

Thursday, October 29, 2009

Red, Blue, And Pigskin

I hate Air Force week. A series that had seen 11 of it's previous 12 decided by 7 points or less saw another go down to the wire, as the Utes got another ugly win. Meanwhile Happy Valley is seeking a name change after running into the TCU Buzzsaw. A game that if possible, was even worse than last year.

So what questions - if any - were asked, and what questions now remain? Also, now that TCU is the leading Non-AQ Team in the BCS Standings what are their chances for a national championship appearance, especially considering some of the effusive praise coming their way.

And yes, Utah did just fumble again. What I Saw At LaVell Edwards Stadium by AoD

AoD was brave enough to go into enemy territory this past week and has brought us a spy report which we will see throughout this week's article.

First, I'd like to thank Sideshow for letting me chip in here. I had the opportunity to go see this game in person, and I wanted to share a few of the thoughts I had, but didn't want to be responsible for the whole setup of the article - Sideshow was generous enough to let me contribute to this thing he's been doing pretty much solo for the past few years now. I'd also really like to thank my friend Greg for inviting a very vocal Ute fan to attend probably one of the most hyped BYU games of the year. Even though BYU lost, I really enjoyed watching these two teams go head-to-head from the bleachers rather than my couch - even though it WAS in "Portal XX, Row 147".

Now, I realize I'm no football expert - I'm just a huge fan who "armchair coaches" a lot, but there were a few things on both teams that really stood out to me that I wanted to share.

We'll hear some more of AoD's game report, but first a little bit about another Ugly win for the Utes.

Offensive woes, but Defense looked great.

I'm one who always thinks that the Air Force game should be viewed in a partial vacuum. They use such a unique offensive system. Teams just don't see the offense a lot, even those who play them every year, and so that week leading up to the game spends more time on the defensive side of the ball in practice than normal.

That doesn't mean the Utes shouldn't be worried about some of the things they saw offensively this past week. First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth on that list of course would be fumbles. Utah put the ball on the ground 6 times. Fortunately they only lost 2, on 2 consecutive series. Terrence Cain fumbled 3 times. Matthews had 2 fumbles on punt returns and David Reed fumbled once. Those 6 fumbles bring up the total of fumbles on the year to 22. An outrageously high number for a 6-1 team ranked in the top 20. A stat that if not taken care of will come back to haunt this team.

Those fumbles helped to prevent the Utes offense, and specifically Terrence Cain from getting into a rhythm. Now Cain has been talked about a lot, and I don't really want to go into the same old comments this week. The only thing I will say is that those who are calling for Wynn to see some time are sadly mistaken. This year is more about future progression. Utes are better served to leave the Redshirt on Wynn and finish this season with Cain. 3 years post Cain of Wynn, is much better than 2 years. Especially if Wynn is as good as has been advertised.

Also think about this, The Utes are the only team so far this season to score more than 20 on Air Force's defense. Even if they were all ugly points.

Defensively the Utes played probably their best game of the year. They played a bend but don't break defense against the Falcons, which is about all you can do. But they kept the Falcons out of the endzone except for one drive that started at the 12. Most impressively for the defense is at the end of the game, when they had spent 30+ minutes on the field. A time when most defenses weekend, the Utes defense stiffened and was even tougher than the start.

Robert Johnson may have earned himself a first day draft slot.

Part of that strong defensive performance was Robert Johnson. Everyone knows how good Johnson is around the ball, the question was always how physical could he be. He answered that question very strongly. Johnson was constantly around the point of attack and racked up somewhere between 13 and 2000 tackles.

Robert Johnson is arguably the best safety in College Football. I know many will say it's Taylor Mays from USC, but Mays is having a down year, while RoJo's progression each season continues to go up. He's 3rd in the country in Interceptions, and Interceptions per game. He has more turnovers himself (8) than some FBS teams.

The problem with all players coming out of MWC schools is they don't get the respect as players from bigger schools when it comes to the draft board, but Robert Johnson's game this past weekend will definitely have earned him a selection in the first two rounds, and should he continue his season it will be a first round selection.

Also the Miami Dolphins, and San Diego Chargers both had scouts at the game. Both of them are familiar with Utah Defensive Backs (Eric Weddle for San Diego, and Sean Smith for Miami), maybe they were coming back to the well again.

Same mistakes, Same issues, Same result.

Watching the TCU game, I was amazed at how many issues from last years game, reared their ugly head again this year. We knew that this game would basically hinge on BYU's ability to match TCU's speed, how they'd keep that Defensive Line from getting pressure on Max Hall, and how Hall would handle that pressure, and finally how would Coach Mendenhall and Coordinator Anai do with their in game adjustments.

Looking back maybe we were asking too much of the Cougars.

Pretty much from the start it was clear that the speed was going to be an issue. Jerry Hughes and country was able to get into the back field so much, I thought they should have been given BYU jerseys, which will bring to the first of AoD's observations.

At least once on every BYU offensive series, I felt there was a chance for Hall to step up and make the big play - and every time, Hall would sprint backwards 5 yards, throw a 3 yard 'dump' pass, and make his receiver fight for 2 or 3 yards just to get back to the line of scrimmage.

While this is better than last year's insistence on going deep, and may have been a result of the TCU defense taking away favorite target Dennis Pitta, it was pretty clear that as the game went on, Max Hall did seem very quick to dump off to the flat outlet. Even when it was a bad idea, and ended up as a lateral/fumble.

But the TCU Defensive line didn't have it's own way all night.

TCU is weak in the tackle box

Probably the only real weakness I saw in the ***OUTSTANDING*** TCU defense was against the run between the tackles. This also led to the occasional over-commit to men inside the box, and I saw a number of chances where I thought calling a stretch play on an audible might have been very effective.

AoD is correct, the Cougars could run the ball on the Horned Frogs, at least when they tried to run it up the middle. Much like last years game, Unga was having a fair bit of success, getting 5-6 yards a pop on straight up the gut runs. However, much like last year, either Coach Mendenhall, or Anai insisted on ignoring this fact and passing way too often, which brings up another point of AoD's.

Bronco Mendenhall, or his OC, are either completely incapable or entirely unwilling to make half-time adjustments. It doesn't take a tactical genius to realize that when you go into the half down 21-7, **SOMETHING NEEDS TO CHANGE**. And yet, BYU came back and played ***exactly*** the same as they played in the first half. Honestly - they would have had almost nothing to lose by going to a completely different offensive set, such as a veer or even the venerable wishbone - **SOMETHING** to get your players off their heels!

While a new offensive system would be a bit much, I do agree that the Cougars just do not make any in game adjustments. Mendenhall insists that a game comes down to execution. While execution does make a huge difference, coaching, and specifically the ability to adjust to what the other team is doing is a big part of winning games. This is an area that Mendenhall and Anai have been severely lacking in for the past couple years.

Also how about changing it up a bit. Sure the Single Wing Formation is all the rage in football nowadays, and while I think it's a bit overused, the one thing that it has done it brought some creativity to offensive football. The Cougars could use some offensive creativity. Maybe a trick play or two.

To further underline the fact that Mendenhall does not make many changes is the fact that most of these issues, were issues that were made obvious last year against TCU, and then further highlighted by Utah, and Arizona. They were also once again brought to light against FSU this year.

Finally, the other issue which has been made clear, not just last weekend, but the past couple weekends:

BYU's secondary is a problem

They have at least two issues - one of which was pointed out to me by a co-worker (who I'll refer to here as "AP") who sat next to me during the game. First, as AP pointed out to me, they have a serious lack of both height and speed at the corner position. The second problem is almost certainly a direct result of this - they try to play "predictive football" instead of just playing the ball. Every time they tried to jump routes, Dalton would pull the ball back down and either select a different receiver or leg it out himself. A little bit of misdirection could go a LONG way against this Cougar defense.

TCU now in the drivers seat.

As I predicted two weeks ago, TCU finally made the jump over Boise State in the BCS standings. The victory over the Cougars also has started to bring a lot of the same talk Utah got last year in regards to their deserving of a national championship spot.

Truth is they won't get a national championship shot, whether they are deserving of it or not, but they are most definitely in the driver's seat for the Non-AQ BCS berth. Boise State just doesn't have the schedule to match, especially with a matchup against Utah still to come for TCU.

'09 shaping up to be exactly like '08

It's strange to see that the more things change the more they stay the same. Last year BYU was soaring high, with lots of hopes coming into the TCU game, only to see those hopes embarrassingly dashed.

Same thing happened this year. And the victory against BYU set up a late season matchup against Utah for a possible BCS Bowl berth. This years game again will have a possible BCS berth on the line for the winner. Of course for Utah to get the berth they'd need some help from a Boise State loss.

While TCU would definitely be the favorite in the game against Utes, AoD has two notes that Utes fans should keep in mind for that game in 3 weeks. One that helps the Utes, and one that hurts the Utes.

TCU's punter is AMAZING!

I really thought highly of TCU's special teams on the return side of the ball coming into this game - they had gotten a lot of press for their punt and kick returns. However, I think this game showed that their punter is perhaps the best I've seen since Sakoda disappeared into the ranks of the Saskatchewan Roughriders. Both the height and the distance of his punts made it difficult for BYU to ever get decent starting field position, even when the BYU defense held strong. Given the predilection of the Utes to make poor decisions on punt returns this year, I'm *very* concerned about this aspect of the coming contest between TCU and the Utes.

Andy Dalton caves under pressure in the pocket

Every time a BYU defender got anywhere NEAR Dalton, his passes went absolutely wild. Admittedly, he's lining up behind what might just be the best O-Line in college football right now, so it's not as easy to exploit this as I'd like it to be - but there's something there, if Coach Whit can find a way to use it. Of course, you have to be careful not to over-pursue him as well - he's shown over and over that he can make plays with his legs.

Home Field Advantage

Finally I asked AoD to report on the BYU Crowd. While they claim to have a great home field advantage, it has long been my belief that they are easily silenced. This was made obvious by FSU when the Tomahawk Chop could be heard loud and clear.

Here is what he had to say:

Sideshow also asked me to comment a little bit on (in his words): "the mood of the home crowd after they got down a bit". Actually, the apparent lack of "football IQ" of the average Cougar fan really was kind of shocking to me. At 14-0 TCU, about 20% of the stadium vacated, and it wasn't even the second quarter yet. The Cougar fans would yell and cheer when their team was getting ready to hike the ball on third down - I imagine they thought they were encouraging the players, but I'm pretty confident it led to at least one drive-killing false start penalty on an offensive series that had otherwise been showing some sparks of hope. By the end of the third quarter, the stadium was nearly 75% empty, and I moved down to sit in a padded seat right near the endzone that TCU was currently on their way to visit.

But perhaps the most telling - and definitely the most *embarrassing* - moment of the night for Cougar fans probably came midway through the second quarter. For twenty minutes, I'd been sitting on a bleacher listen to someone who was ostensibly a Cougar fan complaining VERY LOUDLY at everything BYU did. It got so bad that the aforementioned "AP" offered me \$20 to punch him in the face - I declined because I didn't want to be ejected from the game, but it was something I'd gladly have done *for* *free* under other circumstances. Finally, one of the other people on my row mumbled just barely loud enough for this idiot to hear "Why don't you shut up?" The loudmouth demanded the person repeat his comment, but they seemed unwilling to do so, so I turned around, looked him right in the eye and said "He said 'Why don't you just shut up', and I agree with him. You're being pretty annoying." The guy backed down, and turned down the volume on his invective, but it was a little bit later when I heard this guy - who moments ago had an opinion on *EVERYTHING* going on down on the field - turned and asked the person sitting next to him what "Roughing the quarterback" means. This is a fanbase that seems to believe that everything has to go perfectly their way every play of every game, or they're ready to put Mendenhall to the torch. Their attitude was dismissive to the players, unfair to the coaches, and frankly made me even more firmly a Utah man than I'd ever been before. Maybe if their fanbase will grow up a little bit, the Cougars can start to win some of these challenging home games.

I have a theory. Ever since last years TCU games BYU fans have had a fear of the other shoe dropping. BYU also has a problem when a team jumps on them early. Therefore whenever a team strikes early against the Cougars, the fans start to think that the other shoe is dropping and get really tight. For this reason it is really easy to take the BYU home crowd out of the game.

Moving On

Both Utah, and BYU must face the difficult task of putting last week behind them.

For Utah they may want to relax just a bit after getting past Air Force. Especially with typical lightweight Wyoming coming into town. While Wyoming may be weak, they are vastly improved over the past few years. Utah should win, but they cannot relax as Wyoming would be looking to pull an upset out of its hat.

As for BYU they have a tougher task. First, because they are coming off of a loss, and secondly, they have a bye this week. Byes after a loss can be tough, because they can either leave a team to dwell on what just happened, or it can give them extra time of renewed focus.

After the bye BYU faces the same Wyoming team Utah sees this week.

Posted by Sideshow at 11:11

Tuesday, October 27. 2009

Happy Halloween

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Posted by The Mad Giggler in Personal Entry at 11:07

Monday, October 26, 2009

Podcast 39: Unforgettable - That's what Kahless is...

Once again, Joey and I show the world why we have a weekly TALK show instead of a weekly MUSICAL NUMBER. For the misanthropes out there, you'll enjoy our TNG rendition of Unforgettable. Mediocre episodes this week for us to talk about, but we were able to have some good conversation none the less. This podcast covers episodes 21-24 of Star Trek: The Next Generation, Season 6.

Various topics discussed in this podcast include:

- Â Â Â Â 10 books that screwed up the world
- Â Â Â Â The philosophy of why Joey thinks he is always right
- Â Â Â Â Can the mentally ill be held responsible for what they do?
- Â Â Â Â Exploring your darker side
- Â Â Â Â Xenophysiology must be the toughest field of study
- Â Â Â Â Dealing with a personal religious crisis
- Â Â Â Â Boots should not be worn on a star ship
- Â Â Â Â Joey can control his bladder
- Â Â Â Â I Fight Dragons
- Â Â Â Â JC Hutchins 7th Son Novel

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Here are the ratings that we gave for each show: Frame of Mind: 54min 09sec

Peter: SciFi - 8 Television - 7

Joey: SciFi - 8 Television - 8

Suspicious: 19min 58sec

Peter: SciFi - 6 Television - 2

Joey: SciFi - 6 Television - 1

Rightful Heir: 43min 35sec

Peter: SciFi - 6 Television - 4

Joey: SciFi - 4 Television - 5

Second Chances: 17min 18sec

Peter: SciFi - 5 Television - 5

Joey: SciFi - 4 Television - 5

If you have something to say then we welcome your comments below, or feel free to email us at trekwest5@thehomestarmy.com, twitter us at hashtag [TrekWest5](#), or leave us a voicemail at 801-788-4913.

Posted by Radar in Podcast at 04:00

Friday, October 23, 2009

Red, Blue, and Pigskin

This is it. The moment BYU fans have been waiting for ever since their quest for perfection went off the rails last year. The victory over OU, BYU fans were excited, but the real fans knew it meant nothing compared to this week. And as the season has turned out to show us, it really didn't mean anything anyways.

The embarrassment against Florida State, yea it was bad, but the real fans knew redemption awaited this week.

This is the week we learn, did BYU learn from their mistakes. How much did Max Hall learn from last year?

Last week Utah exorcised some demons against UNLV. This week BYU looks to do the same against TCU. Strength vs Strength in conferences best offense vs. conferences best defense
Brigham Young offense is averaging 469.4 yards and 38.6 points per game. TCU's defense is averaging 238 yards and 13.7 points per game allowed. So what happens when the unstoppable meets the immovable? We're going to find out, but history suggests defense usually wins in this matchup. TCU's defense last year caused havoc for the BYU Offense. Look for them to try and replicate the success. One area where BYU was finding success last year was running up the gut with Harvey Unga. Though much like the mastermind they are Coach Bronco Mendenhall and/or Offensive Coordinator Robert Anai decided to go away from the inside run and instead try to get Unga on the corners, where TCU's speed swallowed him up. If the Cougars can get some running with Unga it will take pressure off of Max Hall.

Don't sleep on Andy Dalton

Andy Dalton doesn't have the flashy numbers of a Max Hall. He may be overshadowed by an amazing defense. But when it comes to leading his team, Andy Dalton may just very well be leader of the pack in the MWC. Dalton has a 65.5% completion ratio, over 1200 yards and an 8/3 TD to Interception ratio. He also has rushed for another 233 yards. More importantly he has his team at 6-0, after a tremendous 11-2 campaign last year. Much like Brian Johnson for the Utes last year, sometimes what a team with a great defense and playmakers elsewhere on the offense need, is for the QB to not get in the teams way. However, much like Johnson last year there will come a time or two where the QB will need to make a play to win his team a game.

How far has Max Hall come

Last year Max Hall had a tendency to hold onto the ball forever as he locked on to Austin Collie for a deep pass. TCU's speed took advantage of this fact and harrassed him all day. This year Max Hall has been getting the ball out in around 2 seconds and spread the field. This seems to have worked for him a bit. The only game where he seemed to hold onto the ball was against Florida State, and we saw how that game turned out.

So the question is what caused the change in Hall for that game. Was it the fact that the Cougars were down early that started to make Hall press. Did the pressure get to him. There is a chance he will see defensive pressure early and often against TCU. If TCU is smart they will watch tape of the Utah game from last year, and the FSU game this year, and see that Max Hall seems to get confused by zone blitzes.

Going into this season there were many who wanted to place Max Hall among the greatest QB's to play for BYU. That was a place he didn't belong. However his legacy has yet to be decided, and this game will go along way to making that decision clearer.

And for that other game.

In football terminology "Hell Week" is usually used to refer to the one week of just gruesome, brutal two-a-days, running and generally hard practices in the off season designed to get the team into shape. For the Mountain West Conference, the term is used to explain the week leading up to the Air Force game.

Air Force's style of play is one that requires 100% attention on every single play. Whittingham likes to say it requires a 1/11th defense, meaning the field is split up into 11 chunks and each player is assigned a section. Unlike other teams where you can worry about matchups, Air Force requires you to worry about positioning. Make one small mistake and they will bounce a 70 yard play.

Also since Air Force is undersized on the lines they also use more of a cut blocking scheme. Defensive Linemen hate this game. Defenders hate this game period. This is a game where they will all be tested.

And to add a different wrinkle Air Force is good on defense as well. They are good at stopping the run. This may very well be the game we find a lot out about Terrence Cain. If the Utes are unable to get the ball rolling on the ground, he'll need to win it through the air.

Which brings me to.....

Open up the offense already

Why does Dave Schramm insist on spoon feeding the offense with the 1-2 yard WR bubble screens on almost every play until the team is down. Give Cain some freedom. He's shown multiple times throughout the year, that when he needs to he can move this offense down the field with 7-15 yard passes. Not every play needs to be 1 yard passes. Of course Cain does need the help of his WR's to catch the freaking ball. I'm looking at you Jereme Brooks.

Cain has shown a knack for remaining calm under pressure situations. The 2 minute drive at the end of the first half of the Oregon game, After going down by two TD's against Oregon. After going down by 10 points versus Colorado Stat. All of the above were situations where the Utes loosened the reigns, and required Cain to move the ball with normal passes. All of them, except for one, ended in 7 points, and the other would have been a TD except for a horrible call for fade pattern.

Enough Already

Finally this week can we as a college football nation get rid of the awful trend of having the offense line up and then look to the sidelines for an audible. This breaks the flow of the offense. It helps to eliminate guesswork for the defense as to when the ball will be snapped because they know nothing will happen until after the entire team looks to the sideline.

Also I'm not exactly sure how it's legal. When an offensive lineman gets in his stance, they aren't supposed to move till the ball is snapped, yet somehow they are allowed to shift their entire body to look at the sidelines.

Most importantly it slows the game down as generally snaps don't happen until 5 seconds are left on the play clock. This is also really a contradiction when a team is running a no huddle (meant to keep the defense on it's toes with speed of the game), and then takes the time to look at the sideline.

Posted by Sideshow at 11:58

Monday, October 19, 2009

Podcast 38: Lessons learned

Alright, so we didn't learn any lessons to change our (or probably anyone else) lives this podcast. But we did learn that no matter how early we start, we still won't end recording our television podcast until 1am. We also learned that even when we say we have nothing to talk about, we still end up with a podcast over 2 hours. We also learned that when we finally get to discussing constitutional stuff in The West Wing we will probably be arguing a lot (as evidenced by our near shouting match on the topic of rights). Finally we are really pleased to have finally put together two promotional spots that we can use to help market us (links for promo 1 and promo 2). We only know of one person willing to do this so far, but it's good to have something put together in case there are others.

There were no guests for this week. This podcast covers episodes 16-20 of Star Trek: The Next Generation, Season 6.

Various topics discussed in this podcast include:

- Â Â Â TW5 Promotional spots
- Â Â Â The right to die in battle
- Â Â Â Should you point out the truth if it will destroy peace?
- Â Â Â Worf is a racist
- Â Â Â Why does music evoke so much emotion?
- Â Â Â Should a captain be allowed to date a subordinate?
- Â Â Â Joey hates public displays of affection
- Â Â Â Do you own your DNA?
- Â Â Â I Fight Dragons
- Â Â Â JC Hutchins 7th Son Novel

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Here are the ratings that we gave for each show: Birthright Part 1 & 2: 1hr 20min 44sec

Peter: SciFi - 4 Television - 3

Joey: SciFi - 5.5 Television - 3

Starship Mine: 16min 54sec

Peter: SciFi - 4 Television - 4

Joey: SciFi - 3 Television - 4

Lessons: 28min 42sec

Peter: SciFi - 5 Television - 6

Joey: SciFi - 3 Television - 2

The Chase: 34min 32sec

Peter: SciFi - 8 Television - 3

Joey: SciFi - 7 Television - 4

Posted by Radar in Podcast at 05:00

Friday, October 16, 2009

Red, Blue and Pigskin

While it would be easy to look ahead at next week's big games against Air Force and TCU, there are some interesting story lines for Utah and BYU in this week's games. For BYU Bronco is once again matching up against his mentor. And Utah is returning to the scene of the crime. A crime in which the aftermath, may very well have been one of the biggest events for Utah Football the last two years.

Meanwhile the polls are starting to show that TCU, and not Boise State may very well be the favorite for the BCS bowl. Two years can make quite a difference.

In 2007 the Utes were struggling with injuries at the beginning of the season. They had lost QB Brian Johnson to a shoulder injury for part of the year, and RB Matt Asiata to a knee injury for the entire season in their first game. In week 2 WR Brent Casteel was lost for the season to a knee injury. There were also multiple injuries to offensive and defensive linemen. The season was starting to sink. Then the 11th ranked UCLA Bruins came into town, and as many around the country had predicted a butt whooping commenced. Only instead of UCLA bringing it to the Utes, the Utes absolutely destroyed the Bruins.

The Utes were sitting at 1-2, and heading to UNLV. What happened next was arguably the lowest point during Whittingham's tenure as head coach, but could also be argued, that it is one of the most important events.

As badly as the Utes embarrassed the Bruins the week before, the Rebels topped it. They shutout the Utes 27-0. They rolled up 340 yards of total offense including 196 yards on the ground. Junior running back Frank "The Tank" Summers could not be stopped, as he was shedding tackles left and right as he racked up 190 of those yards.

During the Monday press conference UNLV Head coach, and former Ute Offensive Coordinator, was laughing at Utah and their defense. Talking about how the Utes were afraid to tackle Summers. Everyone was talking about the disaster that was the Utah season.

But from the ashes, Whittingham changed. Utah salvaged that season winning 7 in a row, and 8 of it's last nine including a bowl win. It then went on to win all 13 games last season including the Sugar Bowl. Looking back now it's clear that the turning point came in the aftermath of that UNLV game.

Now Utah returns to UNLV. Once again they are a bit susceptible at the QB position. Once again RB Matt Asiata has been lost for the season. But this time don't expect a Rebel uprising. This isn't the same program, and it's coached by a completely different guy. This expect the UNLV coach to be the one under extreme fire after the game.

There are many questions with difficult answers.

Why is it so difficult to recruit at San Diego State should not be one of them. Yet, it is exactly a difficult question. San Diego State is perennially terrible. I realize it is at best 4th choice of schools in California, and that is probably being generous, but I still cannot for the life of me figure out why the Aztecs have such a hard time recruiting good players.

While player wise their recruiting class is usually weak, a coaching recruiting move they made in the offseason was a heck of a coup. No not Brady Hoke. Honestly the jury is still out on whether he is a good coach or not. (I personally am in the not camp). But getting Former New Mexico Coach Rocky Long as the defensive coordinator was a great move. The Aztecs may not have the players to stop the BYU offense, but it will be interesting to see what Rocky comes up with for his former Assistant Bronco.

Boise may get the hype, but if you actually look at the poll movements the last couple weeks, TCU is the favorite.

Sure Boise State maybe ranked 6th in the Coaches Poll, which is really the only one that matters in the BCS, and sure they are the one getting all the publicity from ESPN (Thanks TV Contract), but if you look at the trends in the polls lately, TCU is the non-AQ school that is the favorite to get to a BCS game.

As usual when referring to a non-AQ making a BCS bowl this is all dependent upon the team winning out.

Three weeks ago is when BSU made their big jump up to number five, and when all the talk about them possibly crashing the big game started talking. This will never happen with Boise's schedule. As the bigger schools start getting into conference play, and start playing better teams, they will start to jump Boise State. Virginia Tech jumping Boise State two weeks ago is an example of this. Last week, with both Boise State, and USC on byes, USC jumped Boise State in the polls moving the Broncos down to 6th.

Meanwhile TCU had moved up to 10 after their second victory over an ACC team a few weeks ago. After a win over Boise's WAC brethren SMU, the Horned Frogs moved up to 9th, and a win over the Air Force Falcons last week moved them up to 8th, leaving them two spots behind Boise.

TCU still has Utah, and BYU Left this year, which is stronger than anyone Boise has left to play. And as the LSU's, Ohio States, and Cincinnati's of the world start to jump the Broncos (And in Cincy's case TCU this next week), that gap is going to close, so that if TCU runs the table against what should be a ranked BYU team, and a ranked Utah team, combined with the fact that TCU beat Boise in last year's Poinsettia Bowl, the Horned Frogs will be in the driver's seat leaving the Broncos out in the cold once again.

Of course that's assuming that Boise was undefeated at the end of the year, which I'm predicting either Hawaii, or Utah State might throw a wrench into that plan.

A decision on Wynn is looming.

A couple weeks before the season started Jordan Wynn looked to be the starter. Now he has yet to see action through 5 games, as Terrence Cain took the job away at the end of camp, and may have finalized his claim on the job last week at Colorado State. So now the question becomes what to do with Wynn.

The Utes don't have a real backup qb if something were to happen to Wynn, but nonetheless don't be surprised to see a redshirt get thrown on Wynn, if he doesn't see action by week eight or nine. In fact the possibility of getting an extra year of eligibility out of the highly touted freshmen, is probably the exact reason that we haven't seen him take a few snaps in the changeup role like Louks last season, or even Brian Johnson did in '04.

Redshirting Wynn has many advantages. It means that after Cain graduates next year, he'd still have 3 years of eligibility remaining and would be starting his 3rd year in the system. But it would also mean the Utes would have to be very careful not to see Cain suffer an injury. Considering that Cain will also probably be shouldering more of the running load to help take pressure off of a depleted RB corps makes the whole situation an interesting catch-22.

Posted by Sideshow at 10:54

J. C. Hutchins' "7th Son" In Print!

If you listen to the TrekWest5 podcast, you know we've been promoting the podiobook trilogy "7th Son" for some time now. I'm really glad to announce that as of Oct. 27th, you'll be able to buy this book *in print* (in fact, you can preorder it now). To quote the email JC sent me: This is huge news for me (the trilogy was also optioned for film development by Warner Bros.), and for podcasting. Considering that 7th Son was rejected by dozens of publishing pros before I released it as a podcast, we have accomplished something extraordinary with its publication. To celebrate the release, he's announcing a number of new promotions that I wanted to make all of you aware of: - A brand-new podcast recording of the "print edition" of the novel (with new scenes, twists, and character tweaks) - A prequel audio short story anthology called 7th Son: 7 Days. (I am currently listening my way through this and am really enjoying it) - Serialization of the novel in PDF and the text at Cory Doctorow's BoingBoing.net There's a lot to like about the 7th Son series of podiobooks, and for those of you not inclined to partake of them in the audio format, I hope you'll pick up a copy of the deadtree edition.

Posted by Ancient of Days at 10:09

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

13

It took the king almost a week to get up the courage to invite the Heffian ambassador into the court for an audience. When he did, he found that his fear was justified. After some bluster and babble about how great the king was, the Heffian ambassador said, "You must understand, your majesty, that you have given my master great cause to worry about your intentions. He has lived long with the Dina. He knows that they, and their god, Tor, are little more than animals that will fight for food, for money, or for any slight of their supposed honor, no matter how minor it may be. My master has always harbored good feelings toward you and your people. He sees you as a people of the land. He has felt that you are good neighbors, and that our peoples are good friends. Your alliance with the Dina has caused him to doubt these feelings." Gannon paused for another bite, and Lena cut in.

"How do you know so much about the goings on at court?"

Gannon finished chewing, and then replied, carelessly, "I was a journeyman at the time. Kingsbury was my guild station, and I happened to enter Kingsbury to buy birds on the same day that the Heffian ambassador did. I decided to stay in town and find out what was going on. One of the masters that I knew in Kingsbury got me into the audience chamber."

I had no idea what Gannon was talking about, but Lena nodded as if she understood. Not wanting to look foolish, I kept my questions to myself, and willed Gannon to continue his story.

He picked up the thread after a few more bites. "The ambassador didn't have a whole lot to say after that. Basically, he finished with a threat. He said that we had a short time to break up the alliance with the Dina. He also said that if we didn't break it up, that they, the Heffians, would regard us and the Dina as a single people, and that they would exterminate us from off their lands as noxious animals."

Lena's face looked thoughtful. "We thought it was bluster. But it wasn't, was it?"

Gannon shook his head. "You were there, at the battle at Goat Pass. Did you notice anything?"

For a moment, Lena didn't respond. Then, her eyes opened wide. "The Heffians are fair-skinned, and light-haired, aren't they?"

Gannon nodded.

"Then those weren't Heffians attacking us. At least not all of them. Some of them were . . ." her voice trailed off.

Gannon finished for her, his voice little more than a whisper. "Some of them were Weald-Men. Probably a majority of them."

I looked at both of them, a note of panic rising in my voice in spite of my efforts to keep it hidden. "Why would the Weald attack us? Aren't they our friends?"

Gannon responded first. "The Weald have been our friends for a long time, but friendship's the funniest thing. If you want a friendship to survive, it has to go two ways. They gave us the Reia, and taught us what we needed to know to survive here. In return, we helped them fight off the Dina and the Heffians. But time passed. The Heffians stopped attacking the Weald. Since our lands were between the Dina and the Weald, the Dina didn't have any reason to attack them any more, so, for a while, there was peace, and everything was good."

I looked over at Lena. Her face looked sad. "We're not very good friends anymore," she whispered. Her voice grew stronger as she continued, "Norwood used to be part of the Weald, but we took it over. More and more of our people are moving into the area around Forestal. Before long, we'll probably drive them out of there, too. It's not that we're trying to drive them out. We just have more kids than they do. We're always growing, and they always stay the same."

When she stopped, Gannon continued. "We're not the only ones moving into the Weald. The Heffians are, too. They're doing things differently, though. They're not coming in to stay. They come through a village, or a town, or a city, and they talk. They remind the Weald that we're newcomers. They remind them that the Heffians and the Weald have lived on Tellan from time immemorial, and that until the Dina showed up, they were friends. The Heffians tell the Weald that it can be like that again if their two nations join together to fight the encroachers."

One of the logs in the fire popped loudly, and I jumped. Gannon laughed. "Secrets boy. These are secrets. The nobles would have us believe that everything's fine, that the Weald are our loyal allies, and that the Heffians are just a little bit restless. I'm a commoner like you. If not for this mask, I wouldn't know anything more than you do." Gannon gestured toward Lena, and continued. "If you want to know secrets, if you want to be able to talk to the likes of her without looking the fool, there's only one way." He held up his mask. "You have to hide your face, and pretend to serve Mora."

Monday, October 12. 2009

Thwart Us and Die #6

While podcast 5 in the "Thwart Us and Die" series is currently undergoing post-processing, I had a brand-new operating system installed hours before our recording this past Friday and, as I went back to listen to it, the mic was WAY too sensitive, causing it to clip the audio on almost every sound. I tried a couple of recovery tools, but nothing was able to save the audio. My apologies.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Oddities at 13:05

Podcast 37: We Surrender!

Well we were finally able to get back to watching episodes, but could only get through 3 of them in this weeks Star Trek the Next Generation television podcast. You win this round Life. By the end of the evening Joey and I were just too tired to go on any further. I believe that I actually put my head down after our conversation of Tapestry and moaned: "Can we stop now?" Thankfully Joey was just as exhausted, so I didn't feel like a total wimp. We will cover the missed episode next week for Podcast 38. This podcast covers episodes 13-15 of Star Trek: The Next Generation, Season 6.

Various topics discussed in this podcast include:

- Good listener email from Pete's Friend Jon Madsen - life and self awareness
- Keeping a journal and personnel records
- Joey has a manifesto. Be Scared!
- Do individuals make that much difference in the world?
- Helping someone see reason
- How many puppies can Joey kill to save a human so that the ends justify the means?
- I Fight Dragons
- JC Hutchins 7th Son Novel

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Here are the ratings that we gave for each show: Aquiel: 49min 09sec

Peter: SciFi - 3 Television - 2

Joey: SciFi - 7 Television - 2

Face of the Enemy: 18min 46sec

Peter: SciFi - 4 Television - 2

Joey: SciFi - 7 Television - 4

Tapestry: 1hr 17min 32sec

Peter: SciFi - 7 Television - 5

Joey: SciFi - 4 Television - 8

If you have something to say then we welcome your comments below, or feel free to email us at trekwest5@thehomestarmy.com, twitter us at hashtag [TrekWest5](#), or leave us a voicemail at 801-788-4913.

Posted by Radar in Podcast at 04:00

Saturday, October 10, 2009

12

Gannon laughed. "See, you're a snoop, too. But no matter. Here's a question for you: why do you think you're here with me, instead of with her father?" He gestured toward Lena with his chin.

"I don't know. Some kind of emergency in Torwell?"

"That's a pretty good guess. But not quite. Several years ago, the king got the idea that we should ally ourselves with the Dina. They're great warriors, but they've always had trouble feeding their people. We, on the other hand, are great farmers, but our armies are fair to middling at best. In the king's mind, we could be perfect allies. They would supply most of the military might, and, in turn, we would supply most of the food. It sounded like a good idea, but the king's Mask warned him that if we allied ourselves with the Dina, that they would drag us into a war that we could not, and would not win."

"So, what happened?"

"The fool ignored his Mask. He finalized the alliance just three hours after he heard the warning, and we've been sending our surplus food to Aster and Torwell ever since." He paused. It was starting to get dark. I had been listening to him too carefully, and had barely started my cage, but he had been working as he talked and had finished another cage. "Let's put these things away, and go get some dinner. You can finish the other cages as we drive tomorrow."

He gathered up the willow switches and carried them over to the wagon. I put the newly-repaired cages into their places in the bird hutch, and piled the remaining ones under the bench of the wagon where I could access them easily the next day.

When I got to Lena's fire, she was serving Gannon salt pork, beans, and an apple in tight-lipped silence. I picked up a bowl and ladled out some of the beans for myself, and chose a seat between them. For a moment, we ate in silence. Gannon swallowed a bite of his apple, and started talking. "About eight months after the alliance was finalized, a Heffian ambassador showed up in Kingsbury with his entire entourage. Nobody had even known that he was coming, but he walked into Kingsbury dressed in scarlet and gold, and announced that he had come to speak to the king." He paused, gulped a spoonful of the beans, took a long drag at his bottle, and continued. "Of course the king tried to delay, tried to make it look as if he wasn't worried, but it was pretty obvious that there were some very worried people at the court."

When Gannon paused for another bite, I found myself willing him to hurry up. I wanted to know what happened next, and I wanted to know right away.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in The Apprentice Mask at 22:19

Friday, October 9, 2009

11

We stopped early that day, setting up our camp near the place where the road curves around the feet of Mount Arian. Lena busied herself starting a fire and preparing dinner. At Gannon's request, I unloaded the cages that had been damaged when my predecessor dropped them. While I rearranged the wagon in my quest for the damaged cages, Gannon wandered over to the banks of the Fangos. He returned bearing an armful of willow switches, and piled them near the stacks of damaged cages. Pointing to a roll of hairy twine, he called out to me, "Grab that cage twine, and come help me."

I'm not sure why I looked for Lena before I asked my question, but I didn't want her to hear me ask it. I don't understand. How can you be a Mask when you don't believe in Mora? Why would you even want to be?

He looked at me for a moment, and then responded, "Watch." A small box crafted from a dark colored wood sat on the ground by his side. From that box, he took a short knife with a curved blade. With quick, practiced strokes, he cut the twine that bound the broken withes on one of the cages. He pulled sharply at the broken twigs, gradually working them out of the loose weave that made up the cage. When they were gone, he carefully wove the new ones into their places, re-shaping the cage as he went. "What do you think? How does it look?"

"Good, I guess."

"Good," he smiled. Handing me a cage, and another knife from his box, he said, "This one's yours." My hands felt clumsy and awkward. The knife was razor-sharp; I was sure that I was going to cut myself. Nothing seemed to work as well as it had when he had been working. Still, I kept trying. Every now and then, Gannon would look over and correct me, or give me a tip on how I could do something better. He finished four cages in the time that it took me to repair one. I held the finished product out for him to inspect it.

He looked it over, examining my knots, making sure that my weave was sound, and checking to make sure that I hadn't splintered any of the withes when I was weaving them. "It looks good," he said. "It looks very good." In spite of myself, I grinned. He noticed my grin, and smiled back. "It feels good, doesn't it? Knowing that you're good at something that's difficult is a very satisfying feeling. That's part of the reason why I'm a Mask. No, I don't do this because I want to serve Mora, but I am very good at what I do, and the work brings a great satisfaction to me. Does that make sense?"

I nodded. His choice still seemed strange, but it made more sense. He handed me another cage, and continued talking as I cut out the damaged wickerwork. "Did you ever listen at doors when you were a little boy?"

I felt myself reddening as I nodded yes.

"Why did you do it?"

"I don't know."

"Yes you do. It was because there's a certain thrill to knowing something that you shouldn't, wasn't it?"

"I guess so."

"That's another thing that I really like about being a Mask. I'm constantly finding out things that no one else knows. That little thrill seems like an insignificant thing, but really, little thrills like that are what drive us."

I thought about his answer as I tugged at the broken twigs. "Like what?"

He looked at me, puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you said that you know things that no one else knows. What?"

Thursday, October 8, 2009

Red, Blue, and Pigskin

Well after a trip to the mother of Sideshow left me without access to many of the games, I decided to take a queue from the Utes and have a bye week last week. But fear not I return this week with a field goal of thoughts about this upcoming weekend. With Asiata done for the year, Not only Cain's, but Coach Schramm's security blanket is gone. For the second time in three years, Matt Asiata's season ended early. This is difficult for the Utes offense, as Asiata's presence made it so that they could bring Terrence Cain about slower. That option is now gone. Eddie Wide III will now take over the main running back duties. The Utes are also going to move WR Shaky Smithson over to running back.

This means that the Utes are going to need to open up the offense and rely on Cain even more. Not just in the passing game, but also in the running game. Utes will need to start using more misdirection to help get Wide to the outside, where he excels. To their credit, in the Louisville game we started to see more of the option, and not surprisingly it worked well. When Asiata entered the Oregon game a bit injured, and Wide started, the Utes didn't have the same commitment to the running game they usually do.

This can't happen. The Utes still need the running game. Schramm needs to harken the offense back to closer to what the '04 offense had. The Utes need to take advantage of Cain's mobility and start using the option even more, including the Shovel pass. Also, and this is important, that if the Utes are insistent on using a Single Wing formation, also called The Wildcat, The Wild Rebel, The Asiata formation, it is important that they pass out of it once in a while. Wisely they did this against Louisville, and it helped to open up the formation for Wide.

Recent struggles throughout the MWC, make conference play even more important.

Once again the last couple weeks the MWC has struggled. Now we enter the heart of conference play. What will be important for the Conference is to not have the middle eat each other up. The middle tier teams need to really be on the lookout to avoid upsets by the lower tier. It is very important that the MWC is able to get 5 or 6 Bowl eligible team, with at least 1 other team outside the big 3 starting to earn a bit of respect nationally.

As for the big 3, it's very important that they are prepared every week. They need to take care of business week in and week out.

Other than not actually deciding the National Champion, one of the Biggest issues with the BCS, was displayed by Tim Tebow's injury.

Florida coach Urban Meyer has received a lot of heat for leaving Tim Tebow in the game with the game pretty well decided against Kentucky two weeks ago. Don't blame Meyer. Blame the BCS, and actually the polling system in general. In the current college football landscape, winning is not enough. A team must win big, and it must win pretty. Florida was getting a lot of heat for struggling with Tennessee the week before. There were already many "experts" who are also pollsters that had been talking about whether or not the Gators had already been surpassed by Alabama. Some pollsters also had Miami ahead of them.

Urban Meyer was doing what every other major college coach would do. When what matters isn't just a win, but what other people think of your win, Florida desperately needed a big win.

Posted by Sideshow at 19:23

Thwart Us And Die #4

Episode four may be downloaded here, but only for the brave of heart. Our heroes encounter new foes and learn of new threats against the land. But more importantly, can they select a tabard to go with their new adventuring company charter?

Posted by The Mad Giggler in D&D at 15:47

Tuesday, October 6, 2009

10

When I returned to the house, Lena was still asleep. I could hear Gannon's voice out front, so I wandered out to see what was going on. He was talking to a small woman with dark hair that stood out around her pixie-like face in wild curls. I know that it can't be secret if it's going to Forestal, she said, her voice piquing. I don't care if it's secret. Just make sure that it gets there before nightfall. If they don't hear soon, they'll be worried.

I'll make sure of it, Gannon reassured her. He tucked the small silver coin that she offered into his belt pouch, and they parted, she hurrying off down the street, and he down the alley toward the barn.

I heard a ladylike voice utter a very unladylike curse, and turned to see Lena hopping up and down, holding her toe, and scowling at the sign of the red mask that lay on the floor. I looked up at the sign yard, and noticed, for the first time, that the sign had been taken down. Just then, Gannon walked in from the back of the house. Lena stopped hopping and stood looking at him primly.

Breakfast's ready, he growled, pointing to the pot over the fire. I'm going to tie up a few loose ends, and then we'll be off. Less than an hour later, the wagon rumbled out of town on its way to Belkeep. Gannon hunched on the left, his mask dangling from its cord around his neck, driving in taciturn silence. Lena perched on the right, acting as if Gannon didn't exist. I sat sandwiched between them, trying desperately to think of a way to break the awkward silence.

My opportunity came when a question popped into my head. How do you send a message to Forestal? Gannon looked at me, incredulous. The same way you send a message anywhere, he answered. You send a bird.

But, I protested. Forestal's in the Deep Weald. There aren't any Masks there.

No, there aren't, he agreed. I noticed Lena looking our way. We can't send secret messages into the Deep Weald, but they do just fine with regular messages.

How do they know how to use the birds?

Again, Gannon's disbelief was obvious. The Weald know more about the birds than we do. They're the ones that taught us how to use them. He must have seen the confusion in my face. You thought that Mora taught us, didn't you? I nodded. His laugh surprised me. It lit up his grim face for a moment, and then disappeared. Listen to me, boy. Mora may be out there, but she doesn't care about us, and she doesn't care about the birds.

At that point, Lena couldn't stay quiet any more. Oh yeah? Then why are we here?

Here? On the road to Belkeep?

No! Why are the Reia here on Tellan?

He chuckled at her defiance. The Masks are dirty mercenaries, that's all. The Weald were fighting against the Dina and the Heffians. They needed an ally, so they hired the Masks to come down from Reka. I glanced at Lena. With every word that he spoke, her anger grew. When we managed to drive the Dina and the Heffians back, the Weald gave us the land that they called the Merle, and they taught us how to use their messenger birds. We decided to share some of what they gave to us. We called our people from Reka; we invited them to share the Merle with us, and we called it Reia after our homeland. Gannon looked right at Lena, as if to emphasize his words. That's why we're here.

And all of this just happened by chance?

Yes.

You're a fool. She spat the words out. As for me, my head was spinning. I had never heard of Reka, never known that the Dina and the Heffians had once been allies against the Weald, and had never, even in my wildest dreams thought that there were people who believed like Gannon did.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in The Apprentice Mask at 21:26

Monday, October 5, 2009

Podcast 35 "Poetry Special"

Well, I promised we'd publish it " and, since I had to make a last-minute trip out of town this weekend, it seemed the best chance we had at putting up some new material for all of you " so here is our "Poetry Special" from Podcast 35. We'd like to thank the following people and the authors of the poets they mentioned. Wherever possible, I've tried to include links to the poets and the poems read " unfortunately, some of the sites linked to are filled with annoying flash ads. We hope you enjoy this as much as we enjoyed recording it. Anne " There's a Certain Slant of Light (LXXXII) by Emily Dickenson Jared God Gave a Loaf to Every Bird (LIII) by Emily Dickenson I Felt a Cleavage in My Mind (CVI) by Emily Dickenson There is No Frigate Like a Book (XCIX) by Emily Dickenson The Brain is Wider Than The Sky (CXXVI) by Emily Dickenson Aaron " Listen to the Mustnâ€™ts by Shel Silverstein Listener Jim " Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll Listener Jim (and Joey) " Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost Peter Carry On! by Robert W. Service Ode to Spot by "Data" (watch him read it via youtube) Â Direct MP3 Download Subscribe Using iTunes

Posted by Ancient of Days in Podcast at 03:05

Sunday, October 4, 2009

9

The Ford of Sovea was a small town. While it was larger than the village where I grew up, it normally would only have been large enough for a Journeyman Mask. It merited the presence of a Master Mask only because so many traders passed through it. If there was something bound for the Central Weald, or traffic coming and going over Goat Pass, it had to pass over the Ford of Sovea. This traffic meant that messages were always coming, going, and waiting for people who would be passing through, and some of those messages were secret enough to merit the services of a Master Mask.

We bumped our way across the shallow water of the ford and threaded our way through the dark streets of the town to a small house where a large red mask hung from the wrought-iron sign yard above the door. A rangy man with a red mask on his face emerged from the house immediately after Lena's father knocked. Without a word, he handed the khasar's Mask several large saddle bags and began leading the wagon into the alley beside the house. Lena jumped clear of the wagon and ran to her father. I watched around the side of the wagon as he raised her face to look at his, stared into her eyes for what seemed like a long time, and then, without a word, turned, mounted his horse, and rode away.

The redface led the wagon around the corner of the house, and unyoked the oxen. I helped him lead them into a small barn where he fed and watered them before leading me back around to the front of the house. Lena was still standing in the street, staring off in the direction where her father had disappeared. She started when I touched her shoulder, and followed us into the house.

Behind the heavy shutters, the yellow glow of tallow candles and a fire on the hearth made the house seem friendly and warm. He led us, without a word, to a table where bread soaked in warm milk, poached eggs, and an oniony cheese waited for us. He spoke in a voice that sounded rusty from long disuse as he pointed. "There are beds in the back room for you." With that, he stumped up the stairs, leaving us to our supper and our thoughts.

I woke early the next morning to the sound of someone rattling around in the main room of the house. I stumbled blearily out of my bed to see the man from the night before stirring something in a pot over the fire. He glance over his shoulder at me. I was surprised to see that his mask was hanging from a cord around his neck, instead of being on his face.

"Morning, boy." His voice didn't sound as gruff as it had the night before. "What's your name?"

"You can call me Gannon." He gestured to a large bucket by the table. "There's water for washing, and an outhouse around back by the barn. Do you know when her ladyship's going to be getting up?"

Shaking my head mutely, I shuffled out to find the outhouse, wondering why Gannon didn't wear his mask, and why he called Lena her ladyship.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in The Apprentice Mask at 13:32