

HB Arnett's



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Arranging the Alphabet for BYU Basketball

BYU making another appearance in the NCAA tournament this year is about as likely as me writing this newsletter using the Cyrillic Alphabet. Neither will happen.

For BYU to get the automatic WCC invite to the Big Dance, they will have to not only beat either San Diego or Pepperdine on Friday, but then get by Saint Mary's on Saturday and Gonzaga on Monday.

An NCAA tournament invite is about as Cyrillic and surreal as it can get for the Cougars. Barring a miracle in Las Vegas later this week, alphabetically speaking, BYU options don't include the NCAA this season.

They most likely will include these letters of the alphabet: NIT, CBI or even the CIT.

That would be the National Invitational Tournament, The College Basketball Invitational and of course the College Insider Tournament.

All would be ETS and ETM options for BYU.

That stands for extend the season and extend the misery.

PFM is BYU's best option. That stands for pray for miracle in Las Vegas and two wins over Saint Mary's and Gonzaga.

[Click here](#) for the official WCC post season tournament brackets, start times (Pacific Time) and television options for both BYU's men and women's teams.

BYU Basketball...Handling the Truth

Jack Nicholson made the quote "You can't handle the truth" one of cinemas' most oft quoted lines in the movie *A Few Good Men*.

Nicholson is not a basketball analyst, but he has likely stayed in a Holiday Inn before and has front row seats to LA Lakers' games. Those credentials unknowingly made him a great analyst for describing BYU basketball this season: The Cougars were "A Few Good Men" short, especially against good teams.

Basically, BYU had a decent post player and a good three man in Brandon Davies and Tyler Haws. That was good enough for 21 wins to date against the *Mary Poppins* on the schedule, but it was *Gone with the Wind* against the good teams the Cougars faced this season.

It is just my opinion, but if you are counting, BYU and Dave Rose had no 1, 2 or 4 man good enough to beat decent to good teams this season.

It may be time for Rose to start handling the truth.

BYU won't and can't beat the two best teams in the West Coast Conference with its present production at the point guard position. Over two seasons that seems to be proven. Again, this is just my opinion, but there will be no WCC championship in BYU's future until the point guard spot is settled, handled and upgraded.

Decision Making

Matt Carlino, when he is on his game, can shoot and get to the basket, but his decision making as a point guard when games against good teams are on the line, sometimes seems suspect. Again that is just my opinion. And it may also be Dave Rose's opinion based on the bench time Carlino has seen in recent games.

Handling the truth may mean that Carlino and BYU's future records may be better served if he was moved to a shooting guard and put out to pasture at the point.

Again, he has at times looked spectacular as a point guard, against teams, like BYU, that are a few good men short on their roster, but against teams like Saint Mary's and Gonzaga, his line, in my opinion, is certainly not a box office hit.

In Carlino's defense, which is actually one of his strong suits, and in defense of Dave Rose, Carlino is probably still the best option there is at the point this season for the Cougars. It just isn't good enough to beat good teams and seriously compete for a WCC championship.

BYU's biggest player, Nate Austin, is a guy whose game is based on effort and hustle, but after two years in the program, he still can't defend anybody or score in the low post. And he still likes to float away from the basket on offense and doesn't appear to have gotten stronger since he showed up as a true freshman and back from an LDS mission.

No Noah

He, along with Josh Sharp and Agustin Ambrosino were all tried at the four spot this season. None were Noah Hartsock.

Hartsock averaged 16.8 points per game and 5 rebounds per contest his senior year. To date this season, Austin is averaging 3.4 points per game and 4.2 rebounds per outing. Sharp is producing at an offensive clip of 4.5 points per game and 4 rebounds a game. Ambrosino is getting 1.2 rebounds per game and 2 points a game.

A few more good men will make BYU a better team. That's why there is that thing called recruiting. There needs to be some serious upgrades up and down the roster.

Unfortunately, Rose and his staff can't wait for the Lone Peak brigade to show up. He needs help in upgrades at shooting guard, point guard and at the 4 spot for next year.

Carlino, at the two, may be one answer at shooting guard. The juco prospect from Salt Lake Community College, Skyler Halford, may also help if BYU offers.

At the point, Kyle Collinsworth returning from an LDS mission will get a try. Even a juco point wouldn't hurt.

That leaves the 4.

Big Bodies

BYU is getting two big bodies next season in freshmen Eric Mika and Luke Worthington.

Mika might be a possibility at the 4 because Worthington has better low post offensive moves right now than Mika coming out of high school.

I definitely see both Mika and Worthington playing together next season in the front court for the Cougars. Mark Pope, the big man assistant coach will definitely be earning his salary this summer and next fall.

Unless Rose and BYU make some serious upgrades to the roster for next season, then another Jack Nicholson movie, *As Good as it Gets*, will not only describe this season, but next year as well.

Unfortunately for BYU basketball fans, if this is as good as it gets, it won't be good enough to compete for a WCC title or earn an NCAA post season bid.

ONLY TWO REAL PRIORITIES FOR SPRING FOOTBALL

There will be plenty of interesting stories coming out of spring football this year, but only two really matter.

Bronco Mendenhall and BYU's two main priorities are first finding a quarterback that can play to the level of other past and productive Cougar quarterbacks, and then finding an offensive line that can protect him.

It's really that simple.

All other aspects of the BYU football team will work themselves out before the start of the season in the fall.

But there will be no season worth watching unless the Cougars can come up with a quarterback and an offensive line to protect him.

Johnny Manziel, last season's Heisman Trophy winner, is already taken and playing at Texas A&M. That means BYU's options are narrowed to Taysom Hill, Ammon Olson and Jason Munns.

Actually, Tanner Mangum and Billy Green will both be getting reps this spring, but neither is an option for the fall. Green is just like his name. He is green and Mangum will be leaving for an LDS mission later this spring.

The real story is Hill's knee. He will be off limits to contact this coming month. But you can be assured that he won't be off limits to post practice training staff and doctors to see how the repaired knee responds to a month of drills.

The equal opportunity mantra coming from the new offensive coaching staff is that it's a clean slate for all quarterbacks and all will have a chance to prove themselves.

Just like in life, equal opportunity has a nice ring to it, but it usually isn't real. Same with BYU football. Barring Olsen or Munns having a Johnny Football (Manziel) like spring practice, BYU is already invested knee (literally) deep in Hill being the guy.

There will be plenty of stories about the progress the offensive line is making, but the real test will be in the fall for this group.

BYU basically evaluated the offensive line and found it wanting as evidenced by their signing a boat load of new juco linemen.

Most of them won't be available until the fall.

If there is a third priority, it probably is to find somebody to get BYU back in the tight end business.

Since Dennis Pitta, BYU's tight end play has been suspect at best. If nobody emerges this spring, fall won't be any different and BYU will then be in its fourth year of a tight end drought.

One tight end from last year won't be competing for the job. Austin Holt, who injured his knee last season, is switching positions and will give the defensive line a try this spring. Also, Blair Tushaus, who at times started at center, is transferring from the program.

Bronson Kaufusi won't be joining the team until the BYU basketball season is complete. That shouldn't take long.

Jacob Hanneman, a true freshman defensive back and returned missionary, will split his spring between baseball and football. Hannemann is the starting centerfielder for the Cougars.

BYU will practice this spring on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and hold a public full scrimmage in the stadium for fans on Saturday, March 30. Drills will conclude the following week on April 5.

FOOTBALL FLUFF AND STUFF

Bronco Mendenhall named a defensive first counselor for his coaching staff last week.

The actual announcement said that Nick Howell, the assistant coach over defensive backs, was named as the new defensive coordinator for BYU.

In reality, Bronco is still the Bishop of the BYU defense, but now he can delegate some of his responsibilities when needed to Howell.

It is still Mendenhall, however, that will continue calling the plays and doing the heavy lifting.

Howell, who was the coach over special teams, will be replaced in that position by Kelly Poppinga.

Robert Anae was also named assistant head coach last week by Mendenhall. In other news, I was called as my ward's new hymn book coordinator. It is not a job title that is as glamorous as assistant head coach, but the job descriptions are similar.

In an announcement that actually means something, Mendenhall also said that he is in negotiations with BYU for a contract extension. He last signed a three year deal that would expire at the end of the coming season.

It is now apparent that Mendenhall is interested in being employed long term as BYU's head coach.

Sammy Sosa and St. George

Former Chicago Cubs slugger Sammy Sosa once said, "Baseball has been very, very good to me." Actually, in his Dominican accent, all recorded sound bites of his comments sounded like he was saying that baseball was actually "berry, berry" good to him.

Here's a thought. When it comes to college baseball, St. George and BYU could actually be "berry, berry" good for each other.

Mike Littlewood, the new BYU baseball coach, has connections and a coaching history in St. George. He was the head guy for years at Dixie State.

With his connections, the Cougars have already spent the preseason practicing in St. George. This past week they played a three game series with Creighton on Dixie State's field because of poor weather and field conditions in Provo.

Why not take it a step further and instead of playing early season road games ad nauseam as usual, make St. George the early season home for BYU baseball.

There is a big enough population of BYU fans in the area and it would be a good tandem for fans up north to parlay a little golf and baseball into a nice weekend getaway.

Dixie State is not going to let BYU infringe on their baseball market without some kind of compensation, regardless of the Littlewood connection.

How about BYU coming up with some cash to install lights at the Dixie State field? It would benefit DSU and also help BYU have a place to play in the warmth and sunshine in March and early April. What's wrong with a BYU and Dixie State doubleheader against other teams?

BYU could team up with UNLV, just 120 miles south of St. George to entice teams to play both schools on the same road trip.

The NCAA isn't going to move the season to accommodate cold weather baseball schools. With St. George and a little marketing, BYU can move to St. George for early season games and maybe entice what cold weather has always prohibited BYU from getting in the past...good pitching.

And, it apparently doesn't hurt the win-loss record. BYU took two of three games from the Blue Jays of Creighton last Friday and Saturday. The Cougars split a double header on Friday 9-0 and 1-5. They came back Saturday to take a 14-5 win over the Jays.

BYU Volleyball is Still Very, Very Good

Like the aforementioned Sammy Sosa, volleyball has recently been very, very good for the BYU men's team.

The Cougars pulled off an incredible come from behind win over then No. 1 UC Irvine last Friday in California with a 3-2 win over the Anteaters. That was followed up with a 3-game sweep over UC San Diego on Saturday.

Next up for the Cougars are matches on Friday and Saturday in Provo against Cal Baptist. Both matches are slated for television on BYUtv.

Making Good on Promise

I promised a subscriber last week that I would mention that BYU defeated Utah in Men's tennis 5-2 two weeks ago.

This week BYU was in Corpus Christi for a tournament. The Cougars lost to Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 1-4, beat Western Michigan 4-2 and lost to South Alabama 1-4.

Television Timetable

BYU vs. TBA (Women BB)

Friday, March 8 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 1:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs TBA (Men's BB)

Friday, March 8 at Las Vegas

Tipoff: 9:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: ESPNU

BYU vs. Cal Baptist (volleyball)

Friday, Mar 8 at Provo

Start: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Cal Baptist (volleyball)

Saturday, Mar 9 at Provo

Start: 7:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: BYUtv

Radio

BYU vs. UC Irvine (Baseball)

Thursday, March 7 at Provo

First Pitch: 3:00 pm Mountain Time

Radio: KOVO 960 AM Provo

BYU vs. UC Irvine (Baseball)

Friday, March 8 at Provo

First Pitch: 3:00 pm Mountain Time

Radio: KOVO 960 AM Provo

BYU vs. UC Irvine (Baseball)

Saturday, March 9 at Provo

First Pitch: Noon Mountain Time

Radio: KOVO 960 AM Provo