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Vol. 28, Issue 18, December 3, 2007

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As a subscriber, you are allowed to access our new blog. You can view it by going to www.cougar-sportsline.blogspot.com

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 RUN OUT OF SEASON WITH 48-27 WIN OVER SDSU

BYU finally ran out of regular season games last Saturday in San Diego with a 48-27 win over SDSU. No, really, BYU actually ran out of the regular season by pounding the Aztecs with a run game that has been underused, in our opinion.

Of course if you were a San Diego State football coach watching your defense get mauled by the BYU ground game, you obviously had a different viewpoint.

Speaking of views, if you were a SDSU safety, what you saw all game long was Harvey Unga and Fui Vakapuna coming right at you.

Unga was his usual self. That means he rushed for 161 yards on 23 carries. While good, it wasn't Unga's best. He had 177 yards rushing against UNLV earlier in the year.

Fui Vakapuna was anything but his usual self, based on this season. The junior running back had his best outing in a year and a half with 97 yards on just 14 carries.

The Cougars netted a total of 311 yards on the ground against the Aztecs.

5.3 Yard Average

Unga finished the regular season with 1211 yards rushing and 13 touchdowns on the ground in 227 carries. That is a 5.3 yard per touch average and 100.9 yards per game performance. That ranks Unga's season as the fourth best rushing season in BYU history.

Luke Staley holds the top spot with 1582 yards in 2001.

Throw in, literally, the 629 yards Unga had in receptions, and the Provo product averaged 153.3 yards per game in all purpose yardage for the Cougars.

Chad Hall, the Air Force running back, led the league in all purpose yardage with 2504 yards versus

the 1840 yards of Unga. Hall had 1411 yards rushing, 488 yards receiving, 176 yards in punt returns and 425 yards in kickoff returns. Unga never returned a punt or kickoff this season.

While Chad Hall will be the Offensive Player of the Year in the MWC, Unga's numbers make a case for him that he could be the POY offensively for BYU.

Without him, does BYU go 10-2 or 8-0 in league play? We don't think so.

Same Said

The same could also be said about Max Hall. Without him does BYU go 10-2 and 8-0? We don't think so, we know so.

Hall's passing numbers weren't needed in the win against SDSU, but they certainly were needed during the season.

Against the Aztecs, Hall was 19-26 for 227 yards. He threw two touchdowns and had one interception.

On the season, he completed 277 of 461 attempts for 3617 yards. He had 24 touchdown passes and only 12 picks on the regular season.

Even more noteworthy for Hall and Unga, is that neither missed a game, despite plenty of nicks and bruises.

BYU AND BRUINS GO BASEBALL

Just like baseball, BYU vs. UCLA is now a three-game series. The Cougars and Bruins played in September at the Rose Bowl and will face each other again in Provo in next September.

Did we mention that they will also see each other in Las Vegas on Dec. 22 in the Pioneer Bowl? That's three games in one year.

Oh yeah, you can expect a circus atmosphere in this Las Vegas Bowl rematch.

The circus will be all about the Bruins.

Despite the fact that he will be fired this week, according to all sources in Los Angeles, UCLA still used the standard quote from soon-to-be former UCLA head coach Karl Dorrell regarding how happy the Bruins are to be invited back to Las Vegas for a game against the Cougars.

The Bruins' first choice for replacing Dorrell is Chris Petersen, the head guy at Boise State. Number 2 on their list is Mike Leach of Texas Tech and the third guy is Steve Mariucci, the former Cal, San Francisco 49ers and Detroit Lions coach. Mariucci's current gig is as an analyst for the NFL network.

Reportedly, the three have already been contacted about the job by UCLA athletic department intermediaries.

Long Shot

A long shot for replacing Dorrell is DeWayne Walker, the current Bruins defensive coordinator that was hired by Dorrell two years ago.

Walker, a former BYU defensive assistant, has already been contacted about the head coaching opening at Washington State.

If somehow Walker does get the UCLA job, BYU will be in trouble in this bowl game. The UCLA players will rally around him and put up a serious effort against the Cougars.

If Walker doesn't get the job and hasn't been hired as the head guy at WSU, you can look for him to be the interim coach for UCLA against the Cougars.

The 6-6 Bruins finished tied for fourth place in the Pac 10. That earns them a rematch with BYU, who finished 10-2 and as champions of the Mountain West Conference.

There are even some rumors around the UCLA program that Ben Olson may transfer to another

school. Olson has denied those rumors and says at the current time he is still a Bruin. "As of now, yeah," Olson said. "I have no plans. I'm a Bruin." That was what appeared in a recent *LA Daily News* article.

Replaced

Olsen, who has been injured, was replaced as the starter against USC last week by Patrick Cowan. If Olsen changes his mind and decides to transfer, a new coach could be a factor in him opting for another transfer. If that did happen, his only option would be to drop down to I-AA ball.

Just a thought, but Southern Utah is I-AA and only 50 miles from St. George, where Olsen's wife is from.

Just another thought. Are we the only one who is thinking that Olsen did BYU a big favor in not returning to Provo after his LDS mission? Based on his play at UCLA and the way Max Hall played this year, things seem to have worked out well for the Cougars in this situation.

The last time these two teams faced each other, BYU did everything right except win.

BYU had 23 first downs to 15 for UCLA. The Cougars had 435 yards of total offense compared to just 236 for the Bruins. Unfortunately, they also had 5 fumbles, 2 of which were lost to the Bruins. Max Hall also had an interception.

Dominated

The Cougars also dominated UCLA in the penalty department. The Bruins had just four calls against them for 30 yards. BYU was flagged 11 times for 84 yards.

While this is not a particularly popular bowl game match up for Cougar fans, it should be extremely interesting because of the UCLA coaching chaos.

NAMES AND GAMES

Quarterback Quandary...We mentioned a couple of weeks ago that BYU was shopping for a juco qb to add some depth to the qb roster for next year.

We also mentioned that BYU would have to find a jc qb who knew that barring several injuries, he would likely never set foot on the field as a Cougar.

No word on how that search is going, but in our opinion, there is another option at qb for the depth chart for next season.

Until BYU can get its qb pipeline filled with the quarterbacks they want, what about Stephen Covey as a third unit qb for next season?

He will be back from his LDS mission in time for next fall. While the Cougar coaches have him ticketed as a defensive back, he could very easily act as a third-unit qb for next season and give the Cougars some security in that area in case of serious injury problems to Max Hall.

Covey was an outstanding high school quarterback. He has similar size to Max Hall.

Meanwhile, there will be at least one new high school quarterback joining the program next fall.

We aren't sure if he will get a scholarship or be an invited walkon. Based on the play of Devin Combs, a 6-2, 205 pound qb from Oakdale HS in the Modesto, CA. area, a scholarship may be coming.

He led his Mustangs to the Sac-Joaquin CIF Division 4 title last week with a win over Whitney HS of Sacramento for the championship.

Playing on a Wing T offense as a junior, he only threw for 1200 yards and 12 TDs. This year as a senior, his coach adapted to his talents and Combs threw for 2005 yards and 24 touchdowns.

He definitely is a playmaker. He has been at BYU's summer camps and junior day and BYU coaches wanted to see more consistency out of him. He showed marked improvement this year and BYU

has made a place for him on the roster next year.

He will either walk on or get a scholarship, depending on the numbers, but he will be a Cougar.

Speaking of juco quarterbacks, former Cougar Jacob Bower saw his season come to a close when his Bakersfield Renegades were defeated 47-42 by the Mt Sac Mounties in the So Cal JC Championship game.

Bower threw for four touchdowns in the first half to see his team take a 35-21 lead. In the second half, he threw 5 interceptions. At one point he threw picks on four consecutive pass attempts.

Before that game he had thrown just eight interceptions for the season.

Mt. Sac was led by former San Diego State qb, Kevin Craft, who was just named the first team All America quarterback selection by JC Gridwire.

Bower made the third team.

Jesse Taufi, an offensive lineman committed to the Cougars from Long Beach City College, was a third team selection. Magnum Mauga, a defensive lineman from Grossmont JC, was also a third-team selection. He committed to the Cougars a year ago, but had to make up academic work this season. All reports are that he will be in the BYU fold by next fall.

Coleby Clawson, the de/lb from Snow College, was a first-team selection on defense. Andrew Mitchell, an offensive tackle from Snow whom BYU has offered, was also a first-team selection on the offensive side.

Taking Sides On Schedules... Next season, BYU's non-conference schedule was supposed to include Nevada at home, UCLA at home and Washington and Utah State on the road.

Nevada has since backed out of their contract and the Cougars are now looking for a game to open the season. They should check on the availability of either Northern Colorado or Charleston Southern.

Both of those teams were on Hawaii's schedule this year and it helped propel them to a BCS berth.

We find it interesting that Bronco Mendenhall is disparaging the Hawaii schedule and has expressed disappointment that the BCS has rewarded the Warriors for their soft schedule.

Funny how we forget that 23 years ago everybody was disparaging BYU when they went undefeated and won a National Championship with what most considered a very soft schedule.

The bottom line is that both BYU and Hawaii went undefeated and that is an accomplishment regardless of strength of schedule.

We have been saying for some time now that 2008 could be a magical year for the Cougars. They return the entire offense and should be almost unstoppable.

That said, the odds of BYU running the table next year in the Mountain West schedule are slim.

Football is fickle. All it would take is an early-season injury to either Max Hall or Harvey Unga and the Cougars would be very beatable by some MWC teams.

That is the way football has always been and always will be.

If a team is undefeated at the Division I level, they should be rewarded. You can't defend BYU in 1984 and disparage Hawaii in 2007.

That is how we see it.

Isn't Life Interesting?... You have to love the model and mission of BYU football under Bronco Mendenhall.

It's all about being accountable and honorable.

In the "*Isn't life interesting*" category, honor may have many hues.

Before the season started, a BYU player was suspended for the opener against Arizona and reprimanded for disseminating false information during a traffic stop.

That is a no-no.

Before the Utah game, BYU coaches and trainers disseminated false information when they told the media and public that Max Hall had a grade 1 shoulder separation when in reality he had a much more serious grade 3 separation. That was good coaching and management. No one was suspended or rep-

rimanded.

The circumstances are definitely different. One was a violation of the law. The other was just good media management and great game preparation in order to keep an advantage over a rival.

It's no big deal. We just think it is one of life's interesting observations.

Speaking of life, the fact that we found it interesting will indicate to many that we don't have one.

Women Advance to Final 16...The non-rated BYU Women's Volleyball team advanced to the final 16 of the NCAA tournament last week with a major upset of the sixth-seeded Washington Huskies on the Dawgs' home court.

The 30-28, 28-30, 25-30, 30-22, 15-13 win moves the Cougars to a final 16 match up against Middle Tennessee State on Friday, Dec. 7 at Penn State.

If the Cougars can get past MTSU, they will face the winner of Penn State-Michigan for a chance to reach the final four held in Sacramento.

The upset over UW was a bitter pill to swallow for the Huskies who, despite a 26-3 record, have never beaten the Cougars in volleyball in the 12 times they have matched up with BYU.

Cougars Paste Portland...BYU used a 17-2 run to open the second half en route to a 78-54 win over the University of Portland Pilots last Saturday night in Oregon.

This game was never in doubt and allowed Coach Dave Rose to continue to try different combinations with his roster.

He had mentioned that he wanted to try and go big at times and was able to do that against Portland by playing Trent Plaisted and Chris Miles together.

It was Lee Cummard, however, that led the Cougars in scoring with 18 points. Trent Plaisted had 16 and Jonathan Tavernari added 13.

This game featured the novelty of BYU fans outnumbering Pilot patrons.

It also featured national television, thanks to an unexpected and last-minute broadcast of the game by BYUTV.

The network can televise the games not picked up by the Mtn Network. It also means that BYU basketball fans should keep checking the Cougars' schedule to see if additional games are going to be televised by the BYUTV network.

They have hinted that other games could show up. The most likely would be the Weber State game this week, Boise State, and Wake Forest in January.

One game that won't be on BYUTV is this Saturday's mega match up against Michigan State at the Energy Solutions Arena in Salt Lake. It will be shown on the Versus network. Tipoff is set for 2:00 pm local time.

The No. 21 ranked Cougars will host the No. 13 ranked Spartans in a contest that could seal seedings for BYU in the NCAA tournament in March.

MSU is a very good team. They have size up front and good guard play. That description also applies to BYU.

In the past, BYU has faced Oklahoma State, Washington State and Lamar in games in Salt Lake.

The OSU game was a big-time event. This game with Michigan State promises to be even bigger and, in our opinion, a can't-miss occasion for Cougar fans.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. Weber State

Wednesday, Dec. 5 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: None yet. Continue to check BYUTV.org

BYU vs. Michigan State

Saturday, Dec. 8 at Salt Lake

Tipoff: 2:00 pm Mountain time

TV: Versus

BYU vs. Lamar

Wednesday, Dec. 12 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Pepperdine

Saturday, Dec. 15 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. Southern Utah

Friday, Dec. 21 at Provo

Tipoff: 6:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: Mtn

BYU vs. UCLA

Saturday, Dec. 22 at Las Vegas

Kickoff: 6:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPN