

Monday, November 24, 2014

Podcast 192: Emillio Stew

We begin our study of the AMC classic tv show, Breaking Bad. My new roommate Justin joined us for his first go round on a podcast. He did a great job. I am so excited to be able to cover a series of television that is so well written, acted, and produced. This tv podcast covers episodes 1 and 2 of Breaking Bad Season 1.

Various topics discussed in this podcast include:

- Â Â Â Â New roommate introduction: Justin
- Â Â Â Â Peter discusses various types of taco. Why, we don't know.
- Â Â Â Â Salty Lake Radio - Take a listen!
- Â Â Â Â Joey's Culture Corner: Ivory Tower (2014 film)
- Â Â Â Â Facebook Find of the Week: Everyone -
- Â Â Â Â Top 5 Favorite: Things you're thankful for
- Â Â Â Â Who would ever eat veggie bacon? Peter is willing to try it if you have.
- Â Â Â Â I was a terrible Chemistry student.
- Â Â Â Â Awkward husband wife scene to watch in mixed company.
- Â Â Â Â Walter White's motivating and definitive statement about how he is going to cook meth.
- Â Â Â Â Two guys who know nothing about how you do drugs discuss ways to do crystal meth.
- Â Â Â Â Which implement would you use to kill Crazy 8?
- Â Â Â Â Music by Shayna Zaid

Here is the rating that we gave for the episodes in Podcast 192: 2hr 07min 17sec:

- Pilot
- Peter: Television - 8
- Joey: Television -

- The Cat's In the Bag
- Peter: Television - 9
- Joey: Television - 8

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Posted by Radar in Podcast at 04:00

Thursday, November 20, 2014

Red, Blue And Pigskin

Remember as the Utes suffered through the first couple years in the Pac-12 and the common wisdom was that Utah was lucky to have missed Oregon and Stanford during the first two year rotation, and they'd really be hurting once those two came up on the schedule?

2011 & 2012 Utes versus Cal and Washington 1-3

2013 & 2014 Utes versus Oregon and Stanford 2-2

Fortunately past results are not a guarantee of the future, or I would really be worried when Stanford drops off next year and Cal and Washington are back along with Oregon. (Let's be honest though, I'm always worried anyways.)

Meanwhile it's Senior Weekend in the state of Utah as all three Division 1-A teams play their final home game of the year. (The two Division 1-AA teams had their final home game last week, and final game this week.) For many of the seniors it's the end of a way of life. After this season most of them won't ever play organized football again. Also for the first time since 2011 all three teams are officially bowl-eligible. I Don't Know What To Say Anymore

Well, at least Byu officially became bowl eligible, even if it wasn't a concern considering this week's opponent. Outside of that nugget was there really anything remotely important that happened during the Unlv game?

Mostly it was just a confirmation of things we've already known.

A dreadful Unlv team did just enough to remind us that Byu, especially their defense has some major holes, and it was probably going to be the reason that Byu lost a game even if Hill hadn't gone down.

Offensively Byu did enough to remind us that the offense hasn't been the problem since Hill went down. Christian Stewart continues to show us that while Taysom Hill may have been more athletic, and more dynamic of a player, Stewart is the better quarterback, and by far the best passer Byu has had in 5 years.

I don't know if it's because the rest of the running backs have improved, or because Stewart isn't taking their carries they way Hill would, but it's nice that for the 2nd time this year the Cougars played without Williams for essentially the whole game (he was injured on the first play against UCF) and once again the Cougar running game didn't miss a beat in a committee role, rushing for over 250 yards with Lasike, Hine, and Carter carrying the bulk of the load.

In the end, the Cougars ended up with an unmotivated, and uninspiring victory over an uninspiring opponent to finally get that 6th win. But hey against Unlv, it could always be worse.

I'm Not Even Mad At You

I could go on, again, about how much I hate these prostitution games, and how this week's opponent may be the worst opponent to come into the state of Utah to play Utah or Byu in over a decade, but I won't. I know everyone plays these games (just look at the SEC slate this week.) Hopefully the playoff will change that, but it is what it is.

I also know the official excuse is that this was a scramble pickup when Hawaii canceled their contract a couple years ago, and it's hard to find a November 1 and done with only a couple years ago (even if this is only partly true, since an FCS team would always have been on the schedule.)

So I'm just going to ignore the opponent and focus on the seniors.

(But seriously, Savannah State????)

Saturday night will be the last time that approximately 25 seniors play in a Byu uniform. Some of the names are recognizable as they've been solid contributors to the team for a while like Craig Bills, and Alani Fua. Some of them have only been known for a short time but still made quite an impact like Jordan Leslie and Christian Stewart. Some of them have been disappointing and the target of fans ire like Skye PoVey. Some of them are names you don't even recognize, because they've been mostly on the Scout team like Kevin O'Mary and Quinn Lawlor. Some of them have

suffered serious injuries during their career for the program like Devin Mahina. And two of the are the final reminder of the Iggy's Press Conference with Ross Apo and Zac Stout.

Either way Saturday will be the last chance that Byu fans have to give appreciation to these players. The full list of Seniors this year is as follows: Michael Alisa - RB, Ross Apo - WR, Scott Arellano - P, Craig Bills - DB, Josh Carter - DL, Robertson Daniel - DB, Alani Fua - LB, Edward Fusi - OL, Harvey Jackson - DB, Jordan Johnson - DB, Marques Johnson - DL, Solomone Kafu - OL, Paul Lasike, - RB, Quinn Lawlor - OL, Jordan Leslie - WR, Devin Mahina - TE, Keanu Nelson - WR, Kevin O'Mary - DS, Skye PoVey - DB, Trevor Samson - K, Christian Stewart - Q, Zac Stout - LB, Brock Stringham - OL, De'Ondre Wesley - OL, Michael Yeck - OL.

Since it's a guarantee these seniors will win their final home game, the only question left is how many fans out there haven't just been beaten down so badly this year that they are willing to suffer the weather and the atrocious opponent to actually attend? Good news is, you can get a ticket for \$3.

Throwback Football

Remember before TV became such a force on football, and you didn't get so many stoppages. Broadcast windows used to be set for 3 hours, but you knew that the game would be closer to 3 and a half hours, instead of now where broadcast windows are 3 and a half hours and you know games will be closer to 3 hours and 45 minutes?

Remember before offenses were given easy mode and defensive battles were common?

Remember when defenses were dominant and casual fans would complain that offenses weren't able to move the ball as well?

Remember when scoreboard operators didn't get carpel tunnel from having to add points every 90 seconds?

Saturday's tilt between the Utes and the Cardinal was a throwback to those days. In a game that went into double overtime, and still didn't see either team get 300 yards of total offense. A game where the final combined score was only 47 points. A game that lasted 3 hours and 15 minutes. Again a game that went into double overtime.

Ironically it was a game that didn't seem like it was going to be that way after the very first offensive possession when Stanford took the ball, and marched 70 yards down the field in just under 4 minutes.

This was a classic field position game the whole way. A game where one team would put together two or three first downs, punt from near midfield, and pin the other team deep, just to see that team return the favor.

If you don't like hard nosed, hard hitting, defensive football, this wasn't the game for you. It's also what makes Utah and Stanford so drastically different from their Pac-12 peers.

This is a game that saw a 10 play drive take 5:55, a 9 play drive take 5:14, an 8 play drive take 5:03, and a 14 play drive take 8:44. That's 25 minutes of play (almost an entire half of football) in those 4 drives. Combined points allowed in those 4 drives? 0

None of those drives more devastating than the 8:44 drive by Stanford, who got the ball with 10:22 seconds, took the clock down to under 2:00. Go the ball to the Utah 34 yard line, and ended up punting rather than trusting their kicker to attempt a 51 yard field goal, which was 3 yards longer than his career long.

In the 2nd OT Stanford was forced to attempt a 51 yarder, and their kicker drilled it with room to spare. Which basically sums up exactly the way Utah football has been this year.

This was a throwback to the 3 yards and a cloud of dust games.

Punters Are People Too

Tom Hackett has become one of my favorite Utes. It's weird to say that about a punter, but then again it's also weird to see opposing teams game plan for a punter, and it's also extremely weird to see teams frequently drop a 2nd returner back on punts.

But another reason Hackett is fun is because he is kind of crazy.

As evidence I give you this quote:

I get nine snaps, and that's a lot of snaps. Generally, I get five snaps, and I go make the most of them. But at the end of the day, I'm kicking, essentially, pigskin. We eat bacon. So I'm kicking bacon down a field for people's entertainment. It's not that big of a deal. I just have a laugh on the sideline and do my job. It's something that's pretty easy.

Obviously the Australian Hackett doesn't understand why we make such a fuss over this football thing.

Since Hackett's only a sophomore, I really want to see this Bacon thing somehow turn into a gimmick for him next year.

Cardiac Alert

This season for Utah has been filled with close calls, and tight games. Utah is just as close to 3-7 or 9-1 as they are to 7-3. The one team that has outdone them on the cardiac scale this year is the Arizona Wildcats. Whether it's escaping UTSA and Nevada with 1 score victories, or catching a Hail Mary to be Cal, or seeing a questionable celebration penalty derail an Oregon comeback drive. Seeing USC successfully ice their field goal kicker not once, but twice in the same game during a loss, or watching the Huskies fumble the ball as they go for a game winning first down. The Wildcats have seen their share of close, cardiac games this year.

After seeing the nation's leading runner the past two years carry a QB deficient team, Arizona has flipped the script a bit this year. With their running game still good, but closer to average, they have been led by redshirt freshman QB Anu Solomon. Solomon has been a bit of a surprise this year and already has over 3000 yards and 25 TD's, including 4 games with at least 4 TD's.

Solomon gives the Wildcats a QB in the same vein as Marcus Mariota for Oregon, Brett Hundley for UCLA, and Taylor Kelly for Arizona State. Of course all three of those guys are experienced veterans, whereas Solomon is a young freshman who still plays like a freshman at times, and especially as the opposition increases. Solomon is still struggling with the Zone read offense that Arizona coach Rich Rodriguez runs. On top of that, Solomon has seemed to run into a bit of a freshman wall lately, as he has struggled more and more as the season progresses.

The Wildcats will try to attack the second level of the Utes defense. They will attempt to utilize screens and crossing routes to move the Linebackers out of position to open up the middle of the field. That's why the news yesterday that LB Gionni Paul will miss the rest of the season to have surgery on his foot is extremely hurtful. Paul was an instinctual beast of a linebacker. He's currently the leading interception man, and always seemed to be in the right place. Though it was clear he's been hampered the last couple weeks. Hopefully getting his foot looked at now will give him time to come back 100% for his senior season.

Without Paul, the LB corps for the Utes will need to step up.

At the beginning of the season I called Arizona "the biggest fraud in the Pac-12 the last 2 years." Each of those two years they weren't very good, but still managed to get to 8 wins. This year, they are actually a good team. They are a reminder of the West Virginia teams that made Rich-Rod a top commodity in the coaching circles. That said, much like the Utes, they are a team that has lived on the edge all season long, and much like the Utes, it won't take much to push them over. The question is whether Utah's defense will push Arizona, or will the Wildcats offense send the Utes over the edge.

Sayonara Seniors

The Utes have 18 seniors on their roster this season. 17 of which they will be recognizing Saturday for Senior Day. (The Utes are going to get a Medical Hardship waiver to allow Tevin Carter to come back next season) 1 of whom has an outside shot at being back for next year's Senior Day (Kaelin Clay has a possibility, though an outside one, of also getting a Hardship Waiver for a missed season to injury 2 years ago.)

The 4 year seniors in this class were part of the first class of recruits to play all 4 years in the Pac-12. They were the first class to be recruited after the announcement the Utes would join the Pac-12, and during Utah's final year in the MWC. The Redshirt Seniors would be the last group to be recruited while Utah was thinking they would always be MWC.

This group includes two former freshmen All-American Safeties (Eric Rowe, Brian Blechen), the son of my favorite NFL player ever, one of my all-time Utes, and someone who unfortunately won't be playing in the game due to injury (Dres Andersen), A WR turned defensive end stud, who has also changed their name while here (Nate FakahafuaOrchard).

While not all of them lived up to the hopes of fans (Andre Lewis, Marc Pouvave), they were all part of the Utes transition from MWC to Pac-12, and will get their moment in the spotlight. Of course none of them will get a louder cheer from the Muss than one of their own. Someone who impressed the coaches during the Muss flag game during the Red-White spring game and given a chance to eventually earn a walk-on special teams spot (Ryan Petersen).

The full list of seniors: Dres Anderson - WR, Brian Blechen - DB, Kaelin Clay - WR/KR/PR, Wykie Freeman - DB, Jacoby Hale - LB, Sese Ianu - DT, Chandler Johnson - DB, Andre Lewis - WR, Geoffrey Norwood - WR, Nate Orchard - DE, Davion Orphey - DB, Ryan Petersen - WR, Marc Pouvave - OL, Greg Reese - DE, Eric Rowe - DB, Junio Salt - OL, Westlee Tonga - TE.

In addition to the group of Seniors don't be surprised if this isn't the last home game for at least 1, and an outside shot at two other players. If I were a betting man (which I am), the smart money says Booker leaves for the NFL this year. RB don't get drafted extremely high anymore. Other than showing an improvement with holding onto the football, there isn't much more that Booker can do next year to improve his stock. He's the Pac-12 leading rusher in conference games. He has over 1100 yards and 8 td's on the season, and has shown that he can carry the rock 25-30 times a game against some of the nations best. Add in the recent Todd Gurley injury, the Marcus Lattimore retirement, and the short shelf life of running backs in general, and it wouldn't be any surprise to see Booker leave, even if he's only considered a 4th - 5th round guy.

The other junior that his getting some NFL love is tackle Jeremiah Poutasi. Poutasi is raw, but has been turning heads since his freshman debut against Usc three years ago. Poutasi is more likely to return though. General consensus seems to be that, unlike Booker, Poutasi would be a project pick this year, and actually can do more to greatly increase his stock next season if he returns and continues to develop.

Speaking of Poutasi, here's an article on how he turned his life around to even be where he's at now.

Some Love For The Aggies

I'll admit, I don't give Utah State the attention they deserve. A Lot of that comes from their tendency to attempt to gain relevancy, but ultimately fall short under Gary Andersen. They've managed to change that under Matt Wells, and are actually doing a remarkable job this season. They are on their 4th string QB up in Logan, and are still winning games. The Aggies are wondering why Utah and Byu have such a problem with this QB injury thing.

The last 4 years for the Aggies arguably was their most successful in history, and once again this year's group of Seniors has them in the hunt for an MWC championship.

They will be celebrating at least 18 Seniors, the one question is Chuckie Keeton who is eligible for a medical redshirt, but one could seriously ask whether he'd want to come back again.

The full list: La'Ron Bennett - CB, Jaron Bentrude - P/K, Ronald Butler - WR, Jefferson Court - TE, Nick Diaz - PK, Craig Harrison - QB, Joe Hill - RB, Shaan Johnson - WR, Elvis Kamana-Matagi - NG, Chuckie Keeton - QB, BJ Larsen - DE, Rashard Stewart - CB, Brian Suite - S, Joe Summers - OC, Frankie Sutera - S, Bill Vavau - OL, Zach Vigil - LB, Bryce Walker - OL, Kevin Whippey - OL.

From Hot To Cold

Ever since the Utes started in the Pac-12 one of the things I've really enjoyed is when a warm weather team has come into Utah in late November. Especially when it really cold or stormy. Last year, the two November games were actually some of the warmer ones of the year.

This week, not so much.

Even though it's an afternoon kickoff at 1:30 MST, broadcast on ESPN, the Wildcats will be leaving the confines of their 70 degrees to come to a game that will be about 42 degrees at kickoff. To make matters worse it's also expected to be a bit rainy during the game.

The same can also be said for the Tigers of Savannah State. They'll be leaving the 70 degree weather of Georgia for a

1:00 p.m. MST kickoff in Provo, UT that, not surprisingly, will also be 42 degrees and rainy. If you are one of those who don't want to brave the cold and the rain, to watch Byu play a dreadful opponent, or if you only go long enough to salute the Seniors and then immediately leave, this is the annual Byu Tv broadcast.

Ask Red, Blue And Pigskin

Since I haven't received any rules related, or game related questions lately, I haven't had this segment. However, this week I wanted to post a little back and forth with Rhett that came from when he decided to torture me a little bit more about my experience during "The Drop". It's just more of a look of the fan view when you can see disaster coming.

Rhett
View from the redzone was great

Me
I've seen the replay of the drop a few times and I swear the videos have to have sped it up, because it felt like 20 minutes

Rhett
How did you know from the north endzone that he dropped it early?

Me
You could clearly see it
From the angle we had
the people directly in front of him lower down probably couldn't, but other than that you could just see it drop on the green.

Rhett
and the ref not throwing up his hands
Did fans around the area, start yelling to pick it up?

Me
Oh yea.

Rhett
did it ever cross your mind to jump out of the stands and tackle the Oregon player? Not that you would do it, just a quick thought

Me
Before he ever picked it up, I wondered if I could get down and kick the ball out of bounds before they got to the ball. Or at the very least if someone on the West stands by the goal line would at least do it.

Rhett
I would of had the same thought
That's how much you love your team
Wait, where are your seats?

Me
I have two sets, 4 at Row 5, right behind the goal posts, and 2 more in N23 row 41 (which is where I was sitting at the time this week)

Rhett
N23 is where I had my season tickets haha

Me
It definitely was one of the more surreal moments I've seen live.

Rhett
I bet

Me

Especially only two weeks removed from the Usc lateral play

Rhett

oof

I bet when that Oregon guy ran away from you, it was like seeing the game run away from you. Praying that he would fall or go out of bounds or anything

Me

Yea, you could just see it slipping away the farther he got down field.

Rhett Weller

Contrasted with that amazing pass and catch coming right at you....

Posted by Sideshow in Red, Blue And Pigskin at 10:06

Thursday, November 13, 2014

Red, Blue And Pigskin

Just another boring old weekend of football in the Beehive State where nothing at all memorable whatsoever happened.

Okay maybe not true, but it was, what has become this year, just another Saturday Night at Rice-Eccles.

Also did you know that teams from the state of Utah have now lost 5 QB's, who have started at least one game, to season ending injury. One Play

I could bring up how Utah came out on fire and jumped to an early lead by moving the ball down the field, and by harassing the heck out of Mariota.

I could bring up how Utah overcame the loss to the QB who started the game when Kendal Thompson went down with injury.

I could bring up how the much maligned Travis Wilson overcame Booker fumbling on the first play after Wilson came into the game, and still managed to get 297 yards passing.

I could mention how the Utes fought back and was within 3 points of the Ducks with just under 12 minutes to play in the game.

I could bring up that Dave Christensen did a good job of completely changing the game plan for Kendal Thompson to start the game and gave fans a glimpse of how Thompson actually could be effective before his knee just collapsed on him.

I could talk about how injuries just suck, and make you feel for these players after watching Thompson go down. After watching Tim Patrick go down. After watching Oregon TE Pharoah Brown go down with an injury severe enough he's still in a Salt Lake hospital.

But none of that is what will be remembered about that game. Instead this game will forever be remembered for one play. It's a play that will go down in Utah lore. A colossal, monumental blunder. A moment of selfishness that turned what should have been a 14-0 lead for the Utes, into a 7-7 tie ball game. A play that the Utes took the rest of the quarter to shake off. A play that hung over every minute of the rest of the game. But everyone else is, or already has, talked about that play so much, including the Taiwanese, that I want to focus on other aspects.

Like how Kaelin Clay shook off the blunder and still helped rack up the 3rd most all purpose yards by a single player in Div 1-A this season with 339, and in the process looked like the player to take over the stretch the field duties of Dres. Something that's going to desperately be needed with Tim Patrick going down.

Or how Travis Wilson was actually able to be effective, once they stopped trying to make him a mobile QB, and instead put an extra back in the backfield, and let him set his feet. The 798 yard bomb to Clay was an absolute thing of beauty, as was the other bomb to Clay later in the game. Sure there were still a fair share of just hideous looking passes, but the takeaway from the game should be not to try and roll Travis too far out.

Also with Kendall Thompson out now, and Travis having thrown his first interceptions of the season, Wilson doesn't have anyone to look at over his shoulder. Maybe now he can just relax and go sling it.

The score eventually got away from Utah, but Oregon is really good at taking close games and making them seem not close. Who knows what would have happened had Utah got that 14-0 lead with the way their defense was playing and the way the offense was moving the ball, but it was nice to see Utah fight back. The 7 points scored on that play were the first of 24 straight points by the Ducks, and with just over 2 minutes to go in the half, trailing 24-7, the Utes easily could have folded. They didn't, and in doing so have shown how far they've come in the last few years.

View From The Red Zone

Have you ever been in an car accident? Ever notice how when you see it coming, it's like time slows down? As if the

world is slowing things down in order to give you a chance to avoid what is happening, only in a cruel irony there is absolutely nothing you can do. That's how it was Saturday Night.

To go from the elation of seeing Travis throw the best ball any Utah QB has thrown all year that was actually caught, and seeing Clay streak down the field, and then he dropped it. From the vantage point of the North End Zone, it was clearly evident he dropped it early, and time slowed down.

As everyone in the area is screaming to go get the ball, as you watch the official on the sideline, standing at the 1 yard line not making any gestures. As you watch Clay in the back of the end zone hamming it up with the crowd. As you see three Utah teammates come celebrate with him. The whole time an emptiness is starting to form in the pit of your stomach as you know this is not going to turn out well. As you hope and pray that somehow the ball rolls out of bounds, or that at the very worst it's a turnover.

Then you see it. In what was only seconds, but literally felt like minutes, you see an Oregon player start to recognize what's going on, and he picks up the ball, and you see nothing but grass ahead of you. But wait, Tonga is there, and yes he forces the fumble. But no he can't get to it, and instead you see the convoy form. 14-0 becomes 7-7. The elation that was there literally about a minute ago is gone, as you see the team realize what happened.

It's now despair. You can't help but feel that was it. That was the Utes chance to win the game, and now it's gone. You see Clay feels it too, as he's hitting himself in the helmet in anger. Then of course, you have to relive the moment as it's reviewed. You hope that maybe you were wrong and it was closer than you thought, close enough you might get the crappy Pac-12 refs to overturn it. But no, it's clear as day.

The Stadium goes flat. Kaelin Clay, who had many good plays for Utah this year, and will be needed the rest of the season, had managed to do something most teams can't, which is take the crowd out of it. It says flat. The despair, of that play is palpable. It hangs over the stadium the rest of the game. Every play, every score from that moment on is a what if. Oregon goes up 24-7 and the first thing everyone in the stadium thinks is, it should only be 17-14. Utah pulls to within 27-20, and everyone does the math, it should be 27-20 the other way.

As Utah pulled to within 3 there was renewed hope, but there was also the worry that maybe the Utes expended too much energy overcoming the mistake.

And as you left the stadium there was a "what could have been" feeling, as well as the realization that the only thing people were going to talk about was that drop, forcing you to see it again, and again, and again.

Misfits In The Land Of Offenses

This week the Utes battle their Mirror image team from the Pac-12. In a conference that is known for high powered offenses, and great QB play, Utah and Stanford are the outliers.

Utah and Stanford are mirror images of each other. Both play teams have a defense first mentality. Stanford has the 4th ranked scoring defense in the country, while the Utes lead the nation in Sacks and Tackles for loss.

Both teams have more of a power offense, choosing to rely heavily on their running backs. Both teams have also been forced into the power running due to weaknesses at the QB position (Utah more so, than Stanford.) Both teams seem to really struggle in short yardage, and red zone situations.

Both teams enter the game 3-3 on the year in conference play.

Last year, the Stanford Cardinal brought an elite, 5th ranked team into Rice-Eccles stadium. At the end of that game the Utes had their first signature win in the Pac-12 after they upset the Cardinal, in a game the Utes controlled for most of it.

This year, the Cardinal will look for revenge at home on the Farm, after a bye week, but with a team that has severely fallen off from the elite teams of the past 4-5 years. The problem for the Cardinal is that their offense struggles with consistency. You've heard the saying "strength against strength"? Well this game will be a battle of team weaknesses. As in which teams weak offense can do enough, and be consistent enough to make the defensive effort pay off.

Season Reclamation Project

Byu will try to continue reclaiming their lost season this week with a visit from an old conference mate in Unlv. Now while it may have been awhile since these two teams saw each other some things never change. One such thing is how

a school in Las Vegas simply cannot attract recruits who are any good. They don't have this problem in Basketball, but man do their Football teams continually just suck, and the 2014 edition of the Rebels is no different.

Unlv ranks towards the bottom of the country in all major statistical categories, except passing yards. But when you are as bad as Unlv is, you end up passing a lot, because you are down often. The Rebels do have 2 victories on the season, by a combined 4 points. One against Div 1-AA Northern Colorado, and an overtime victory over equally awful Fresno State.

The Cougars are looking to reclaim a season that is now void of any major meaning. The lofty goals early in the season are gone. Now the Cougars are still looking to become Bowl eligible (the last of the three Utah based team to become eligible), and find some way to make the final month of the season have meaning. Byu should have no problem accomplishing that feat this week.

Marketing Gimmick Alert

While the quality of opponent is clearly not enough to generate even a mild pulse of excitement regarding this week's game, the Cougars are hoping making the game a marketing gimmick Blackout game will. This will be the Cougars second attempt at a Blackout game. The first one didn't go so well, but that's what they get for having a Blackout game in the middle of the day.

This week the Blackout will mark the third marketing gimmick this season for Byu. The Cougars are 1-1 so far during those games. A record that will have no problem going to 2-1.

Football In The Daylight

For the first time in the while, not only will the Utes kickoff on Saturday night, but they'll finish the game on Saturday as well. The Utah game will kick off at 4:00 p.m. MST and will be broadcast on the Pac-12 networks.

An hour later the Cougars will begin as their kickoff will be 5:00 p.m. MST on ESPN U, which means that now that the sun sets so early, shortly after the Cougars come onto the field in their dark uniforms, it'll start getting dark period (they way it should be for blackouts.)

Posted by Sideshow in Red, Blue And Pigskin at 06:07

Thursday, November 6, 2014

Red, Blue And Pigskin

November begins the way September ends with the Cougars getting a win (much needed) and the Ute fans all on a ledge with me just wanting to push them all off. Righting The Ship

Facing down a bye week, the Cougars really couldn't afford another loss on the road against Middle Tennessee State. While much closer, and sloppier than you would have liked, Byu finally managed to get back on the correct side of the scoreboard with a 27-7 victory.

Christian Stewart continued his ascendancy as the best passing Quarterback at Byu since Max Hall. Even more promising for Byu is that Stewart has done an effective job of sharing the ball, and not just having a favorite target and relying exclusively on him.

Defensively, the Cougar defense harrassed Blue Raider QB Austin Grammer to the point he became Jake Heaps like by ducking and going down the moment it looked like any pressure was going to be on him.

The highlight of the game, and honestly a turning point, was Byu Punter Scott Arellano taking a punt from his own 10 yard line and booming it 81 yards to flip field position, just as it looked like the Raiders were going to score and take a lead with decent field position. Instead they got the ball at their own 10 and never threatened again.

The fact that a victory against Middle Tennessee State is such a huge win, shows how the rails have come off for Byu this year, but it was a much needed victory. The last thing Byu wanted to do was be on a 5 game losing streak going into a bye week.

M*A*S*H Unit Gets Another

Not all good news for Byu this week though, as they suffered another serious injury to a key player. Junior running back Jamaal Williams suffered a knee injury during the middle of the game. Bronco revealed on Monday that he would be done for the season as he had to have surgery on multiple severe knee injuries.

Williams is just another in what has become a long list of injuries for the Cougars. Here's hoping for a speedy recovery to Williams, who has been the best player on the Cougars (not the most hyped) for three years now.

Still A Game Of Inches.

Another week, another extremely tight conference game for the Utes. The Utes had been walking the on the razor's edge for a month. The problem with walking that close to the line, is it's not difficult to stumble and go over it. That's exactly what happened to Utah against Arizona State.

The Utes lost to the Sun Devils in overtime after a missed Andy Phillips field goal, allowed the Sun Devils to kick a figgie for the win. While it's shocking that Phillips missed such an easy field goal, the blame for this game isn't on him. Instead it's on the offense.

The defense had some issues. Playing against a true spread team for the first time, really struggled holding the edge, which allowed the Sun Devils some large gains on the ground. They also missed two gift chances for interceptions, one of which would have ended the game tying field goal drive and sealed a Utah victory. Where the defense excelled though was in the bending and not breaking motif. Arizona State moved the ball at will in the first quarter. Both times though, the Utes clamped down inside the 30 and held the Sun Devils to measly field goals. After that Sitake adjusted, and confused Taylor Kelly and the Sun Devil offense for most of the night.

Unfortunately it all went for not because the Offense didn't show up.

A Group Effort Of Crap

In the aftermath of last weeks beyond abysmal 57 yard performance a lot of the criticism went straight to Travis Wilson. Wilson had the opportunity to finally seize control of the QB Competition that has plagued the team all year. Instead the

lack of consistency that worried me last week showed up. When the Utes desperately needed Scorpion Travis to show up, timid Travis made the trip instead.

It wasn't all his fault. Without Dres, none of the Wide Receivers were able to stretch the field or get separation, which allowed the Sun Devils to blitz like crazy, and play close to the line. Honestly though, by the 2nd half of the game, I'm not sure it would have mattered if they were open, because by then Wilson was so rattled, and his confidence had been entire too shaken that he just wasn't making plays.

And that's the crux of the problem for the Utes at QB. The coaching staff has thoroughly mishandled the QB Competition. Now I'm okay with the competition having happened in the fall, but it needed to stay in fall camp. When Travis Wilson won the job, the coaches needed to get behind him, and let him know, that while he doesn't have a free reign to make mistakes like he had the previous year, he was there guy.

Instead from the moment it was announced that Wilson won the job, it was always with a caveat. First the coaches said Wilson won it "by a thin margin" and that Thompson would be given time during the season, essentially telling Wilson, that he didn't have much room for error.

The playing time wasn't an issue during the first three games as it came in the second half of blowouts, and when Travis went out with an injury after going full Scorpion. Then came Washington State game, and the Utes first loss. The majority of the rhetoric coming out of that game was that as the Utes offense bogged down in the second half, the coaches felt they should have given Thompson some time.

Wilson has never been the most mentally strong player. You could see it last year when he'd get into funks, he'd stay in those funks (UCLA's 6 picks, Arizona State, Usc games are all good examples of this.) So now the coaches had undermined him during their only loss. By doing so, they basically told Wilson he can't make any mistakes. For someone who thrives as a gunslinger, having them be afraid to make the wrong decision is a severe detriment.

Against UCLA, the drops came to Utah, badly. Travis led the Utes on 3 extremely ineffective drives, and it was time to try Thompson to spark something. It worked against Ucla, but became abundantly clear, that Thompson is not a long term solution. Ask Byu fans what happens when you have a QB who trusts their legs way too much. So, the coaches replace an ineffective Thompson with Wilson, and immediately saw the offense open up for Booker as the Utes won against OSU, and the Coaches began saying they just wanted somebody to take the job, but they were letting Travis start by default.

Then something weird happened against Usc. Surprisingly enough the coaches showed some trust in Wilson with the gameplan. Aided by the fact that Usc had a really stout run defense, the coaches let Travis throw the ball. While it wasn't anything to wow anyone, it was enough that Wilson had the offense moving throughout the night, and when the team needed a leader on the final drive, Wilson became that leader.

Sadly that confidence didn't last long, the Utes were never able to handle the ASU blitz, and Travis struggled early, so how did the Coaches adjust? Once they got the lead (by allowing Travis to move the pocket and try to make plays) they went into an extreme shell. To call the play calling vanilla is an insult to vanilla offensive games. With a lead, and a running back who was finding holes, the Utah coaches stopped even pretending to call pass plays. Despite having Arizona State keying on every run. Despite them playing a cover 0 defense which leads to no support in the back field, and is ripe to be picked apart by skinny posts, and slants. Nothing is called. Also despite letting Travis run and move out of the pocket on their way to 4 scores in 5 drives and 16 unanswered points, so to are those gone.

The play calling got so bad that Joey Freaking Harrington was calling out the Utah plays as soon as the Utes got to the line. Of course it wasn't that hard, the play call was run.

At the first sign of trouble, and with a miniscule lead, the Utes took away any confidence in Travis. They started playing not to lose, and basically let Travis know his only job was not to turn it over. Is it any wonder when the time came he didn't have the confidence to make a play. He's thinking any mistake will cost him his job.

Sure enough, after struggling, the coaches went back to the old "it's no ones job" rhetoric and move Wilson and Thompson back into an OR situation on the depth chart.

Where To Go From Here

I'm not sure how to fix the QB situation at Utah. Even worse, I'm not sure at this point Travis Wilson can be fixed. He's honestly never been the same since he initially hurt his hand against Stanford, and even this year when he was doing

well at the beginning, there was just something off.

As his confidence has become entire shot, he's become more off.

Kendall Thompson isn't the answer. He's a great athlete, and is maybe deserving of a drive or two a game, but it's clear, until he learns to trust his arm (which is pretty good, and pretty accurate) he's going to be limited. So what can the Utes do?

This week the Utes host the #4 team in the College Football Playoff poll, and the standard bearer for the Pac-12 when the Oregon Ducks come to town. With them comes the player who should be the obvious Heisman runaway selection (but isn't solely because he doesn't play in the SEC) Ducks QB Marcus Mariota. Everyone knows what the Ducks are. They speed, speed, and more speed.

The Utes can beat Oregon. The Ducks are weak on the offensive line. Washington State got 7 sacks against the Ducks. Granted they were missing players who are now back, but even still, the OL has been a weak link for Oregon. The Utes defense can take advantage of this. They need to pressure Mariota and make him uncomfortable. Still, don't expect him to make mistakes, because that's just not what he does. Mariota is far and away the best player in College Football this season, and he's actually been that way for a couple years.

To beat the Ducks, the Offense needs to keep Oregon off the field. They don't need to be great, they just need what they had against Usc (minus the goal line fumbles.) The offensive coaches need to call a dynamic game, and not get predictable. If the Utes can manage even that, if Scorpion Travis shows up, the Utes will stay in this game, and as we've seen the last 5 games, anything can happen.

So what happens if Timid Travis shows up? What happens if the offense isn't up to snuff again. The Utes obviously can't survive with 57 yards passing. The Coaches can't just let Travis stand back there and be ineffective. At the same time, I don't think you can keep swapping between Thompson and Wilson.

I know the common logic says that going against the Ducks is a terrible time to throw somebody new in for their first reps. Especially since at best they'd be a Redshirt Freshman. I'm going to disagree and here's why.

Coming into the season the goal was bowl eligibility. The Utes got there. Yes it would suck to have the Utes end the season on a losing streak and end up with only 6 or 7 wins. It would definitely be a blight on the season. But let's be honest, the loss against the Sun Devils put any hope for a Pac-12 South divisional title on the ropes. While the Utes are still technically in it for a chance to win the division, it would be hard. A loss to Oregon would essentially kill any chance the Utes have for a magical Pac-12 season or more, and instead would leave Utah focusing on bowl game improvement, and next season.

6 wins is fine this year, but the Utes will need to keep improving to really become a player in the Pac-12. Next year, the QB competition will obviously be opened up, but it can't just be between Thompson and Wilson. The Utes also have 3 other QB's on the roster that deserve a shot. Redshirt freshmen Conner Manning, Brandon Cox, and true freshman Donovan Isom (who is my pick to be the future.) The coaches really like Brandon Cox. So if the offense is stalling, and the Ducks look like they're about to take control of the game, why not look to the future. Why not put Brandon Cox in and see if he gives us something different than we're getting with Wilson and Thompson.

Honestly the Utes would have nothing to lose. It would give them a chance to see Cox in real game action against real opponents. It would also give them a leg up on their decision making for next fall camp. The Utes staff is playing with house money at this point. Why not put that house money to use. Now that the Utes are bowl eligible they'll get the extra bowl practices which are great for developing youth. Why not see what else you have. The worst that can happen is you find out that someone isn't your guy and you have one less guy in the mix next year. It's better than the alternative which is Travis continues to struggle, you could lose anyways.

Either way, the competition next year cannot just be Travis Wilson and Kendal Thompson. Not saying Wilson can't be the guy, and can't improve. (Although if you haven't noticed I am intimating that Thompson can't be the guy) Just saying his confidence has been shot this year by the coach mismanagement. It's time to either prop him up or start to move on.

Of course the best case scenario is Wilson gets out of his own head, turns back into Scorpion Travis, the coaches trust him, and he starts moving the offense and we don't have to worry about it at all.

Wait, A Poll That Makes Sense?

This week marked the second appearance of the College Football Playoff Committee's Top 25. While I didn't see the need for them to release an in-season poll when it was announced, I'm kind of glad they are, since it gives us an insight into what they're thinking. One of the things we've learned is that they kind of make sense.

One of the major problems with the AP Top 25, the JokersCoaches Poll, and the BCS is that it discouraged matchups between good teams. The reason for that is that the pollsters all looked at a loss being a requirement for a drop in ranking, no matter the circumstances.

So far, it's looking like the Committee is taking the opposite approach and rewarding wins, instead of punishing losers.

For example, in a matchup between two top 20 teams, one would expect a close matchup. Theoretically one would also expect the higher ranked team to come out victorious. So in the past when a say 14th ranked team would beat a 17th ranked team, the previous polls would drop the 17th ranked team for losing, without looking at the situation. So say the 17th ranked team was the road team and lost in overtime, they would still be punished for losing, despite the fact that the rankings basically stated that they should lose closely.

The Utah/Sun Devil game is an example of this, and an example of how the committee is thinking differently. Utah dropped in both the Coaches poll and the AP poll, while the Sun Devils got a minor bump in both. Not so for the committee. Instead they left Utah ranked 17th, and rewarded the Sun Devils by moving them up 5 spots into the top 10.

If this is truly how the committee is going to act, it shows that they do in fact value strength of schedule, and teams won't be punished for playing and losing against tough opponents. It will also encourage teams to schedule better.

All that being said, any team that has two sub 70 yard passing games on their resume, that isn't a full on triple option team, should not be ranked in the top 20.

Back To The Dumb Polls

The Cougars and Aggies both played their 9th game of the season last week, meaning we have two of the three teams in state having turned the 3rd Quarter poll. So let's see how they rank.

3. - Byu (5-4) - To say October wasn't easy on them is an understatement. A win last week, a bye this week, and Unlv and Savannah State following gives them a chance to get some positive momentum. 1 more win and they'll be bowl eligible.

2. - Utah State (6-3) - The Aggies not only ruined the Cougars season, but they're also ruining their injury excuses. Already down their defensive captain and other starters, the Aggies had to start their 4th string QB last weekend. Playing against similar competition, they've kept it rolling despite the injuries.

1. - Utah (6-2) - The Utes are just as close to 3-5 and 8-0 as they are to their current 6-2 position. Their defense though is a beast, and they're proving that they are for real, even as their offense tanks.

Up All Night

Well last week didn't undo time and space, it also didn't bring an end to those really late nights.

This week the Utes have another late one. Kickoff will be at 8:00 p.m. and the game will be on ESPN.

Posted by Sideshow in Red, Blue And Pigskin at 06:04