

HB Arnett's ***COUGAR SPORTSLINE***

801 372 0819

hbarnett@fiber.net and hbarnett@xmission.com

1391 West 800 South – Orem, Utah 84058

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PUBLIC RELATIONS, POLITICS AND PUMMELING UNLV

When it comes to football and public relations, winning still solves all problems and perceptions.

The last ten days have not been the perfect primer on public relations for Bronco Mendenhall.

The local press has been banging on the BYU head football coach pretty good.

One columnist said Mendenhall owed all BYU fans a public apology for calling Cougar fans uneducated in the intricacies of football.

Others in the media claimed that the Cougar coach was either a liar or incompetent, depending on when or what he knew about Shiloah Te'o's alleged DUI in late August.

One columnist even claimed that Mendenhall was fostering a culture of snitches.

We never thought that BYU football could be like partisan politics, but when Mendenhall dismissed Te'o, the sophomore backup safety, from the team early last week, Bronco gate was burning brightly. At least that was being portrayed by some in the media.

Beleaguered Bronco

So what is a beleaguered Cougar coach to do?

He could have called a press conference and given out his private cell phone number for BYU fans to use in order to become less dumb by discussing game plans and designing plays with him.

He could have ordered a side car for his Harley Davidson motorcycle and allowed media members to jump in and get closer to his ride and rationale.

Forget firesides. How about a Home Evening with the BYU coach? Everyone is invited Monday night to Mendenhall's house for cookies and coach talk.

Public relation gurus would advocate for more openness, candor or a more contrite attitude.

Instead, Mendenhall took the proboscis approach to public relations. He went and beat the snot out of UNLV.

Even the dumbest fans and the Mensa media understand 59-21, the final score last Saturday night against UNLV in Las Vegas.

Winning solves all problems, public relations or otherwise.

Nothing gets Shiloah Te'o off the front page of the sports section and calumny out of columns like 611 yards of total offense and 59 points on the scoreboard.

Mendenhall Muted

While Mendenhall may have muted some of his critics for another week with the win, there is still some public relations work left for Max Hall.

His image and public perception among some Cougar fans as an ordinary quarterback that throws too many interceptions and can't win a big game took a hit last week against the Rebels.

UNLV is certainly not a big game, but how dare Hall not throw an interception?

Even the biggest proboscises don't get picked all the time. As the newly designated Max Hall apologist, please accept our apology on behalf of Hall for not living up to his image with a pickless proboscis performance.

He is on his own, however, when it comes to the rest of his passing stats against UNLV. He completed 21-of-27 passes for 320 yards and two touchdown passes, a 35-yard completion to Dennis Pitta and a 15-yard scoring strike to J.J. Di Luigi.

At the risk of becoming as annoying as a nasal drip, we still need to mention Harvey Unga and his nose for the end zone.

He scored three touchdowns against the Rebels. His TD runs included 33, 1, and 52-yard scoring jaunts. For the season Unga now has accounted for eight rushing touchdowns. Against UNLV, Unga rushed for 149 yards on 20 carries.

Productive

J.J. Di Luigi also had a nice productive night in the rushing department. He racked up 67 yards and one rushing touchdown on just 6 carries.

Defensively, the Cougars had a nice solid outing. They allowed the Rebels to rack up 337 yards of total offense, but 75 of those yards came on one play when UNLV scored on a defensive mismatch between a BYU linebacker and a Rebel wide receiver. The Rebels also scored on a 94-yard kickoff return. The final UNLV tally came in the waning moments of the game against BYU second and third unit defenders.

Scott Johnson was a big part of the defensive effort with his two interceptions.

With the win, BYU is now 5-1 overall and 2-0 in Mountain West Conference action.

The Cougars are now ranked No. 18 in the AP poll and No. 19 in the USA Today/Coaches poll.

AZTECS UNDEFEATED AT HOME

That sounds like a scary headline, but it is less frightening when you realize that San Diego State's two home wins this season came against Southern Utah and New Mexico State.

Holding on to that home winning streak for the Aztecs should be much harder this Saturday when BYU shows up.

The Cougars will take their revved up offense and match up with Rocky Long, the new SDSU defensive coordinator.

Long was employed as the head coach at New Mexico for years, before resigning to take the coordinator job with new Aztec head coach Brady Hoke.

Long is not only a good defensive coach, he has a great sense of timing. He got out of Albuquerque before the program imploded.

Coaching and timing will be a big issue for BYU Saturday night.

Long will try and keep Max Hall from having time to complete passes. Long will bring pressure and use his 3-3-5 defense to try and get to Hall and confuse him.

Hall has seen this defense for the last two seasons at New Mexico and won't be surprised.

We expect to see BYU to try and remain balanced in their offensive attack with Harvey Unga getting at least 20 touches on the ground.

The Aztecs are coming off a bye week so there should be some new wrinkles employed by the

Aztecs, but if the Cougars don't go overboard with the turnovers, this is a game that BYU should win. We call it BYU 41 SDSU 21.

BYU BASKETBALL STARTS PRACTICE

This week will mark the official start of practice for BYU basketball for the 2009-2010 season.

The Cougars were selected as the prohibitive preseason favorite to repeat as Mountain West Conference champion last week at the conference media gathering in Colorado.

BYU returns four starters from last year and also the preseason selection as conference player of the year in Jimmer Fredette, the junior guard from New York.

Also returning is Jonathan Tavernari, another first-team preseason selection by conference followers.

Tavernari is coming off a very nice summer where he was the only non-professional to make the Brazilian National team.

The other two returning starters include Jackson Emery and Chris Miles.

Dave Rose will be looking for a way to replace Lee Cummond, but will have a smorgasbord of selections to choose from in returners Noah Harsock and Charles Abouo and new incoming freshman Tyler Haws.

You can get your first look at the Cougars in a couple weeks. The annual Cougar tipoff is set for Wednesday, Oct 28. BYU will play two exhibition games in early November. Trinity Western is set for Thursday, November 5 and Central Washington will be the opponent on Tuesday, November 10. That game will be shown on BYUTV.

The first regular season game is against Bradley in Provo on Friday, November 13. That contest is set to be televised on the Mtn.

Recruiting

While this season has yet to get underway, Dave Rose and his staff are already recruiting and evaluating for the coming seasons.

As mentioned last week, Kyle Collinsworth, the top prospect in Utah and a nationally noted recruit, has agreed to sign with the Cougars in November.

Last week we mentioned that BYU is already looking down the line at ninth grade prospects Nick Emery of Lone Peak HS in Utah and Jabari Parker, of Simeon HS in Chicago.

Dave Rose was at College of Southern Idaho a week ago on a recruiting jaunt.

We don't think it was a random visit.

Christian Parker is a guard on the CSI squad. He is a redshirt freshman and is also the older brother of Jabari Parker.

He signed out of high school with BYU-Hawaii and redshirted as a freshman. He then served a two-year LDS mission to Atlanta, but decided that he wanted to give Division I basketball a look and is hoping that somebody will show interest while he is at CSI.

Parker is only 6-0, but the Cougars will be looking for a replacement for backup point guard Lamont Morgan, Jr. Morgan is a senior and will be gone next season.

We will see how it all shakes out. If BYU is indeed recruiting Christian Parker it means Dave Rose was able to get an official in-home visit in the Parker home in Chicago. That would be good for current recruiting and future recruiting.

We are pretty sure that we have given the Parker background before, but here it is again.

Sonny Parker, the father of Christian and Jabari, was a former first round NBA pick coming out of Texas A&M. A 6-8 forward, who played two years at Mineral Area JC in Missouri before becoming an Aggie, he was selected by the Golden State Warriors.

He had a six-year NBA stint.

He established the Sonny Parker Youth Foundation and is a fixture in basketball and multi-cultural programs for inner-city children in Chicago.

Parker is not LDS, but his wife is. Lola Parker, is Tongan and a returned LDS missionary. She and her husband have seven children. She is also relative of the Moeaki family of Warrenville, just outside of Chicago.

She is the aunt of Keilani Moeaki, a current BYU women's basketball player. There also were two other Moeaki's that played football for the Cougars a few years back.

QUARTERBACK QUEUE

Max Hall...Picky, Picky, Picky. Hall didn't have any against UNLV. Halls is currently No. 6 in the nation in quarterback efficiency leaders with a 162.6 rating.

The top five are Jimmy Clausen, Notre Dame, Kellen Moore, Boise State, Tim Tebow, Florida, Bill Stull, Pitt and Riley Skinner, Wake Forest.

Despite the high qb rating, Hall's approval rating among Cougar fans has suffered because of his penchant for throwing picks. He has ten so far this year to go along with his 13 touchdowns.

His fan-based approval rating should get a little bounce this week because of his pick-free game against UNLV.

Riley Nelson...Because of the blowout, he did not throw a pass, but had four carries for 17 yards. One of those was a 2-yard touchdown run after O'Neill Chambers returned a kickoff 97 yards. Nelson scored on the next play.

What should have excited BYU fans for the future was what Nelson did late in the game. On third and long, he ran a quarterback draw for eight yards and a first down. He then took a knee twice to end the game.

In case you forgot the play, Nelson actually juke'd a UNLV defender out of his shoes on the carry.

It has been a long time since BYU has had a quarterback that can make plays consistently with his feet, but that is what Nelson will bring to the table next season.

It is unfair and unreasonable to make assumptions based solely on mop up and limited action, but since we gave Max Hall's passing efficiency numbers, here's Nelson's passing stats for the year. He is 5-for-5 for 73 yards and one touchdown and no interceptions. That gives him a current QB efficiency rating of 288.6.

James Lark and Jason Munns...Both are still serving missions. Lark is due back in January and Munns will return in May.

Jake Heaps...It was another blowout for Heaps. Skyline HS defeated Eastlake HS 43-7 last week. Heaps was 14-29 for 270 yards and 4 touchdowns.

Tanner Mangum...Another week, another loss for the sophomore qb from Timberline HS in Boise. He was 11-31 for 125 yards in a 48-0 loss to Rocky Mountain.

Alex Kuresa...The junior qb completed 14-of-17 passes for 198 yards and 3 touchdowns as Mountain Crest defeated Logan 42-21 last week.

Football Fluff and Stuff

Peyton Manning, the Indianapolis Colts quarterback, would have been a perfect fit as a BYU quarterback. Based on what we have seen the last two weeks, he is the prototypical BYU QB who can't see

the entire field and never looks off defenders.

How else do you explain the All-Pro quarterback's penchant in the last two games for locking on to Austin Collie? When did Robert Anae start calling Colt plays?

This Collie connection for Manning has to stop or sales of Manning jerseys in Provo will be in a steep decline.

Collie's career, in this his first season in the NFL, seems to be ascending quite nicely, thank you very much.

For a fourth-round pick, he has put up some first-round type numbers in his last two outings.

Two weeks ago, in a 34-17 win over Seattle, Collie had six receptions for 65 yards and his first professional touchdown. That TD catch was good enough to get plenty of highlight mileage on most of the NFL coverage that day.

Yesterday, Collie was even better. He had 8 catches for 97 yards and two touchdowns in a 31-9 Indianapolis victory over Tennessee.

The performance was seen and commented on nationwide. No longer is Collie a nice human interest story in Indianapolis because of his Mormon faith and missionary service, he is now just a very good rookie receiver for the Colts.

In case you missed it, here are the basics of the Shiloah Te'o story.

It was announced early last week that the sophomore backup safety was dismissed from the BYU football team by Bronco Mendenhall for a violation of team rules.

Te'o subsequently withdrew from school. He will not be returning to the team or school.

In late August, Te'o was arrested in Provo on suspicion of DUI. According to Mendenhall, he had heard reports of possible involvement by BYU players and called Te'o in to quiz him on the matter.

Again, according to Mendenhall, Te'o denied anything had happened.

Public records show that Te'o was arrested on suspicion of DUI and two other traffic violations Aug. 29.

Charges weren't filed, however, until Sept. 18.

The Bronco brouhaha then came about when the local media wanted to know how much Mendenhall knew and when he knew it in reference to Te'o.

Mendenhall says that the decision to boot Te'o from the team was more a result of having a player lie to him than the actual infraction.

In our opinion, there is no muck to rake up on Mendenhall. If there is going to be some kind of cover-up, you don't spend time and effort on covering up something done by a special teams player who sees only limited action on the field.

Mistakes were made by the player and maybe Mendenhall in being too trusting, but its time to move on and wish both parties well.

TELEVISION TIMETABLE

BYU vs. San Diego State

Saturday, Oct 17 at San Diego

Kickoff: 4:00 pm Mountain Time

TV: The Mtn

BYU vs. TCU

Saturday, Oct 24 at Provo

Kickoff: 5:30 pm Mountain Time

TV: Versus

BYU vs. Wyoming

Saturday, Nov 7 at Laramie

Kickoff: Noon Mountain Time

TV: The Mtn

BYU vs. New Mexico

Saturday, Nov 14 at Albuquerque

Kickoff: Noon Mountain Time

TV: The Mtn