

HB Arnett's



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BYU 87 USD 53

Home Sweet Home and Halford Stop Losing Streak at 4

Skyler Halford scored 28 points in leading BYU to a much needed 87-53 win over San Diego last Saturday night in the Marriott Center.

It was a Steve Cleveland win. Some of you may remember when Cleveland was hired from Fresno City JC as a complete unknown to take over the BYU basketball program. During his first season, in an effort to rekindle interest and sell tickets to BYU basketball, he coined the marketing phrase of “Shooting the three and playing some D” to describe how BYU would play under his tutelage.

That marketing strategy lasted about three games into Cleveland’s first season because BYU couldn’t shoot the three and couldn’t play any D. They were simply outmanned by almost everybody they played.

Sixteen years later Cleveland’s description of how BYU would play was finally realized against the Toreros of San Diego. The Cougars actually shot the 3 and played some D in stopping the hemorrhaging of a four game losing streak.

With the much needed home court win, BYU is now 9-7 overall and 1-2 in WCC play. Next up for the Cougars will be home games this week with rematches with Pepperdine and LMU.

Watching Halford and his helium shot (a high floater) was a gas. It was a welcome relief from the Periodic Table shooting displayed by BYU in their 4 most recent losses. For those unfamiliar with Periodic Table shooting, it means that BYU would continue to shoot the ball from outside, but it would only periodically go in.

In Periodic Table parlance, they call Halford's shooting against USD Au. That's the symbol for gold. Halford, the juco transfer, shot 68 percent (almost matching 79, the atomic number for gold) from the field by hitting 11 of his 16 shot attempts. He was 50 percent from beyond the arc connecting on 4 of his 8 attempts from long distance. He was perfect from the free throw line going 2-2.

BYU also was dominant inside, outrebounding USD 45-27. Eric Mika also scored well in the post with 13 points. Tyler Haws added 17 more in the Cougar scoring column.

While the win over San Diego was nice and needed, the truth is that the Toreros are just an ordinary team, just like BYU. USD is 9-7 on the year and 0-3 in WCC play. Their best win to date was a loss...65-64 at home in Jenny Craig Pavilion to San Diego State.

For BYU, the test of whether or not the slump is over will come when the Cougars hit the road again. BYU is currently just 1-5 on the road. The win was against Stanford and the losses were at Utah, UMass, Oregon, LMU and Pepperdine. The other two losses were at an almost neutral site against Wichita State which is within easy driving distance of Kansas City, where the game was played and at home in Provo against Iowa State.

HIT AND MISS

Lexi Eaton hit a 10-foot jump shot with time expiring in overtime to give BYU a 69-67 win over St. Mary's Saturday afternoon in the Marriott Center. Eaton led all Cougar scorers with 19 points.

With the win, BYU is now 12-2 overall and 3-1 in WCC play. The league loss occurred earlier on Thursday when Pacific, currently 1-3 in league play (the only win at BYU) and 6-8 overall, defeated the Cougars in Provo 75-62. BYU, at 3-1 is in second place behind undefeated and 4-0 San Diego

In men's volleyball, the Cougars opened their season with two losses on the road to Loyola and Lewis. That's a very good alliteration, but a terrible start for the Cougars who were ranked No. 3 in the preseason national volleyball rankings.

Illinois, where Loyola and Lewis are located wasn't a kind state to BYU. Now the Cougars will get a chance to see how they fare against California. Cal State Northridge

and Long Beach State will both be in Provo this Friday and Saturday, Jan 10-11 for matches against the Cougars.

FLUFF AND STUFF

1. As proven by what I have written in previous letters, I have no trouble pointing out that Bronco Mendenhall seems to have trouble identifying talent and then developing it.

My primary piece of evidence for this position is Ziggy Ansah, the accidental NFL first round pick of the Detroit Lions. In case you forgot, it took three years for Mendenhall and his staff to figure out that Ansah was a game changer. Only a season ending injury to Eathyn Manumaleuna forced the hand of Bronco into playing Ansah. As they say, the rest is history.

If I am going to give Mendenhall a kick to the backside for botching the evaluation and development of Ansah, then Dave Rose also has to at least get a small whack for his whiff in evaluating Skyler Halford.

Granted, one game doesn't make a Cinderella story and slipper for Halford, but after 28 points, pretty decent defense and a couple of floor burns for hustle plays against San Diego last Saturday, Rose needs to be asked the same questions as Mendenhall.

What took so long? Was Halford's performance Saturday night an aberration? Is he a horrible practice player and just had one of those magical nights against USD?

For a coach that acknowledged two weeks ago that this team needed outside shooting and more intensity, what kept Rose centered on Carlino and hesitant on Halford?

Just wondering? Loyalty to a returning starter is an admirable quality unless that loyalty leads to losing 4 straight.

While both BYU coaches appear to have erred in evaluation, Mendenhall's gaffe is much bigger than Rose's. Ziggy Ansah was an NFL talent. Halford appears to be a good college player, but he is definitely not going to be playing in the NBA.

Also, when Ansah finally hit the field as a starter getting starter minutes, opponents still couldn't handle him because of his raw and innate abilities. Halford, on the other hand, won't score 28 points in a game again. Opposing coaches will now game plan for him and defend him accordingly. He will still help, but Rose's apparent evaluation miss on the juco transfer, was not as egregious as the evaluation miss on Ansah.

In defense of Rose, the starting of Halford and his surprising production was probably not so much of an evaluation error as a mistake in waiting so long to reign in Matt Carlino. Carlino, despite the 28 points by Halford, is a more talented guard who just needed to be on a shorter leash for the last two years.

A year ago, there was no leash to use because of the limited talent of back up guards on the bench. This year, with Halford and Kyle Collinsworth, now at least Rose has a Carlino chain he can pull on. That leash will become even stronger next season when Chase Fischer becomes eligible after sitting this season out because of his transfer from Wake Forest.

2. After watching a bunch of bowl games, I have concluded that if BYU wants to play with the big boys and have a real chance at being competitive, they have to chuck aside the current read option offense. BYU will never have the athletes to make this offense work against the elite athletes of the top tiers of the BCS conferences.

A legitimate passing game offense, however, can be successful against almost all big boy teams. Oklahoma certainly has better athletes than BYU has, but while the passing game they used to whip Alabama was good, it wasn't as good as some of BYU's previous passing games in years past. That's my opinion and I'm sticking to it.

Speaking of sticking to it, look for Bronco and Robert Anae to keep going fast and hard as long as Taysom Hill is healthy and has eligibility left.

That will be fun, but not functional against good teams. Again, just my opinion, but if BYU is going to be a serious face on the national football scene, they need to start stockpiling decent to good offensive linemen, a couple of good to decent wide receivers and wait for Tanner Mangum to get back from his mission to Antofagasta, Chile.

Then BYU might be for real against the big boys. The current go fast go hard offense will have a few moments of glory and glamour, but it will never be consistently productive against the top tier BCS teams. A school like BYU, that will always struggle to have a stockpile of big time athletes, has to throw the ball and throw it well.

Here's one other Oklahoma vs. Alabama reference in the Sugar Bowl. Do you think Oklahoma only used 6 of the allotted 15 NCCA practice times getting ready for the Crimson Tide? Me either.

3. If Taysom Hill was starting as the Stanford quarterback with the offensive line the Cardinal have, Stanford could very well have been national champions this season. That's my opinion, and I stand by it.

4. Tyler Haws is the new Jimmer. No, not in the way you think. Haws is not the scorer Fredette was, but he is good enough that teams have to game plan for him and mug him with or without the ball.

In Fredette's case, as a junior in the MWC he got calls. But after showing that he was money at the free throw line and opposing coaches complaining that he was getting calls every time he went to the basket, those calls dried up as a senior in the league.

Despite being legitimately fouled, refs were hesitant to make calls because it ruined the flow of the game. Haws is now the new Fredette for BYU. He is being mugged and it's not being called as often as is warranted. That's how it is when there is lobbying from opposing coaches and players and the player being fouled is still good enough to score without the help of a call.

It's the nature of officiating at all levels. The tactic of coaches is to foul hard and often and it won't take long for officials to not want to call a foul every time down the court.

In my opinion, it is the same strategy employed by Utah in football when they play BYU. The Utes have better athletes on the defensive line than BYU has on the offensive line. Their defensive backs get in press coverage and basically hold BYU receivers constantly. Officials are not going to call holding on every play regardless of how valid the call is.

Consequently, the advantage eventually goes to Utah's defensive backs. They know holding isn't going to be called that often and it gives them an ever greater leverage against BYU's ordinary receivers.

5. This week coming week for BYU basketball should be a pleasant experience for all involved. The Cougars host Pepperdine and Loyola Marymount in Provo. There will be plenty of incentive for pay back against the Waves and Lions, both of whom whipped BYU a week ago on their home courts. BYU should be 3-2 by Sunday morning.

The real test to determine if Dave Rose has righted the ship will be the following two weeks when BYU will have a four-game road trip.

They go to San Francisco, Santa Clara, Portland and then finish at Gonzaga.

Quite frankly, a road split of 2-2 would be great, but 1-3 is more likely.

This four game swing will either brand BYU as a contender or pretender. Halford has helped, but BYU will need more than a helping Halford hand to prove that they have any serious chance at earning conference kudos.

6. Tayo Fabulujue is now a facebook and twitter legend in Cougar land. The latest internet rumblings on the 6-7, 315 offensive lineman who has been enrolled at BYU this last semester after transferring from TCU, is that he is headed back to Fort Worth after a semester in Provo and will finish his career at TCU.

Since he wasn't involved athletically at BYU, he actually can transfer back without losing any eligibility. Again, this is all rumor and rumblings based on a few facebook and twitter posts.

The winter semester starts this week in Provo at BYU. If Fabulujue is in class this week, then the TCU tweets are not true. If they are, it will be a major blow to BYU's hope of an improved offensive line for next season.

None of this will or can be confirmed either way until this week when the winter semester starts at BYU.

7. Better outside shooting by BYU certainly help basketball's cause in league play, but another bigger body inside would be better. That's not going to happen. Bronson Kaufusi is a big body and lent that body to BYU and Dave Rose last season.

Not so this year. Kaufusi won't be joining the Cougar basketball team for the remainder of the season. He has decided to concentrate on football and devote his time to spring practice and getting ready for his junior campaign in football.

While talking about big bodies, here's another misevaluation of talent. Mine. I thought Luke Worthington would contribute this season coming out of high school. I was wrong.. He has the big body so desperately needed this season by BYU, but his lack of defense, rebounding and scoring ability in the low post was misdiagnosed by me.

Here's hoping that Worthington can develop in all the areas mentioned above, because he will be needed next year with Eric Mika headed on an LDS mission.

With Mika gone that leaves just Worthington and Nate Austin in the post next year. They will get help from Jamal Aytes, the 6-6 UNLV transfer. Additional help will be in the form of incoming freshman Ryan Andrus and returned missionary Isaac Neilson.

Excitement and anticipation aren't exactly two words that come to my mind when I think about BYU's post play prognosis for next season.

But you be your own judge. Here are some high school video clips of Neilson, Andrus and Aytes. [Neilson # 45](#) [Andrus #23](#) [Aytes #40](#)

BYU Television Timetable

BYU vs. Pepperdine

Thursday, Jan 9 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Northridge (Men's Volleyball)

Saturday, Jan 10 at Provo

Time: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. Loyola Marymount

Saturday, Jan 11 at Provo

Tipoff: 7:00 pm MST

TV: BYUtv

BYU vs. San Francisco

Thursday, Jan 16 at San Francisco

Tipoff: 7:00 Pm MST

TV: ESPNU

BYU vs. Santa Clara

Saturday, Jan 18 at Santa Clara

Tipoff: 8:00 pm MST

TV: Root, CSN Calif and theW.tv

BYU vs. Portland

Thursday, Jan 23 at Portland

Tipoff: 8:00 pm MST

TV: TWC, Root, CSN Calif and theW.tv

BYU vs. Gonzaga

Saturday, Jan 25 at Spokane

Tipoff: 8:00 pm MST

TV: ESPN2