Bracketology fame, still has BYU as going to the Big Dance. So does Jerry Palm of CBS Sports. Those two guys are usually very accurate in predicting who gets in and who stays home waiting for the NIT call.

If BYU does make the tournament, it will be the sixth straight appearance for the Cougars under Dave Rose. Now in his seventh season as the head coach at BYU, BYU played in the NIT the first season, but have been a NCAA mainstay since then.

Women's Side

For the women's side of BYU basketball, the case is clearer. Jeff Judkins and his coaching crew need a win this afternoon in the championship tournament matchup against Gonzaga.

A win and BYU is in. A loss and it is highly unlikely that two teams from the WCC will be selected. With a 64-46 victory over the No. 3 seed San Diego Toreros, the No. 2 seed Cougar women's bas-

ketball team (25-6) advanced to the title game of the WCC Basketball Championship.

BYU will play Gonzaga (26-4), the No. 1 seed in the tournament. The two top teams in the WCC will battle today, Mon., Mar. 5 at noon PST. The game airs live on ESPNU and on BYU Radio.

What Good Guard Play Looks Like

It is no secret that Jimmer Fredette hasn't set the NBA world on fire as a rookie with the Sacramento Kings. But last week he had two outstanding outings, which were in limited minutes, but reminded us of what good guard play looks like and also reminded us that he still has a bright NBA future.

We offer the following two clips to illustrate the point.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/BlakeAtkins22#p/u/0/ATrXqNry-jY>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/BlakeAtkins22#p/u/1/SrM-Xpoz1qE>

HOPE AND REALITY

I saw Jabari Parker play last week and he was wearing a Lone Peak HS uniform.

When it comes to the future of BYU basketball, we all hope that somehow Dave Rose can persuade super star Jabari Parker to sign on the bottom line with BYU this November.

It could happen, but it will be an upset. My money is on Kentucky.

The Jabari hope and hype has made for some nice copy and discussion over the last two years.

Now it is time for a dose of reality.

BYU already has a pretty good Jabari Parker knockoff in the bag.

I saw the future of BYU basketball at the Utah state 5A championships last week and it was T.J. Haws

About six weeks ago, I wrote that I thought T.J. Haws had a bigger upside in college than his more heralded and touted teammate, Nick Emery. Both have verbally committed to BYU.

I am convinced of it now. Emery, a junior in high school, has been called the next Jimmer Fredette and rightfully so. He has unlimited range on his jumper and can get to the rim at will.

Without a doubt, he will have an impact on BYU basketball and future play in the WCC.

What he doesn't have is great size.

Haws Has It

T.J. Haws has what Emery has. He can shoot it from deep and can also slash to the basket. The difference is that he has real size and can still play on the perimeter.

Nobody will confirm his current height or weight, but we peg him at about 6-5, 170.

As a sophomore who most likely still hasn't yet experienced a prom, he will get bigger and stronger. Write this down. Barring injury, he will be an exceptional college basketball player.

We are not just saying he will be an exceptional player at BYU, if he continues to make the strides we have seen; he will be a major player on the entire college basketball scene.

He appears to be wired differently than his brother Tyler Haws, who, in his own right is a very, very talented college player and will be back on the Cougar team next season to prove the point. He is returning from an LDS mission to the Philippines.

If T.J. can add at a minimum another 20 pounds to his frame over the next two high school seasons, at the least, we see him as a Lee Cummond look-a-like and at his best a potential Mike Dunleavy, Jr. type player. Dunleavy out of Duke, went on to be a first round NBA selection

Not Hard

This isn't hard to figure out folks. He can shoot it with range, can slash to the basket and can handle the basketball. All he needs now is more strength. He certainly has the fiery competitiveness to match his talent.

If BYU is ultimately jilted by Jabari this fall, Haws will certainly soften the blow.

He still has two more years of high school basketball, but the performance he put on this past weekend in leading his team to a state title was nothing short of phenomenal.

In four games of the state tournament last week, he scored 73 points, made 11 three-pointers, had 13 assists, 23 rebounds and 9 steals.

In the first two of those games, he spent some serious time on the bench because the games were not competitive.

In the final two games, he had 22 points against highly touted West Jordan and 24 in a big time blow out of Brighton in the championship game.

Lone Peak beat West Jordan 68-56 and defeated Brighton 68-38.

Naturally Haws was named the MVP of the tourney.

If per chance this kid continues to grow and gets stronger, look out.

It was just two years ago that Tyler Haws left for his mission after an outstanding freshman season at BYU.

To give you an idea of how much T.J. has grown in those two years, look at the following video, beginning at the 6:30 mark. [Watch Here.](#)

And More Spring Football Notes

BYU SIGNS ANOTHER DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Here is the official release from BYU last week:

PROVO, Utah — BYU head football coach [Bronco Mendenhall](#) announced today that defensive lineman Taumata Tofi from Perris, Calif., has signed a national letter of intent to attend BYU.

“Taumata Tofi is a great fit for BYU,” Mendenhall said. “He is a great student, a man of faith and an excellent football player. He has a bright future as a defensive lineman at BYU and we are lucky to have him.”

Tofi, who goes by “Felesi” (meaning “fresh” in Samoan), is a 6-foot-3, 270-pound lineman who is a two-time All-Sunbelt League First Team selection and was selected to play in the Inland Empire Football All-Stars game as a starter for the Riverside County team. In addition to football, Tofi also participated on the Perris High School volleyball and track and field teams.

A native of Aoa, American Samoa, Tofi moved to California following the tsunami that hit Samoa in Sept. 2009, arriving in Perris during his sophomore year.

Two of Tofi’s older brothers, Travis and Joe, also played collegiate football at USC and UNLV, respectively.

Tofi was recruited by a number of Pac-12 schools, including Washington and Arizona, in addition to Fresno State and Utah State.

Spring Football

The Cougars kickoff spring football drills today.

In speaking with the media last week discussing the upcoming practices, here are some interesting quotes from Bronco Mendenhall.

“Our players and coaches are excited to start practicing again,” coach Bronco Mendenhall said. “We have a lot of senior leadership. I believe we have a strong team coming back. And we are looking forward to continuing to improve our program.”

“It is very similar every spring,” Mendenhall said. “Sometimes the positions change that you are trying to replace. But really, we are looking to establish another strong, competitive football team that has a chance to compete in or win every game. We have made a lot of progress in the program; we are very, very consistent. We are one of, I think, the country’s best.”

“This spring will be so important for [Lark] in terms of maintaining [the] role that he currently has,” Mendenhall said. “If James Lark is still the best player behind Riley, we will use him as the backup.

“If any of the other quarterbacks are more adept at running the football or maybe doing something else,” Mendenhall continued, “we might be able to get them some more time on the field, in maybe a unique package that will help [get them] some experience.”

“One thing to remember is that spring isn’t fall. Spring is still a developmental stage. I have learned a lot more to put spring into perspective, and I want our players healthy at the end of spring, I want them to be as experienced as they can be,” he said. “But it is not fall yet. If anything, we will err on

the side of hitting less, not more, to make sure that we continue to build our personnel going into fall.”

The spring game is set for March 24 in an effort to avoid a conflict with General Conference.

What Mendenhall hasn't said, however, is that they are looking for more toughness from this year's team.

They are also looking for big, big things from incoming freshman running back Jamaal Williams. At the end of his high school season, big name programs started coming in droves to see if they could land him. He bought the BYU package early in the recruiting process and never wavered.

BYU will also likely be very sparse in their praise of Taysom Hill, the new quarterback via Stanford.

The coaches learned their lessons well when the hype on Jake Heaps made it almost impossible for the kid to live up to that hype.

They won't make the same mistake on Hill, but mark it down; this kid can play and is the most athletic quarterback BYU has had since Steve Young.