

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

Red, Blue And Pigskin

This must be how Phil Connors felt. Every year, different pieces, same story. No matter how dominant one team is, and no matter how hapless the other team is, when it comes to the end, the game is always on the line, waiting for something strange, and crazy to happen.

Of course, I'd rather suffer through this kind of Groundhog's Day than the one Byu fans are living through.

Note: In this analogy, 2011 is the suicide montage from the movie.

The Holy War has come and gone, and while it won't be back until next November, there still enough time to look back at the good, the bad, and the ugly for both teams and see what we can learn about both teams after the rivalry clash.

But first...There's Ugly, And Then There's Horrifically, Misfigured, Better To Stay Hidden Under The Stairs, Fugly

Before we get to what happened with the two teams, I'm sure anyone who watched that broadcast can agree on one thing. The worst part of the night was that broadcast duo. I know Utah and Byu isn't usually an ESPN announcer's prime choice for assignment, and there has been plenty of time were announcers weren't fully prepared, but the duo of Mike Patrick and Tommy Tuberville took incompetence to an entirely new level. Jake Heaps aspires to be as bad at his job as they were.

Wrong names, Faulty information, flat out false information, going multiple plays without saying anything. A general lack of understanding the rules of football. It was terrible.

I knew ESPN was suffering, as evident by all those layoffs, but judging by the production quality of the telecast, and this announce team, they must have been really really hurting. I think we all heard why Tuberville is no longer a coach.

I'm also sorry to say Byu fans, that you have to suffer through that again next week. I'm sure Utah will get them again soon as well, which is a fate that shouldn't be bestowed upon anybody.

Rise And Shout

It wasn't a good game for Byu. We're starting to get enough data that we can get a feel for exactly what this year's Byu team is. It's not good overall, but there was still some good takeaways from their 7th consecutive Holy War defeat.

The Good

Red Zone Defense - There's more later on about defense between the twenties, but for the 2nd straight week, the defense did a great job of not breaking in the most important part of the field.

Byu might have finally found their running back. Ula Tolutau provided a much needed spark for an otherwise dead offense, and was the driving force for Byu's first TD. He rushed 5 times for 25 yards, and a TD. Utah struggled to adjust to his entry into the game. The big question mark is whether Tolutau can stay healthy. He's already nursing a camp injury, which is why he was limited to only 5 yards rushing.

For all his faults, one thing remains true about Mangum, he remains calm under pressure, but.....

No fake punts.

Jonah Trinnaman gave Byu a spark on their first scoring drive by breaking a long TD return, only to be taken down by a diving Mitch Wishnowsky.

Byu's run defense. They keyed on Zack Moss all night, and were not going to let Huntley give him the ball.

The Bad

We're starting to see who the real Mangum is. He may be calm under pressure, but he's struggling in this system. Even Detmer made a reference to it this week, that since he no longer has the 6'5" WR to just throw it up to, it's hurt his production.

The Offense as a whole is terrible. Outside of Tolutau, and when Utah went zone late in the game, Byu just could not sustain any forward momentum.

The WR's are unable to get separation.

Between the 20's, for the 2nd straight week, Byu defense was exposed. It's a good thing they've been able to tighten up in the red zone, but I'm not sure they want to keep playing with fire.

The Ugly

Again the Offense....

Not to pick on a player but Aleva Hifo had a night to forget. His early offensive pass interference call was one of the most obvious and blatant offensive picks I've ever seen, and it erased a TD that would have given Byu an early lead. He also dropped a gimme pass on the first play of the last drive when Byu was angling for a miracle drive to win.

Moving On

Byu is struggling right now. Things won't be any easier this week as they welcome the Wisconsin Badgers into town. They'll be doing it without Tanner Mangum who after being beaten up the last couple weeks suffered a high ankle sprain last week and is gone for 4-6 weeks. In his place will be Beau Hoge, a sophomore, and son of former NFL running back Merrill Hoge.

Wisconsin has to be extremely giddy as they watch tape of the LSU game, because they are very much a power run game type of offense, who is currently ranked 13th in the nation in rushing yards with 295.5 yards per game. That said, Byu's defense will be better than Fighting Lane Kiffin's of FAU, and Utah State who the Badgers destroyed in week 1 by the score of 59-10

With Mangum out, and Hoge starting, this game looks to be a continuation of the previous two games, where the offense is going to struggle to find its footing, while the Bend but don't break mentality of the defense is going to get really, really, tested.

Who Am I, Sir

Much like with Byu, there are some things to take away from a lackluster Utah performance in the Holy War.

The Good

Tyler Huntley..... He's dynamic, he doesn't make a lot of bad decisions passing the ball. As we saw with the deep pass in the middle, he has quite the arm. This offense is made for him. It's early, obviously, but if this kid can continue to develop, continue to get comfortable, he could develop into a star in a few years. Against Byu he had nearly 400 yards of offense.

The defense did what the defense does. It smothered the Byu WR's making it impossible for them to get any room. Shut down the Byu running game, and harassed and tortured Mangum into 3 interceptions and many other rushed passes and poor decisions. It seemed that Utah could get a guy in the back field whenever they wanted.

The offense as a whole is definitely far improved from what we've seen the last few years. This offense is dynamic. Utah is using more of the field than they have in years past and was doing a good job of getting WR's open in space. Carrington especially always seemed to find a hole in between defenders whenever Utah needed a first down.

The Defensive Backfield especially had a great night. Julian Blackmon and Jayce Johnson were locking down the BYU WR's all night long.

The Bad

Running game. Byu was keying on Moss all night, forcing Huntley to keep it on the reads, but the non QB running game

was bad this week. Utah will need more of week 1 and less of week 2, especially to help keep Huntley healthy.

Red Zone scoring. Utah officially went scoreless on 2 red zone trips, but one of those was the very end of the game when they went into victory formation. Outside of the 2 scoreless trips, the Utes had to settle for Field Goals way too many times. Utah has got to start converting red zone trips into 7 points instead of 3.

Even though everyone knew Matt Bushman was Mangum's favorite target, he still was able to get enough room to make a few plays.

The Ugly

Penalties. Far too many penalties. The Utes have been called for 11 penalties each game so far. The only thing that seemed able to stop Utah was their own stupid penalties last week. Penalties are what kept them from being a 2 or even 3 score game. Utah must get those under control.

Sunia Tauteoli. It doesn't matter if you started your tackle before the QB Slides. The second you drop your head you're being dumb.

Avoiding A Hangover

Last season, the Utes beat Byu in a tight holy war matchup. The week after they played San Jose and came out looking extremely flat for the first half, even trailing 10-6 midway through the 2nd quarter before the Utes finally put the Byu game behind them, and pulled away, eventually sacking San Jose State 10 times in 34-17 win.

San Jose State isn't a good team, but they already showed once this year they can be frisky if the opponent isn't mentally ready. The opponent that Utah is really going up against this week is Byu. For whatever reason, Utah has had a very hard time shaking off the Byu game. Since joining the Pac-12, when the game got moved from the last week of the season Utah is 1-3 in the weeks following the Byu game.

This is the last week for Utah to sharpen up their game before entering Pac-12 play.

Nice Lid

This is also the annual Ute Proud game. The game where Utah wears a uniform and/or helmet designed with the Ute Indian tribe in mind. (It's also the game where in the past the tribe has come out to perform at halftime, which is really cool.)

This year they've redesigned the helmet, to incorporate the Indian logos within the U, and I must say, Me Likey.

Honestly, I really like what the Utes, and Under Armour have done with their helmets the last few years. We've gotten some really nice designs and alternate lids.

For Your Viewing Pleasure

The Wisconsin/Byu matchup will be the early afternoon network game, kicking off at 1:30 p.m. Mountain Time, and being broadcast on ABC. This of course means a much larger audience will get to feel the pain of Mike Patrick and Tommy Tuberville. Really Byu fans, I'm sorry.

Utah vs San Jose will be a late game, kicking off at 8:00 p.m. and will be broadcast on Espn 2.

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