

Thursday, October 5, 2017

Red, Blue And Pigskin

Okay, so I guess it could get worse. The first three losses weren't unexpected. Maybe we didn't expect them to perform as badly as they did, but Byu losing the previous three games wasn't out of the realm of expectation.

But Utah State was sitting there as the perfect get well medicine for the Cougars. After all, this is the modus operandi of the Cougars.

It's not just the loss to Utah State that was unexpected. Rivalry games have weird results.

It was the turnovers, the injuries, and the offense being flat out unprepared and inept that was so unexpected. You can't prepare for injuries, but the others can definitely be coached and prepped for.

At Least The Defense Was Solid

Congratulations to Utah State. You made the plays needed to win the game, but man that wasn't a pretty offensive game for either team. It started out really good for Utah State. First drive they just marched down the field for an opening Touchdown. Except for 3 deep bombs, that would be the last bit of good offense we'd see the rest of the night.

The rest of the game turned into Byu giving Utah State the ball and daring them to score, and Utah State saying, thanks but no thanks.

And boy, did Byu keep giving Utah State the ball. Byu would end up with 7 turnovers on the night. Two of which were Pick sixes by Jalen Davis. Davis actually ended up with a 3rd interception and was by far the most productive receiving threat for the Cougars. Too bad for them he wore an Aggie uniform.

In addition to the four interceptions, the Cougars also had 3 fumbles, two of which were by Ula Tolutau. Outside of those two fumbles, Tolutau was the only bright spot for the offense, as he continues to show he's a force of a running back.

Byu did manage to quick scoring drives thanks to a 26 yard, and 40 yard TD passes by Beau Hoge, and it looked like Byu was going to roll. Then a horrific pass led to Jalen Davis' first pick six. On the next drive, Hoge suffered a concussion, and it was all she wrote, as Koy Detmer, and Austin Kafenzis proved to be unable to get anything going.

Yet with 12 minutes to play in the game it was only a single digit lead for the Aggies, even after 6 turnovers at that point. This was because Byu's defense kept shutting the Aggies offense down, forcing them to turn 6 turnovers into only 18 points. When you consider that Utah State started 4 drives inside the Byu 40, that's not a good offensive showing.

There Went The Room For Error

Byu's front end of the schedule was always going to leave them with very little room for error in the rest of the games if they wanted to make a bowl game. With the loss last Friday, the Cougars are now playing with no room for error. Assuming they lose to Boise State, and Mississippi State, as expected, they will be sitting at 1-6, meaning they would have to win out to reach 7-6 and be bowl eligible.

Of course a win either of the next two weeks, gives them that bit of breathing room again. Enter the Boise State Broncos, who might just be that unexpected win for Byu. Much like the Cougars, the Broncos are suffering through a bit of a down year, though admittedly not as bad as Byu.

The Broncos come into this game at 2-2. Last week they were on bye after having been crushed by Bronco Mendenhall and the Virginia Cavaliers 42-23. The Broncos come into this game ranked roughly in the middle of the nation in most offensive categories, except rushing where they are truly dreadful. The shine has started to come off head coach Brian Harsin, and a loss this week to the Cougars will really cause some unrest in potato country.

Any chance for a surprise upset though relies on who the Cougars roll out at QB. Tanner was back at practice this week it seemed, but just how close is he to coming back from that high ankle sprain. I'd seriously doubt Hoge is back, as he

was really seeing stars when he was taken off the field. Rumors are that's his 2nd concussion in 3 weeks (2 games.) Considering his dad's history with concussions, I can't think he'd be rushed back too quickly.

That leaves Koy Detmer, or the Cougars to burn a redshirt off one of their 2 true freshmen. The Cougars desperately need Koy or Tanner if they're going to pull the upset.

If all else fails, I say put Jonny Linehan back there. Boise would never expect that. And at the very least, he's always funny on twitter afterwards.

Let's Hope They Lose That Love-in Feeling

Utah fresh off their bye host the Stanford Cardinal, also known as their Pac-12 twin. Much like Utah, the Cardinal play a style where they're more than comfortable grinding it out, letting their defense win an ugly game.

Of course this year, the Cardinal have Bryce Love, who has over 1000 yards rushing on the season. In only 5 games. The rest of their offense isn't very good this year, but when your running back is averaging over 200 yards a game, it can make up for a lot of offensive problems. Just ask John White, Devontae Booker, and Joe Williams.

For the Utes, they'll bring the nations 10th ranked rush defense and see if they can slow down Love. It's looking more and more like the Utes will be without Bradlee Anae or Kylie Fitts at the defense end positions, so don't be surprised if you see Mokofisi scoot out to the end, and the Utes use a bit of a hybrid 3-5 defense. I expect Chase Hansen to be brought down from his safety position to lend run support.

If the Utes can't contain Love, no one can stop him, they have no chance. If they can contain Love, I don't think it'll matter whether Huntley is back this week or if it's Williams behind center. Although if it's Williams I hope the Troy Taylor spent the bye week tailoring the game plan to him, which means getting rid of the read option, since Williams just isn't as dynamic a runner.

Another key aspect for Utah is they have to stop shooting themselves in the foot with penalties. This will be their 5th game, plenty of time to iron out the issues from the first month.

Despite the fact that the offense is drastically improved this year, I expect this game to be a throwback to the type of games Utah has specialized in the last 10 years. Lower scoring, grind it out, physical and ugly win or lose.

On A Positive Note

One good thing did happen during the bye. Utah kick Matt Gay went from a Senior to a Junior, thanks to the NCAA extending his eligibility clock because of serving a mission. That means another year without worry too much about the kicking game.

For Your Viewing Pleasure

The Broncos and Cougars will get your weekend started Friday Night with an 8:15 kickoff time on ESPN.

24 hours later, the Utes and Cardinal will get things started on Fox Sports 1 with their 8:15 Saturday night kickoff time.

Next week, though the Utes will be done before late night, as their matchup with USC has been tabbed for the Saturday Primetime ABC game. Kickoff will be 6:00 p.m. on ABC.

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