

Wednesday, September 30, 2015

Red, Blue And Pigskin

So before I start talking about what was truly a shocking weekend of College Football, I ask for a moment of silence and reflection as we sit back and realize that we are already 1/3rd of the way through the College Football Regular Season. These moments are fleeting.

Okay onto last weekend, to which I offer a single piece of advice to both Utah and Byu.....

Burn the Tape. Don't watch it, don't study it, just burn it. After you've burnt the tape, take the ashes and throw it in a dirt pile (similar to the way De'Veon Smith threw Michael Davis off his back) and bury it. Whatever you do don't watch it. No good can come of it.

Obviously, the reasons are very different for each team, but the advice is the same. Burn the tape. Burn The Tape - Big House Edition

The Cougars grind of a September finished up last weekend in Michigan against the Wolverines. Of course, based on the way they played, one could make the argument that the Cougars actually finished their September in Los Angeles, because they sure didn't show up in Michigan. In a truly putrid performance the Cougars got dominated on all sides of the ball while being shut out 31-0.

Offensively the Cougars gained a grand total of 105 yards. Tanner Mangum went 11 minutes before completing a pass. The Wolverine defensive line pushed the Cougar offensive line around all day getting tons of pressure on Mangum. Even when he wasn't pressured, it was clear he and his WR's were not on the same page, as he'd frequently throw a pass expecting a zig, but getting a zag.

Defensively it wasn't any better and the Cougars couldn't stop the Wolverines especially on the ground, with the standout play being the long run by De'Veon Smith.

It was a performance, so bad, and so outside the norm, that there really isn't anything that can be taken away from the game. The Cougars aren't nearly as bad as they seemed there. While struggles for Mangum are to be expected, he'll never look like a High School freshman again like he did in the Big House.

This was an outlier game of massive proportions. One of those games where it's just not your night. It really would not do the players any good to watch the tape for mistakes. It's best to move on beyond this game.

The Good News

Fortunately for the Cougars their September, which was the toughest September schedule in the nation, is over. They now enter a stretch of 5 games where they will be the clear cut favorite to win. That's not to say they won't lose one of those games. Given Bronco Mendenhall's history it would not only shock me to see them lose one of the next 5 games, but I would expect it to happen. I just wouldn't be able to predict it happening.

It starts this weekend with the UConn Huskies coming to town. UConn is 2-2 on the season and two weeks ago gave two time SEC East champion Missouri all it could handle in a 9-6 slugfest. UConn does just enough on Offense to keep it in it's games. Defensively the Huskies have spent 2 of the last three weeks playing option teams in Navy and Army. While Navy was able to tune them up for 300 yards, Army was held to a more pedestrian 150.

After 4 straight weeks of stiff competition, especially on the defensive side of the ball, UConn is the perfect time for the Cougars to start to get healthy, and right the ship. This will be the perfect game to rebound for Mangum, and allow the Cougars to help rebuild some of his confidence. Though if we've seen anything the first 4 weeks, it's that Mangum doesn't lack for confidence.

Burn The Tape - Autzen Edition

5 days later and I still don't know what to say. Even The Dog (not the bounty hunter) would be pleased with this performance. I thought that if Travis Wilson played, and the Utes front 7 were able to ugly the game up, Utah would be

able to keep it close. But this, never expected this. Where nothing went right for Byu and Michigan, absolutely everything went right for Utah at Autzen.

Even when they did get stopped and were forced to punt, something would go right, like the punt hitting the overhead sky cam wire, forcing a re-kick, only Whittingham noticing that the ducks were biting on the rugby run to the right, so they call a fake punt left and get a 33 yard game.

Yea it was that kind of night. Or it was this kind of night. Either way, memorable, weird stuff seems to happen when the Ducks and the Utes play.

When it was all said and done the Utes had steamrolled the Ducks by a score of 62-20. 62 being the most points Oregon had ever allowed at Autzen stadium. The Utes outscored the Ducks 21-7 in the 2nd quarter, only to top that with a 28-0 3rd quarter. The pedestrian Utah offense showed up with 530 yards of total offense. Not counting the 1 play drive with 15 seconds to go in the first half, the Utes scored on 8 consecutive drives, including 6 straight Touchdown drives. Defensively the Utes forced 3 Turnovers, and sacked 3 different Oregon QB's a total of 5 times.

The performance was just stunning. It was a case where everything that could go right for Utah did go right. The Utes will rarely if ever have this many things go right, and play this well again. It's such an outlier performance, that it's best to just Burn the tape, and instead put in the Fresno State, or Utah State tapes where there were plenty of mistakes to be corrected.

Did You Know?

Did you know The Dog from duck hunt, actually has a name? It's Mr. Peepers. But yea I think I'll stick with The Dog.

Much Maligned Travis Wilson - Giant Slayer

One person on the Utes squad who should watch the tape though, and deservedly so, is Travis Wilson. The Sr. QB, playing through the pain of his sprained left shoulder only happened to have his best game of his career. Wilson was 18/30 for 227 yards and 4 TD's. He added another 6 rushes, for 100 yards and a TD. On the rushes you could see he was really hurting after the tackles.

While Wilson's funky delivery will never look crisp, he's never looked more confident in the pocket, and was clearly seeing the whole field. His reads, whether they were which pass to make, or whether to hand off to Booker, or keep the ball on the read were spot on all night. This is the type of game that Wilson has shown he was capable of, but never really put together completely.

This means that Wilson, who spent most of last year having his head and confidence jacked with by Dave Christensen to the point where Kendal Thompson seemed like a viable alternative, has overcome injuries (intracranial artery, hand, shoulder), and constant calls for his benching, to put up a resume of huge wins unlike any ever seen by a Utah QB. Wilson now has 2 wins over Michigan, 1 of which was at the Big House, 2 wins over Stanford, including 1 when they were ranked #5 in the nation, A win over Usc, and a win over Oregon at Autzen stadium. Technically he's credited with a win over Ucla at the Rose Bowl, but that was mostly Thompson in relief after Wilson was pulled. While some Utah QB's may have bigger wins nobody has as many big wins as Travis.

Of course, since Wilson has had big wins before, we've also seen Travis, through injury or fault of his own, then revert back to bad Travis, so now we need to see consistency, and how about a win versus a team from Arizona. Especially since despite being the nation's leader in QBR, he didn't even have his own teams best QBR for the night. That went to DeVontae Booker who went 1/1 for a 35 yard TD to Britain Covey, so Wilson still has work to do.

Utah's Next Opponent: The Utes

This week the Utes are on bye, so while they won't actually play an opponent on the field, the coaching staff will definitely have an opponent off the field to deal with. They have been

Posted by Sideshow in Red, Blue And Pigskin at 10:04

Dueling Reviews #5

Covering Life in Pieces and Lucifer.

Next up we will be watching Quantico and Grandfathered.

Before we get to these reviews, we have a new participant.

The Mad Giggler chimes in on Supergirl:
Thoughts going in:

I'd heard some good buzz about this on reddit and seen a couple favorable (if hesitantly so) reviews on the web. My initial reaction to the concept was skepticism and I still worry that viewing audiences may be getting burnout on superheroes.

What I Thought:

The pilot surprised me. I liked what they did with J. Olson and the lead has some nice onscreen presence - which hadn't translated well for me through still shots. There were a few cringeworthy scenes, mostly with Cat Grant. I think the cast has a good chance to build some nice chemistry if the writing improves.

I really enjoyed the scene with her picking out her superhero suit. I thought the feminist thing may need to tone down a bit, but I wouldn't want to see it go away entirely. I certainly had the thought during a couple scenes that I'd like to show this to my daughters.

How Long Will This Last:

Well, Superman stuff has traditionally done very well on TV, so there's hope if the network doesn't gag on the pricetag for the special effects. The optimist in me gives it five seasons, but the pessimist says it'll struggle by the third to keep viewers on a big network.

Life in Pieces

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

Everything I read keeps comparing this to Modern Family, which I found grating. Not really looking forward to this one.

Joey's Summary:

Much funnier than expected. I really enjoyed the idea of the 70th Birthday being themed around a funeral - unfortunately, my wife wouldn't go for it any more than his did. Actuarial tables suggest I will kick off at around 62 years old anyway.

Joey's Rating: 8

Joey's Season Prediction: 3 seasons

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

This looks like it could be one of the good ones.

Aaron's summary:

A comedy about family. I laughed more than I thought I would. I hope it only gets better as it goes.

Aaron's Rating: 7.5

Aaron's Season Prediction: Five seasons with more hits than misses.

Sideshow chimes in on Life in Pieces
Pre-watch Thoughts: After a decade of trying to recreate Friends, looks like the TV world has moved on to Modern Family

Summary: Wow that was..... weird. On one hand I kind of like just being thrown into a story without setup. On the other had, it took awhile to figure out what the heck was going on. The hook of the couple trying to hook up, but the ex still lives in the house was kind of funny. James Brolin is funny as the familial patriarch, but not sure that he won't get annoying. At least there's nobody in this "Modern Family" that I absolutely detest.

Rating: 6.5

Prediction: Midseason cancellation next year, just as it's shedding it's Modern Family clone roots and finding itself.

Lucifer

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

Never read the comic book, but there's no way it's going to be a better show than Constantine was, and that got cancelled.

Joey's Summary:

GROAN. Does EVERYTHING have to be a police procedural with sexual tension between the two leads? All of the "I'm the Devil, watch me do my thing" scenes in this movie made me think of the scene in Studio 60 where Harriet can't tell a

joke. These people don't actually understand seeping, pernicious evil; or, at least, they're unwilling to portray it on their TV show.

Joey's Rating: 4

Joey's Season Prediction: 1

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

It looks like one of those shows that will have a cool idea that will be cancelled before it finds itself.

Aaron's summary:

Lucifer gets tired of hell but not of his evil ways. I really enjoyed watching this pilot. Like J. Michael Straczynski's *Midnight Nation* they had me agreeing with Satan then sitting back and saying, "Wait I really shouldn't be rooting for him..." though *Midnight Nation* is far, far better. I am going to correct my pre-watch thoughts and say they definitely found themselves.

Aaron's Rating: 9.5

Aaron's Season Prediction: Sadly cancelled before the fourth season.

Posted by Ancient of Days in TV at 06:05

Tuesday, September 29, 2015

Dueling Reviews #4

This time, we're discussing FX's *The Bastard Executioner* and the CBS' *Supergirl*.

Next up we will be watching *Life in Pieces* and *Lucifer*. *Supergirl*

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

I'm hoping for early *Smallville*.

Joey's Summary:

I really enjoyed it. Even though they laid on the "Kara will be her own woman" stuff pretty thick.

Joey's Rating: 7.5

Joey's Season Prediction: 2

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

Looks great I will watch it for as long as it is on I think.

Aaron's summary:

The story of Kal-El's cousin Kara Zor-El. I really liked this pilot. I am afraid that it will either be cancelled early or live on but twisted by caving to public opinion.

Aaron's Rating: 8.27

Aaron's Season Prediction: Will finish the first but not be picked up for a second.

The Bastard Executioner

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

Every channel wants a *Game of Thrones*.

Joey's Summary:

I'm having a hard time summing this one up. It wasn't terrible; it wasn't great. It had moments of story-telling. It had moments of senseless gore. It had moments where the authors clearly phoned it in.

Joey's Rating: 6

Joey's Season Prediction: 3

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

I have heard it is similar to *Vikings* which I just couldn't get into.

Aaron's summary:

A rebel replaces an executioner because a witch tells him to. A little rough around the edges, but it is a pilot. I am willing to see if they can tighten it up.

Aaron's Rating: 4.95

Aaron's Season Prediction:

However long *Vikings* goes. I guess 3-4 seasons.

Posted by Ancient of Days in TV at 06:21

Saturday, September 26, 2015

Dueling Reviews #3

This time, we are reviewing the frustratingly good Heroes: Reborn double-length premiere as well as The Player.

Next up we will be watching FX swing for the Westeros-style fences with The Bastard Executioner and the CBS trying to play in the superhero genre with Supergirl.

Heroes Reborn

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.

Joey's Summary:

All right...I said ALL RIGHT! FINE! SHAME ON ME!

Joey's Rating: 9

Joey's Season Prediction: Why am I doing this to myself? 5! Give me 5 good seasons! PLEASE! - Instead, I will be bitterly disappointed; cancelled midway through season 2, even though the writing is starting to pick up again after a bit of a slump in late first season through the early part of the second.

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

I will watch the first season, and only the first season.

Aaron's summary:

Heroes: The Next Generation. It looks good though switching to the video game universe is a little jarring.

Aaron's Rating: 5

Aaron's Season Prediction:

One great season then increasingly bad until it is cancelled.

The Player

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

Not expecting much from this one

Joey's Summary:

You're going to hear a LOT of people comparing this one to Person of Interest. Like the writers of The Player, those people don't actually understand what it is that makes Person of Interest tick. This was a moderately fun ride that isn't going to last.

Joey's Rating: 7

Joey's Season Prediction: 1

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

Person of Interest rip off, that doesn't mean it will be bad.

Aaron's summary:

The rich people of the world bet on peoples lives. It's ok but I would prefer they brought Human Target back.

Aaron's Rating: 5

Aaron's Season Prediction: Two and a half: A season and a half before we discover that there are no rich people betting and this is all being run by Samaritan (Ed: he's referring here to the counter-AI from Person of Interest), then cancelled halfway into the next.

Sideshow chimes in on The Player and LimitlessThe Player

Pre-Watch Thoughts: I like Wesley Snipes so anything he's in will get at least a watch from me.

Summary: Person of Interest did the whole predicting crimes thing better. But where POI has become a story about too much government oversight, the gambling aspect of the Player means it'll never get into anything serious like that. The only thing memorable about the cast is Wesley Snipes over acting was a bit of unintentional comedy. It's a good "popcorn flick", turn off your brain type of show. There hasn't been a good one on TV for awhile.

Rating: 5

Summary: Gets moved to Friday somewhere around February, where ratings are expected to be lower, which earns it a 2nd season.

Limitless

Pre-watch thoughts: This is one of my favorite movies of the past 5 years or so. Great concept. Thought of continuing in the world is a great idea, but of all the things that can be done with the NZT drug, a procedural where the drug is used to help the FBI just seems like such a waste.

Summary: Really enjoyed the pilot. A lot of that might have something to do with the fact that it's basically the movie over again. Even the star of the show is a halfway decent poor man's Bradley Cooper, so it feels like this pilot isn't a good representation of what the week to week show will be. Hopefully it doesn't become the Mentalist or Unforgettable, but I have a bad feeling that's what we're going to get. But I'm going to watch it anyways.

Rating: 8

Prediction: A Solid by the book procedural that is ultimate disappointing to fans of the Movie that sticks around for 5 years with just enough NZT based tie ins to keep the movie fans interested.

Posted by Ancient of Days in TV at 21:32

Friday, September 25, 2015

Dueling Reviews #2

In which Joey publicly suffers an identity crisis, and Sideshow tells us how he REALLY feels about Lea Michele.

This time we're reviewing the Scream Queens double-length premiere as well as Fox's execrable Rosewood.

Next up we will be doing Heroes: Reborn episodes 1 and 2 (they aired back to back, billed as a double-length premiere episode) and the Wesley Snipes star vehicle The Player.Scream Queens

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

This is probably the one I'm dreading the most. I don't like the genre, I don't like the promotional stills I've seen, and I don't like the name. But I *do* like Jamie Lee Curtis, so let's focus on that.

Joey's Summary:

((Mean Girls æ• True Lies) / The Horror Genre) == a surprisingly likable outing. I was VERY SURPRISED at how I was actually able to enjoy this one a little bit. Certainly the first few minutes of the episode, set 20 years in the past, made me laugh quite a lot; and I don't think there was a Jamie Lee Curtis scene I DIDN'T laugh at. I am really surprised at how much I was able to enjoy this. Don't get me wrong - I still hate horror stuff, even comedy horror. But this wasn't nearly the cringe-fest I thought I was headed for going in.

Joey's Rating: 5 - That may sound low, but normally a horror show wouldn't even register a 2 for me.

Joey's Season Prediction: 3

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

The third Punishment.

Aaron's summary:

The worst that humanity has to offer has gathered around the sorority KKT. Luckily someone is killing them before they can breed. Oh and they scream a lot. Bad acting on a terrible show that sprang from a horrible idea.

Aaron's Rating: 0

Aaron's Season Prediction: I am hoping this gets cancelled after the pilot, but probably two really bad seasons.Sideshow chimes in on Scream Queens

Pre-watch Thoughts: Every mid 90's slasher flick only glee-ified by Ryan Murphy. After having suffered through all seasons of Glee and seeing Ryan Murphy ruin a show by centralizing around Lea Michele's Rachel, the real horror of this show is having to suffer through Lea Michele again.

Summary. Wow, that was truly awful. Every character is a caricature. Where it's trying to be funny, satirical, or witty, it was just plain stupid, generic and lazy. I think I'm going to have nightmares. In more delicate hands this could have been an interesting send up of the slasher genre, but it misses every possible mark.

Rating: 1. Jamie Lee Curtis actually caused me to crack a few laughs.

Prediction: The Red Devils at Fox slash this before Christmas break.

Rosewood

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

I liked the main guy when he was the super-tenacious DC cop on Legend. I'm not so sure the current television landscape needs another Bones, though.

Joey's Summary:

I am SO confused right now. I thought I would ready to gouge my eyes out after Scream Queens, and instead found myself somewhat amused. I thought I would at least be able to appreciate Morris Chestnut's turn as a male version of Dr. Brennan, and found myself barely able to finish the episode. It felt like the Director saw Mr. Chestnut's natural charm on Legends, and said "I want you to play a guy who THINK'S he's that character, but in reality he's a closet pedophile." Everything about Dr. Rosewood feels...off. I will not be watching this one.

Joey's Rating: 2

Joey's Season Prediction: I think Fox is secretly hoping this will just retain the Bones viewers, but I can't see it happening. One and done.

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

Castle esque

Aaron's summary:

A private pathologist works with the police in Miami. I liked it, Morris Chestnut will probably pull this show a lot farther than the premise justifies.

Aaron's Rating: 7.76

Aaron's Season Prediction: Four well made seasons then cancelled due to a drop in ratings.

Posted by Ancient of Days in TV at 14:45

Thursday, September 24, 2015

Dueling Reviews #1

This time we're reviewing Limitless and Minority Report, and Sideshow chimes in on the latter.

Next up we will be doing Scream Queens episodes 1 and 2 (they aired back to back, billed as a double-length premiere episode) and Rosewood.

Limitless
Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

The movie behind this series was, for me, the ultimate fantasy; basically, the culmination of my entire life's effort is to achieve this kind of perfect interface between brain and body.

Joey's Summary:

A good first outing. The main character first takes NZT (the super-brain drug) because he wants to diagnose his father's illness. Things escalate quickly when his source of NZT is murdered. Bradley Cooper shows up and reprises his role from the movie - and I suspect he's actually going to turn up to be a bit of a bad guy.

Joey's Rating: 8

Joey's Season Prediction: 3 seasons, but the third one will largely be critically panned.

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

Sherlock Holmes in a pill?

Aaron's summary:

The first fifteen minutes are a lot like the movie. This will battle with Minority Report and Blindspot. Like the main character this show has a great deal of potential.

Aaron's Rating: 8

Aaron's Season Prediction: Three seasons

Minority Report

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

SIGH. The movie wasn't nearly good enough to warrant an entire TV show. If we're going to do Philip K. Dick stories as TV Series, why not "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" (film version: Blade Runner), "The Golden Man" (film version: Next), or "Paycheck" (film version: well...Paycheck)? All of those movies were WAY better, even when you consider the sub-par casting choices made in the latter two.

Joey's Summary:

So the pre-cogs were let go, and one of the twins (Dash) still wants solve crimes, because he gets the horrifying visions of all the deaths. The other twin, Arthur, is some kind of high-powered investment guy, because he gets the visions of the names and numbers (somewhat easier to turn to a financial advantage.) Dash partners up with a cop who consistently shows a wildly inappropriate amount of cleavage. Agatha has a foreboding vision of the future, but isn't sure how to stop it. Oh, and the Washington NFL team is renamed to the "Redclouds" at some point in this hypothetical future. I certainly hope that's not the best the NFL manages to come up with.

Joey's Rating: 6 - slightly better than middle-of-the-road; the acting wasn't great, the plot was super-thin, but they showed off some cool tech gadgets for future cops.

Joey's Season Prediction: Not finishing their first season, unless the writing and acting improve a LOT.

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts: I will wish it was Blindspot.

Aaron's summary:

The weakest of the Precogs helps a police officer stop a killer... via murder?! Already I would rather be watching Blindspot, but hey future tech is cool.

Aaron's Rating: 5.25

Aaron's Season Prediction: Cancelled before March

Sideshow chimes in on Minority Report

Pre-Watch Thought: Minority Report has always been a movie I've really enjoyed, and simultaneously been a little disappointed in, because it fell apart at the end. One thought I've always wondered is about life after the movie for the Pre-cogs. This show is supposed to tap into it. Sadly they're going the procedural route, but hopefully it's a procedural in the Gotham mold where there's individual stories and an overall story, and not the NCIS type mold where nothing ties in. It's one of two movie tie in pilots this season that I'm really concerned might be done an injustice in the procedural

format, though it might work better here than in Limitless.

Summary: A good reintroduction into the world. Initial exposition is enough to catch up those who hadn't seen the movie, and even gave new details to those who did. It's a little too dependent upon showing off and using "future tech" which is a fine line they'll need to balance. A good amount of tie-ins to Minority Report and the after effects of the events of the movie. Enough hints to an overarching story. Much like every procedural the question is can they do enough with the gimmick, and the overall story to avoid getting stale week to week.

Rating: 7.5 - It's a solid pilot, didn't blow me away, but didn't disappoint me either.

Prediction: Futuristic cop shows don't typically fare well. It's hard to get a hook into audiences who sometimes shy away from sci-fi fare, and the shows are typically expensive to make. Sadly I think this will get the same fate as Almost Human a few years ago where it runs out the string this year, and just is too cost prohibitive to bring back next. Also I think connection to the movie might hurt it, because it makes people think of Tom Cruise, and Tom Cruise the person turns people off no matter how good Tom Cruise the actor is. That's too bad because Tom Cruise has nothing to do with this show.

Posted by Ancient of Days in TV at 09:32

Wednesday, September 23, 2015

Red, Blue And Pigskin

In the words of the great boxer Roberto Duran: No más

Please Chuckie, No más.

It's been a great 5 years. You've had some spectacular moments. I know you'll always have regrets because you were so close to the brass ring. Your entire career will be defined by being oh so close, but please No más.

With the news that Chuckie Keeton will be out at least 4-6 weeks with a sprained knee I have to say No más.

Had Them Right Where They Wanted Them

Down 1, 3 plus minutes to go, 1 timeout, the ball in Tanner Mangum's hand. The whole football world had to be thinking the same thing. UCLA was screwed.

Then came 4th and 7, and the world knew the Bruins were done.

Alas, the Mangum Magic ran out this week, but unlike the last couple weeks, there's a lot for BYU to be happy about. At least offensively.

The battle between the two freshman QB's went exactly like I said it would. One of the QB's seemed poised and confident, and played more like an established player in his 2nd or 3rd year. While the other spent most of the game seeming flustered, and confused. 1 QB consistently kept command of the field, limited damage he did to his team, and kept putting his team in positions to be successful. The other played like a freshman and made some crucial mistakes that made the day harder on his team than needed to be.

Of course, I figured the roles would be reversed, as for the first time in 3 games Josh Rosen looked like a true freshman, and for the first time in his 2 1/2 games, Mangum looked calm and in control.

That said though, credit the Bruin defense for realizing that Mangum's security blanket is rolling right (Both Hail Mary's and Jeurgens 87 yard td all came with Mangum rolling right), and refused to let him get there all night. UCLA also came to realize that when Mangum rolls right, he's not going to take off running, and stayed solid on defense. As such on 4th and 7, Mangum rolled right. Threw a less than advised pass, and Myles Jack stepped in front of it to end the game. A play which will end up being Jack's last of the season.

This isn't to take anything away from Mangum. He played a good game and wasn't bothered by starting his first road game. Especially when his defense did him no favors all night as they allowed UCLA run all over them. Paul Perkins rushed for 219 yards, while Nate Starks added another 89. In a game where the QB was mostly ineffective for the Bruins, BYU's inability to stop the run kept UCLA in the game, allowing them to ultimately win.

Taking September's Stock

This week's matchup is about two teams whose first month was about testing themselves to see where they were at. For Michigan, it was the beginning of a new era, and ridding themselves of the last one. For BYU it was a gauntlet of a schedule made worse by injuries. Both enter the game sitting at 2-1. 3-1 would obviously be a success for either side. For one side 2-2 would be considered a small success, while the other would probably consider it mostly a failure.

After an opening night loss to the Utes, Michigan has gone back to the confines of the Big House and won each of their last two games quite comfortably, although both against lesser opponents. After allowing an early touchdown against Oregon State, Michigan then proceeded to go on a streak of 6 scoreless quarters defensively, and 63 unanswered points offensively against the Beavers, and UNLV.

Of course, BYU isn't Oregon State, or UNLV.

The key for this game will be whether BYU can get their porous run defense figured out. This has been a problem for

Byu going back to last year. Of course with last week being the worst example, it might be just what Byu needed to focus on it. In a day of spread it out football, Harbaugh is a throw back to the old Power Running days of the past. Michigan is going to want to line up with it's big uglies and pound the ball all day. Byu must stop the run, therefore putting the onus on QB Jake Rudock, who hasn't been as steady at Michigan as he was the previous two seasons at Iowa.

Outside of the running game, the man that Byu must stop defensively is Jabrill Peppers. Peppers was the #1 rated recruit two years ago, and after missing last season with an injury, has shown exactly why through the first three weeks this year. In week 1 against the Utes, Peppers made plays that kept Utah from busting the game open earlier in the game. Against lesser opponents, Peppers has wreaked havoc. Going up against an offensive line that is undisciplined, look for Harbaugh to move Peppers around, and try to introduce him to Mangum early and often.

A Clear Cut Difference

This week, Utah finished an undefeated non conference slate by rolling an unprepared Fresno State. Everything of value about this game was made clear by the end of the 2nd Utah drive. That value was simply this: Utah will not win a single conference game this season if Kendall Thompson is their QB. It just won't happen. Last week I was willing to give him the benefit of the doubt until we saw what happened when the offense was planned around Thompson. We saw it, he was actually worse. Thompson struggles to be able to read the defense, causing him to be unsure of where to make the throw. When he finally does figure out the throw, his elongated release takes so long, that by the time he actually releases the ball, the read is no longer valid. Thompson is the football gods giving me Karmic payback for 5 years of Running back playing Quarterback jokes about Taysom Hill and Riley Nelson. Only I'd rather have Riley Nelson, because at least his wasn't slow on making his one read before hucking up the pass, and this year Thompson seems to have lost a step when running.

Utah has about as much chance of success with Thompson at QB this year, as Chip Kelly does relying on Sammy Checkdown to run his offense in Philadelphia.

It makes me wonder, how much did Dave Christensen screw with Travis Wilson's head last year, that Thompson was a viable alternative. Fortunately, Wilson should be back this week.

Duck Hunting Or Duck Food

The irony about the clear distinction between Wilson and Thompson being so evident this week is that it was the Oregon game last year where we briefly saw the dynamics that Thompson could bring to the offense. Last year going into the Oregon name, Wilson has lost the starting job, and it seemed as though it was going to stick this time. Thompson came in led the Utes to a quick 7 point lead on the first drive. Oregon could do nothing to stop Thompson as he was leading Utah on his second drive before he planted wrong and blew out his knee on a non contact injury.

We can't forget what happened next. Wilson connected with Clay on a beautiful 78 yard pass, that needed to be 79 before Clay spiked the ball. Oregon recovered ran it back for a TD, and instead of being up 14-0 with all the momentum, the Utes were shell shocked at 7-7. They'd eventually make it a 3 point game with 12 minutes to play, but the Ducks would pull away.

This year the Ducks will be have a new QB in Eastern Washington transfer Vernon Adams. Adams is playing with a broken index finger that severely effected his ability to pass downfield against Michigan State. The index finger is the last finger to come off of the ball, and greatly assists in getting a pass the proper rotation and velocity it needs. Against the Spartans, any pass greater than 20 yards really seemed to be hampered like a lame duck (no pun intended.)

Utah remembers first hand how a jacked up hand can affect a QB after Wilson hurt his hand late in the Stanford upset two years ago. If Adams is compromised, Utah's defense is the type of defense that can keep things close. In a game when there doesn't seem to be much optimism around the fan base, most of the hope seems to rely on Adams being hampered.

If Adams isn't hampered by his finger, this could be the first of several big tests for a Utah defensive backfield that has shown a tendency to let the defender get behind them. While the Db's have made less, and less mistakes each week, they're still managing to let wide receivers get behind them for huge chunk plays. Against Michigan there were three passes that would have been touchdowns if Rudock could have connected. Utah State stayed in the game because of missed DB assignments, and Fresno State actually managed to make a dominant blowout look like a normal blowout because of garbage time 2nd string missed DB assignments. Against Oregon, those missed assignments will be all the more costly.

If Adams isn't effective in the air, the Utes stout defensive front 7 will be tested by RB Royce Freeman. Through three games Freeman is averaging 125 yards per game, and has 5 TD's. He's also averaging almost 7 yards per carry. Of course two of those games were against 1-AA Eastern Washington, and Georgia Southern. Against Michigan State, Freeman found it a little bit tougher sledding with only 3.8 yards per carry and 92 yards rushing. The Utes must keep Freeman closer to those totals than to the totals of the other two games.

Familiar Territory

The Utes are now 14-1 (Utah State 2012 being the only loss) in non conference play since joining the Pac-12. This means it's the the 3rd time they've entered the season halfway to a bowl game. Only in one of those season did they manage to earn a winning conference record, and only twice did they secure a bowl game after entering conference play 3-0.

Utah has also never won it's Pac-12 opener. Utah has also not beaten Oregon since 2003, or Arizona State in 30 years. I think they haven't ever beaten the Huskies.

Basically this means just because Utah's sitting pretty now, the precarious nature and difficulty of Conference play can mean it's all for naught come postseason time.

In case you were wondering here is how Utah has fared against each team since joining the Pac-12.

Arizona State: 0-4, 0 and the lad 30 years.

Arizona: 1-3, with Arizona winning the last three.... handily.

Cal: 1-1

Colorado: 3-1, that 1 is the Colorado high point since joining the Pac-12, snapping a two year road losing streak.... sigh!

Oregon: 0-2

Oregon State: 2-2

Ucla: 2-2

Usc: 1-3

Stanford: 2-0

Washington: 0-2, actually 0 and Forever.

Washington State: 2-2, Some Cougars can beat the Utes, having won the last 2.

Who Needs Cable

For the first time since, well since I'm not sure when, both Utah, and Byu will be available on over the air channels.

Byu will kickoff at the Big House at 10:00 Mountain time, and will be televised on ABC Channel 4.

Utah meanwhile with kickoff at 6:30 Mountain time and will be on Fox 13. Judging by having lost all the coin tosses this year, they'll probably be the ones kicking off as well.

Posted by Sideshow in Red, Blue And Pigskin at 15:27

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

Dueling Reviews - Installment #0

Editor's note: I accidentally left off Aaron's pre-episode thoughts on The Muppets and The Making of the Mob; it's been fixed.

Before we start, Aaron had this to say about the project as a whole:

I made the mistake of encouraging my brother to review the upcoming TV shows. The result is a project I'm sure will end the same way as my attempt to cool down the deep fat fryer with a pitcher full of cold water.

(I will be leaving his typos and other mistakes intact.)

The first 3 shows we will discuss are Blindspot, The Muppets, and the AMC documentary The Making of the Mob: New York. The juicy bits are below the fold...Blindspot

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

Looks interesting, asking the audience to engage in the mystery; ergo, it will be a commercial flop.

Joey's Summary:

Do you remember John Doe? I do. This show should basically have been called Jane Doe; it looks like it's many of the same ideas, repackaged for a female lead. It looks just as promising, and so will probably last - unfortunately - just as long.

Joey's Rating: 8

Joey's Season Prediction: Cancelled before March

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

Looks awesome, therefore it won't survive a second season.

Aaron's summary:

In a world where the FBI sends an amnesiac and traumatised tattooed woman out into the field because... plot. A solid start to what could be a really good show. I like Agent Weller and I can see some humor coming as Jane tries different foods. I hope they don't have a romantic entanglement between the two, but I think we see a glimpse or two already.

Aaron's Rating: 9

Aaron's Season Prediction: Five seasons before the show is rumored to be cancelled, leading to a lackluster sixth then cancellation.

The Muppets

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

I am cautiously optimistic, although what I *really* wanted was for The Muppet Show to come back in its original format.

Joey's Summary:

24 hours ago, I didn't recognize the names Bill Prady or Bob Kushell. Can we please rewind and go back to that time?

Because now I hate these men. HATE. H. A. T. E. Watching Kermit as the self-centered executive producer of Miss Piggy's late night talk show took out a small piece of my childhood innocence I had managed to hide away somewhere and stomped on it, then fed it Beaker. It's like all the things you hated about The Office, but being back-patched into your childhood memories of the Muppets so that they were always these vain, terrible people.

Joey's Rating: 1 - the only laughs came from Fozzie, and that was mostly because he was opposite the fantastic straight-man performance by the fantastic Riki Lindhome.

Joey's Season Prediction: Probably goes two cringe-worthy seasons before finding some kind of heart early in the 3rd, upon which stroke it will be immediately cancelled.

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

Just as long as they don't pull an Avenue Q I will enjoy it.

Aaron's summary:

Miss Piggy has a late night show with Kermit as the executive producer. "My life is a bacon wrapped hell on earth." - Kermit the Frog. If you liked the Muppets before, watch this show. I think they found a balance between Nostalgia and updating for a more mature audience.

Aaron's Rating: 9.75

Aaron's Season Prediction: Three solid seasons followed by a bad fourth then the axe.

The Making of the Mob: New York

Joey's pre-watch thoughts:

I'll admit, I had no idea what to expect here; it was unclear if I was watching a drama set in one my favorite time periods, or a documentary, or what.

Joey's Summary:

Still not entirely sure what it is, but it was well-enough done for modern documentaries. Though they aged the boys too fast; I wanted to really see them grow into the monsters they became.

Joey's Rating: 8.5

Joey's Season Prediction: Will finish the planned run strongly.

Aaron's pre-watch thoughts:

I have seen the Godfather movies but that is really all the interest I have had in the mob.

Aaron's summary:

The premise is in the title. I have to say that as much as I fast forward through what I call the "Talky Bits" I thoughrly enjoy a well done Documentary. Only seven minutes in I feel this will be a riveting look at the Mob. I can tell that it is gems like this that will see me through the horrible shows I am certain are coming on this list.

Aaron's Rating: 10

Aaron's Season Prediction: Two seasons one for East coast mob and one for the West.

Posted by Ancient of Days in TV at 21:53

Monday, September 21, 2015

The 2015 TV Project

Some of you may remember a time when I was doing a preview of the shows coming up in the new fall season - like this one from 2012. I haven't done one in a while, and with TrekWest5 on indefinite hiatus, I have been thinking of a new project to start. Thus, it is with great pleasure that I introduce you all to the 2015 TV Project.

Here's the plan. Here is a list of shows. If there's a new show starting in Fall of 2015 that's not on that list, let me know so we can add it.

No matter how execrable the subject matter may seem, I am going to watch the pilot of every single one of these shows*. Before I start each episode, I will write down my expectations based on trailers, things I've read or heard, and so forth. I will then summarize as much of the story as I can in no more than 200 words. I will also provide a rating on a scale of 0-10, with decimals being allowed (just because Pete loves them so much.) I will also make a prediction about how long the show will last.

Here's the REALLY exciting part - Aaron will be doing the same things for each episode. We will not discuss our thoughts or share our writing with each other prior to it going live here on this blog, so that you get the undiluted experience from each of us.

Want to join in? We'd love to have you - if you need my help acquiring any of these shows, reach out. I have a very capable DVR from Google Fiber that can do wondrous things (*EIGHT* tuners!)

Are we missing a show you'd really love to torture (or enliven - that's allowed too!) us with? As long as this is the show's first season, let us know and we'll put it on the list.

*: I am assuming that I have not missed any of the pilots, or am able to find resources which will allow me to fill any gaps needed. If I legitimately cannot find any way to watch the episode, we'll just do our "initial thoughts" and "series length predictions."

Posted by Ancient of Days in TV at 21:46

Wednesday, September 16, 2015

Red, Blue And Pigskin

I went to bed Saturday night thinking that the worst thing I was going to have to hear about the next day was Cougar fans talking about their latest miracle. Instead I woke up Sunday and started hearing about the two Utah players who were shot.

Fortunately both are okay and expected to make a full recovery, but talk about putting a damper on things. But it does remind you that not only are these real people we obsess about but their just young kids as well. Best wishes to them as they continue on their road to recovery.

I hate when the real world interferes with my sports. Some times it feels like a real shot to the nuts. So Nice He Did It Twice

Last week during the national fawning over Mangum's Nebraska Hail Mary, former Washington Husky QB, and current Pac-12 analyst Brock Huard was on the radio and mentioned that he had never completed a Hail Mary in his football playing life.

Well Mr Huard, Tanner Mangum thinks you failed at life, because not only has he completed a Hail Mary he's done it twice. With an 84 yard bomb mixed in for good measurement, and once again, Mangum pulled Byu's butt out of the fire of defeat in a game where Byu spent the majority of it flailing around like a fish out of water.

While Mangum was the man who hucked up pass, and this week it was Mitch Jeurgens who came down with it, the man responsible for the Byu victory is a man that most Cougar fans love to hate. None other than Offensive Coordinator Robert Anae. After all it was Anae's decision to stick with the run in the 2nd half, despite the fact that it had been entirely stuffed in the first half, that allowed Byu to wear down the Boise State defensive line, and kept the game close as the Byu passing game sputtered and stalled behind a true freshman who, outside of two passes, played like a true freshman. Anae insistence on running the ball, even after a -14 yard first half, allowed the pressure to be taken off of Mangum.

In doing so, the Cougars may have also settled on their main back for the year and it was Adam Hine who toted 19 of the teams 39 rushes, falling just short of 100 yards on the day.

Defensively, the Cougars were happy to see the return of Safety Kai Nacua whose 3 interceptions, including a game ending pick 6, must have seemed like a sucker punch to a Boise State offense that just couldn't seem to get out of their own way. Despite finding great success early on with RB Jeremy McNichols as Boise twice gained 10 point leads, the Broncos seemed intent to put the game in the hands of their QB Ryan Finley. As such, after scoring to make the game 24-14 in the 3rd quarter, the Broncos only managed a total of 12 plays on their final 5 drives of the game, for a grand total of -8 yards, including two of Nacua's interceptions.

Two Sides Of The Same Coin

This week the Cougars take on the UCLA Bruins, another team currently being led by a true freshman QB. There are some pretty big differences between the two teams though.

The first difference is that while the Bruins have the talent, experience and depth that for the most part they are a team that won't need to rely heavily on their true freshman QB, while the Cougars really don't. There is definitely some talent on the Cougars, but the Bruins are a team that return most of their skill position players from last year, including the Pac-12's leading rusher. This is a team that has the depth to be able to withstand the growing pains of a freshman QB and still win most of their games.

The other big difference is that while outside of about three throws, Mangum has looked like a true freshman, Rosen hasn't. During the normal offense of his game against Boise State, Mangum struggled. He was slow to make his reads, struggled to properly read coverages, would hold onto the ball too long, and had a hard time putting the right touch on his passes, often launching rockets for short passes. Many times he'd throw an ill advised pass, hoping his tall receivers would bail him out. Of course, this is everything you would expect from a qb making his first start, and will all be resolved as he gets more playing time.

Where Mangum truly excelled is he never seemed to panic, and always was in control. Most importantly, Mangum has something that has been lacking from the Byu QB position for many years. Well founded confidence in his arm. Which is what allowed him to make the big plays. So far, he's truly been Feast or Famine Mangum. As long as his famine stage doesn't go too long, the occasional feast will be enough.

Rosen on the other hand looked absolutely stellar in his debut, and while he was a bit more pedestrian in week 2, still looked like a QB in his 2nd year, not his 2nd start. As the #1 overall QB recruit, his home debut against a tough Virginia defense saw him shred them for 351 yards, and 3 TD's. It's not just his numbers that looked good, but also his ball placement on throws, leaving them in just the right place for his WR's to make a play, and not have to have his WR's make a play to save the pass. On the road in week 2, Rosen came back to earth a little bit more, hitting only just over 50% of his passes, with 1 TD and 1 Int, but it was a game that illustrated how the rest of Rosen's offense will put UCLA in a great position to be able to withstand freshman growing pains as RB Paul Perkins ran for 151 of Ucla's 273 rushing yards.

This week will be a step up in defensive opponent for Rosen though. Not necessarily because the Cougars are all that much better than Virginia, but because Bronco is a great defensive play caller, who is really good at disguising what he's doing. The key for both teams will be which team is able to get their RB game going, and take pressure off their young QB.

Of course if it's only a 1 score game with under a minute to go, that means the Cougars will have the Bruins right where they want them. Just beware when Mangum rolls to his right because that means he's cooking up a feast.

The Return Of Chuckie

Much like the doll, just when you think he's done, Chuckie Keeton returns, bringing fear and havoc with him. Late in the first quarter, Utah LB Sunia Tauteoli lost his footing after jumping over an Aggie blocker and came crashing down into Keeton's twice surgically repaired lower leg. Keeton immediately dropped to the ground holding his knee.

Keeton didn't stay down long however, and jumped up a second or two later in serious pain, as he jumped around trying to shake the pain out of his leg. Keeton would end up staying in the game and missing no time.

Last week I said the only way the Aggies stay in this game was if the Keeton of old shows up. Seemingly bolstered by surviving the scare on his leg, Keeton played like the Chuckie Keeton of old, for the first time in almost 3 years as he led the Aggies to a 14-14 tie at halftime. For the Aggies though it wouldn't be enough as the Utes made half time adjustments, and while Keeton would still find success moving the ball down the field later in the game, the stout Utah defense would finally get to Keeton and welcome him to Sack Lake City. Two 4th quarter turnovers would eventually end any last Aggie threat.

Much like the horror movies of Keeton's doll namesake, near success was caused do to key casualties. In the case of the Utes it came late in the first half. Travis Wilson once again was showing command of the offense, and had the Utes moving well during the first half. The offensive success had even seen Booker start to break free. But that all changed when late in the first half Travis Wilson remained on the field. They took him off the field, and when next we saw him, his arm was in a sling, and early reports said it was a broken collarbone, meaning it was now time for fans to see Kendall Thompson.

Be Careful What You Wish For

As Utah fall camp was ongoing, there was a big portion of the Ute fan base, having been worn down by Wilson's inconsistency last year, who were clamoring for the job to be given over to Kendall Thompson. With Wilson out, and it looking like it might be a long term thing, this group was about to get their wish.

It wouldn't take long for them to change their mind. When Thompson came in, the offense went out.

Remember when I mentioned how Mangum struggled and was slow making his reads and deciding when to throw, and how it's typical for a freshman. For a Senior, not so good. Add in Thompson's elongated throwing motion and that means Thompson was a half step slow on the read, and then a half step slow on the throw. These are not good things for a passing game. As the game went on, the few times Thompson did throw you could tell his was just a little bit behind his WR's pace. On one occasion his double delay actually saved an Interception as he missed the defender jump the route, but the defender was anticipating a quicker throw and overshot the interception (and probably pick 6.)

With a threat of a passing game mainly neutralized, the Utes went into a run protect offense. The Aggies loaded 9 in the box, and despite the win, the season hopes of the sold out Rice-Eccles stadium drained away.

Fortunately as the weekend progressed, the outlook got a bit better for Utah. Turns out it wasn't a broken collarbone, but instead an AC sprain in his non-throwing shoulder for Wilson. Next came the news that depending on how he handles the pain, worst case scenario for a return would be the Cal game, and best case would be either the Oregon or Fresno State game. Finally came video of Wilson passing in practice on Tuesday.

The key will be how well can he withstand the hits, as the injury happened to his non throwing shoulder. This is the same injury Byu inflicted upon Oklahoma QB Sam Bradford. Bradford missed a few weeks, before coming back. Two games later he re-injured it on another hit and didn't play again until he was busy sabotaging the St. Louis Rams with check down after check down. The big concern is making sure that when Wilson comes back, it has healed enough to not be reinjured in normal play.

Until then, Utah will need to seriously tweak their offensive gameplan, as it was clear the plan they had set up for Wilson, won't work with Thompson. Thompson, while limited as a passer, does have his strengths, and most of them revolve around the use of his legs. Utah needs to take advantage of that. A heavier dose of the zone read needs to be implemented. It would also be nice to see some of that triple option style attack that puts a runner to the outside, an H back to the inside, and gives Thompson the ability to pitch, or shovel pass. Essentially, after spending the majority of the last 4 years making fun of Byu and the RB playing QB based offense, karma now has me advocating for just exactly that kind of gameplan for however long Wilson can't go.

Also, and this can't be overstated enough. Utah really, really, really, really needs to take the top off the defense. Even if it's incomplete, Utah must throw deep at least two or three times this game, just to establish the threat.

Perfect Place For A Tuneup

One thing I really hate about Utah typically having their cupcake game as the season opener, as they've done in the past (and has just been announced, they will do in 2019, 2020) is that you don't get anything of value out of that game. I've always thought, that if Utah insisted on the cupcake game, it should always be the week before conference play. That way you get two good games of data to use, and week to tune up.

In the past Fresno State wouldn't typically be considered a tune up game, or a cupcake. This year, they would be. Fresno is bad. Fresno just got done getting thrashed by Ole Miss 73-21 in a game that wasn't even that close. That being said factor in having to bring Thompson up to speed, there is a slight Ackbar Alert factor to this game.

Utah isn't as good as Ole Miss to put up 73 on Fresno (Ole Miss isn't as good as they looked either, but that's a different argument) but Utah's defense is stout enough to limit Fresno into making some crucial mistakes. Even if Thompson struggles a bit, this should be a perfect opportunity for Booker to get back on track.

In regards to Wilson, there are some who think if he's healthy, he should play. Personally I'm of the belief of giving him the extra week to heal before a hugely important Oregon game. After all, it's not like we can trust Wilson to be careful with his body.

View From The Redzone

When Chuckie Keeton was on the ground holding his knee, it sucked the air out of the stadium. Usually when an opposing player gets hurt, the crowd typically waits and talks amongst themselves. When it's a Utah player, the crowd is usually silent waiting to see how bad. Keeton's injury was the first time I can remember an opposing player getting a home player reaction to an injury. Of course, as I said Keeton managed to get up, and suck the air out of the stadium again going into halftime 14-14, and cause a very tense stadium to worry.

Sorry, but nope. First Quarter, 3rd Quarter. I don't care when. Corporate sponsored waves are wrong. Even though this one actually succeeded in getting started, I refused to stand up for it, and I will continue to refuse all season long. I will not allow ISIS to win.

One more thing. To the rest of the Mountain West Conference, on behalf of the Utes, sorry about that whole waking Chuckie Keeton up, and now you have to deal with him thing.

New Information Means Time To Re-evaluate

Before the season I made my usual predictions. As the season goes along and we get more information, I am going to occasionally revisit and re-evaluate them.

I'll start with Utah State who I originally predicted a 8-4 season with losses to Utah, Fresno, Boise State, and Air Force. So far the only one of those I'd for sure change would be that the Aggies shouldn't have any problem with Fresno State. I'm not ready to pull the plug on Air Force or Boise State game, but I will say that the Air Force game might be the more difficult of those two.

Next up is the Cougars who I said would go 7-5. Obviously I'm already off by 1 as Mangum Miracle #2 meant I missed last week's prediction. At this point, that's all I would change.

For Utah the first thing I would change was that prediction about Utah taking advantage of freshman mistakes by Josh Rosen. Yea that's not happening. There's two other predictions I'm not ready to change, but will admit might be different than expected. First up the Cal Bears. In both games our defensive backs have shown a propensity for letting the WR get behind them. If that doesn't get fixed, it could be a long day. Secondly the Oregon game, and news that QB Vernon Adams has a broken index finger. Watching his game against Michigan State, he struggled down the field, and his accuracy just wasn't there. Utah has the right type of defense to keep games against Oregon close, and Utah knows first hand from a couple years ago, just how badly a jacked up throwing hand can hurt a qb.

Get Your DVR's Ready

This week, if you want to watch both Byu and Utah, you must either get your channel changing game up to mid season form, or record one, as both teams kickoff Saturday at 8:30 p.m. mountain time. The Byu/Ucla game will be on Fox Sports 1, while Utah gets to relive their Mountain West days on Cbs Sports Network.

The Aggies meanwhile will face off against Washington at 5:00 p.m. on the Pac-12 Network.

Yet Another Reminder...

...that early season polls are stupid. And no, despite the fact that I think Byu jumping 8 spots is a bit ridiculous, their two impressive, and newsmaking wins means they should be ranked, so they aren't who I'm referring to.

Instead I'm referring to the idiotic Coaches Poll, who somehow equate the #7 team in the nation losing a 3 point game to the #5 team in the nation equivalent to the #6 team in the nation, getting completely outplayed and needing Overtime to beat a Division 1-AA team.

That's right despite the fact that the by the logic of the polls Michigan State (at home) was expected to win a close game against Oregon, the ducks were punished by dropping 8 spots. Meanwhile Auburn, who struggled against 1-AA Jacksonville State, and needed essentially a botched punt to allow them to force overtime also dropped 8 spots. Although let's be honest, we're all kind of shocked that Auburn dropped at all, usually winning teams, even when winning ugly don't drop.

The polls make me so happy that we have a committee that can actually discuss these games. At least the AP only dropped Oregon 5 spots, but that's still about 3 or 4 spots too many, and dropped Auburn 12 spots.

Posted by Sideshow in Red, Blue And Pigskin at 12:32

Friday, September 11, 2015

Red, Blue And Pigskin

Wow! It's amazing one what 1 second can do. After 59 minutes and 59 seconds in Lincoln the Byu Cougars were looking at not only a season opening loss, but a season opening loss where Taysom Hill got hurt (though the extent wasn't known yet.)

1 second of playtime later (about 10 seconds of real time) and Cougar nation is in pure ecstatic joy.

That play is why we love sports.1 Second Brings Glory

The last second of Saturday's game was thrilling. It's everything we love about sports, all the way down to the pure excitement of Bronco running around like a gleeful little child on Christmas Day, and Byu WR Terrance Houk hugging the referee because he was so happy. That 1 second is the dream we all have in our back yards of winning the big game. All the nonsense that has been circling the sport of football the last few years didn't matter. What mattered was the pure glory for the victors, and the soul crushing despair of defeat for the losers.

The first 59 minutes and 59 seconds though showed something else.

Through the majority of the game, the Byu defense looked to still be the same defense that was such a problem last year. Offensively it wasn't so much about Byu being able to stop Nebraska, but about Nebraska making silly mistakes to throw off their own rhythm. Outside of Bronson Kaufusi the Byu defense was dreadful. Nebraska's offensive line was able to control the line of scrimmage, giving Nebraska's QB plenty of time to make decisions. Of course, that may very well have been the best strategy defensively for the Cougars, because when Nebraska's QB ran timing plays, they moved the ball well, but when he was left back their to his own decision making, it usually didn't come out well.

Offensively, the absolutely best thing of the game was Byu's decision to dump Go Fast, Go Hard. Instead it was Go Normal, Go Hard. Gone was the break neck 120+ plays per game pace of the last couple years. The pace that would cause Byu's own players to suck wind. The play that wouldn't allow the offense to get into a rhythm because the focus was on speed, speed, speed, at the expense of execution. While Byu's running game struggled mightily, the passing game was in as best of form as I've seen in a while.

The star offensively of the game isn't anyone involved in that final play, but it was WR Nick Kurtz. Kurtz showed a little bit of everything during the game. He was able to get behind the defense. He was also able to use his size to outjump the Nebraska defense. Kurtz is setup to be a star this year for the Cougars.

With the running game grounded, the passing game was enough to keep Byu down by only 1 point with 1 second to go. And then the Sports Gods giveth.

The Sports Gods Also Taketh

Unfortunately once the euphoria of the moment surpassed, reality set in. The news came out this week that Sr. QB Taysom Hill suffered a Lisfranc injury to his ankle, effectively ending his season, for the 3rd time in 4 years, as well as probably not only his Byu career, but his football career completely. It's too bad though, because even though Taysom seemed a bit off even before the injury in the first quarter, he was having his best game as a QB he's had his entire career. Gone was the one read and run Taysom of the last few years. This Taysom was not only confident staying in the pocket, but he seemed to be comfortable being in there, and only taking off when needed. It would have really been interesting to see what this Taysom could have done. Especially with these tall WR's Byu has.

Tanner Mangum, who performed admirably in relief, including throwing the aforementioned hail mary, isn't your typical "true" freshman. Mangum was the Elite 11 co-Mvp 3 years ago with Jameis Winston, before going on a mission to Chile. This means, unlike most true freshman he isn't a 18 or 19 year old kid fresh out of high school. He'll have a maturity that most freshman don't have. That said being so fresh off a mission has issues of it's own.

Football wise though, Mangum is still a freshman. His first division 1 action was acquired last week. Now it's his team the rest of this year. There is a big difference between coming in for relief, and going through the entire week knowing you are the guy. It's a whole new set of butterflies he'll have to deal with.

Bronco Must Bust The Broncos

First up for young Mangum is the Boise State Broncos. The Broncos managed to play two games last week. At least that's what it seemed. In the first half, they were having their way against Washington. Especially on the ground. The second half they seemed to go into a shell and almost blew the game before holding on late for the victory.

Byu needs to put all the emotion of this week away, and focus on the task at hand. Offensively, the Byu must contain a defense that returns essentially it's entire starting defensive line. A defensive line that is ranked 8th in the nation by people like Phil Steele. A defensive line that likes to wreak havoc if it can get into the backfield, and one that will want to come after and attempt to rattle Mangum. One plus the Cougars have is their WR corps are a tall group of guys, who displayed a knack for battling for the ball last week.

Defensively, the Cougars need to drastically improve from last week, in basically every facet of defense. Keep in mind though, this isn't the pass crazy Boise State of old, this is a high powered running game who seemed to replace Jay Ajayi pretty effectively last week. Against Nebraska, Byu was sloppy, out of position, and pushed around. This week they'll need more than just Bronson Kaufusi to show up defensively.

Who-Baugh?

After months of never ending focus on a guy on the sidelines, Utah and Michigan players finally got to play the long awaited matchup. The Utes ultimately prevailed 24-17, thanks to a garbage time prevent defense by Utah. This was a game that wasn't as close as that final score, but was very precarious going into the 4th quarter.

Defensively, the Utes were never able to take Michigan to Sack Lake City, but they still managed to control the line of scrimmage, and held the Wolverine rushing attack to 2.7 yards per carry average. The Wolverines were keeping multiple tight ends back at the line of scrimmage in order to deal with the Utah pass rush, and while QB Jake Rudock took quite a few shots, was able to use the max protect, and a quick release to avoid taking a sack all night.

Through the air was a different story for the Utah defense though. The Utes were hit and miss all night. The high point was taking advantage of mistakes by Rudock for three interceptions, including the game clinching pick six by Justin Thomas in the fourth quarter. The bad though was the youth on the back side biting a few times on double moves allowing Wolverine WR Jehu Chesson get behind them, only to be bailed out by overthrows by the QB's.

When the Utes were on offense, the Wolverines keyed on Devontae Booker, and made it tough sledding for him. The rebuilt offensive line struggled at times as the Wolverines were able to keep Booker to just 69 yards on 22 carries. Of course this shouldn't be too much of a shock, as there is a strong possibility the Michigan defense is the best defense the Utes will face all year, and they were the team to shut down Booker the most last season.

With the running game stuck in neutral it fell on Travis Wilson to lead the team through the air. While his numbers aren't all that amazing, what was really impressive was he showed a poise and presence in the pocket that had been missing. Last year at the first sign of pressure Wilson would either try to run, or simply just take the sack. This year, while he did take 1 sack, Wilson had a much better awareness in the pocket and would step up and keep his eyes down field as he led the Utes to victory.

It's only 1 week, but if this is the Wilson the Utes are going to get week in and week out, it's a Wilson that they and the fans should be happy with. It's a Wilson that can get those extra 15 yards per quarter the team needs to move up in efficiency.

While Wilson had a good week 1, new play caller Aaron Roderick struggled to adjust. I swear if I see one more bubble screen this entire season it'll be 2 too many. There's been a lot of calls for our WR's to create separation on the edges, but it's awfully hard for them to do it, if we're not calling routes that go deeper than 5 yards.

Battle Of The Brothers

Quick, what is the longest running in state rivalry? Did you know it's Utah and Utah State? Did you know that Utah's very first game was against Utah State. This week the rivalry continues when the Utes and the Aggies meet up at Rice-Eccles Stadium. I've vacillated all week trying to decide if Utah State's dismal performance, and the emotion of the hype from last week for the Utes has turned this game into our first Ackbar Alert game of the year, or if the fact that it's a bit of a rivalry game means no way would it be overlooked.

The Aggies are coming off of a 12-9 victory where they were shut out offensively from the end zone. Common refrain would say the Aggies were trying to stay vanilla against such lower competition, and they'll have new wrinkles ready for this week. I'd agree with that except for one thing. Last year, before he got hurt again, Chuckie Keeton was playing with a sense of hesitancy, as if he didn't trust his body. All accounts say that's how Keeton looked last week. I almost wonder if Keeton's injuries at this point have affected him too much mentally.

The Utes will look to get Booker going on the ground, and will have to handle the Aggies two great linebackers Kyle Fackrell and Nick Virgil. The Utes also announced this week that defensive back Dominique Hatfield has been reinstated to the team. Since he missed fall camp, he may not quite be ready for football, but look for the Utes to use the next couple weeks to get him ready for Pac-12 play.

Ultimately though this game comes down to Keeton. Keeton is the reason the Aggies won 3 years ago, and is the reason the game was so close 2 years ago. The only way this game will be close is if Keeton is able to overcome his mental hurdles. If Keeton shows up mentally, this game could be closer than Utah fans, coming off of last week's emotional victory, would like. If the Keeton of the last two years shows up, the one who's hesitant, than this game could get away from the Aggies.

View From The Redzone

Last week Rice-Eccles had it's largest crowd in history, and to be quite honest, there wasn't as many Michigan fans as I thought there would be. Don't get me wrong, there were quite a bit of Maize and Blue in the stands, but I still expected more.

The Utes were very loose during this game. There were times last year when during timeouts and stoppages of play you could see how tight the Utes were on the sideline. A big example is during the Washington State comeback last year, the Utes would be in the huddle during a timeout, while the Cougars sideline would be dancing to the music, and generally full of energy. Last week was the exact opposite for the Utes. During stoppages of play, it was Utah who was dancing and being loose on the sideline. At one point late in the game, TE Harrison Handley caught a big pass between Michigan defenders to give the Utes first down in the red zone. When play was stopped for a minute, LB Jared Norris came running from off the sideline directly to Handley, gave him a congratulatory smack on the helmet, and sprinted back for the sideline. It's a camaraderie and looseness that's been missing from the Utes for a few years, and it was nice to see.

I liked the new clapping routine for the Taiko drum in the 3rd quarter, but man those speakers were terrible.

I'm not one of those people who absolutely hate the wave. I like the wave, but it has a time and a place. The wave is best when it's organically started by the crowd during a game that's gotten out of hand, and are just trying to keep themselves entertained. You want to know what isn't the time and place? Any time it's corporate sponsored is not the time and place. Also not 7 minutes into the first quarter of the game. Fortunately the North End Zone was having none of the "Costa Vida Wave", and it died a miserable death. Hopefully the idea suffers the same fate altogether.

What To Watch And When

Well fortunately none of the games are on KSL since they're being pills with Direct TV, so unlike the Patriots/Steelers game it can actually be viewed.

The Utes and Aggies kickoff Friday night at 7:00 p.m. Mountain Time and can be viewed on ESPN 2.

ESPN 2 will also be showing the Boise State at Byu game, but it won't kick off till Saturday night at 8:15 p.m. Mountain Time, which means you better start working on your excuses to get out of those early morning church meetings Sunday.

Posted by Sideshow in Red, Blue And Pigskin at 11:40

Wednesday, September 2, 2015

Red, Blue And Pigskin

Finally, we've made it. We have survived the wasteland. We have suffered, and been tormented. At long last we are coming out of the wilderness after our proverbial 40 years (or 30ish weeks). Finally we can see the light at the end of the tunnel that is the offseason. Of course in this case that light is the headlights of a Khaki dressed bus.

The More Things Change....

As we prepare to enter the 2015 season of Beehive State College Football, it's amusing how many of the story lines are carry overs from last season. Stop me if you've heard these before.

Utah State welcomes back QB Chuckie Keeton from the knee injury that knocked him out of last season. The Aggies managed to cobble together a respectable season last year without him (and eventually without their 2nd string QB as well.) The Aggies hope that Keeton is able to return to at least a portion of his former self. If last year showed us anything though, it's that Keeton may have a hard time overcoming the mental aspect of his comeback, moreso than the physical.

Of course, Keeton has now been around long enough that he was the subject of a players who have been around forever article by grantland.com. My two favorite parts of the article was Grantland mentioning that Keeton was already the subject of his own comeback article on their site the previous year, as well as Grantland reminding us that the coach who recruited Keeton is now at his 2nd school after leaving Utah State.

Speaking of QB's, leg injuries, and health, the Cougars are once again hoping that Taysom Hill can stay healthy throughout the entire season. For as Taysom goes, so goes the Cougars. Sure last year, the Cougars survived Taysom's injury to post a respectable 8 win season. This year though they don't have the best passing QB they've had since Max Hall waiting as a forgotten backup, and they're playing a much more difficult schedule. So once again Cougar fans are going to be holding their breath with every Taysom run, trying to walk the fine line between wishing he'd stop running it so much, and hoping for some more of his amazing plays he generates with his legs.

Finally while talking about QB's, it wouldn't be a new season of Football up on the hill without the question marks once again around the Utah offense, the Utah offensive coordinators, and how is going to step up in the QB Position. Much like last year, the battle this year is between returning incumbent Travis Wilson, and backup Kendall Thompson. Unlike last year, we've seen what Thompson can do, and yet still aren't really sure what either QB can do. Well at least this year, the Utes don't have to worry about the Offensive Coordinator changing again.

Oh Wait... that's right...

Once again, the Utes will have a new offensive coordinator, in this case 2. That means in the last 7 season, the Utes have had a change at that very important position. This year, Andy Roderick returns to offensive coordinator/play calling duties. Once again the Utes are going the Co-Offensive Coordinator route, by also promoting OL Coach Jim Harding. Supposedly the dynamic is that Roderick will be in charge of calling the every down plays, while Harding is in charge of the overall gameplan, and major decisions (such as whether to go for it on 4th, etc.) Well at least this year they didn't bring in anyone from outside the program.

Previewing the Aggies

The Aggies managed to withstand QB injuries better than anyone outside the city of Columbus would ever be expected to. Down to their 3rd string (and for a few plays their 4th string) QB, the Aggies put together a 10 win season. This year they come into the season with the confidence that should the worst possible luck ever fall on Chuckie Keeton, they can survive at the QB position.

Perhaps an even bigger return from injury would be that of Linebacker Kyle Fackrell. Fackrell is the heart and soul of the Aggie Defense, and along with Nick Vigil are key cogs in a stout Aggie defense.

The Aggies have a rough start to the season. After opening up with a prostitution game against the Southern Utah Thunderbirds (At least it's an in-state team.... and not Wagner or Idaho State), the next 6 games are against either

Power 5 foes, or the expected leaders in their conference. It starts with an in state trip to Rice-Eccles, followed by a trip to the North West to face off against the enigma that is the Chris Petersen led Washington Huskies. Once they get into conference play, they have to hit the ground running by first playing Colorado State, followed by a matchup against the West division winners for the last 3 years, the Fresno State Bulldogs. Next up is expected Big 5 Conference representative on New Year's Day, Boise State on the smurf turf. After what's sure to be an emotional game against the Broncos, the Aggies next take the last of the Conference top dogs, in the San Diego Aztecs. It's a 6 game stretch that could see the Aggies be set up nicely for a New Year's Day run, or desperately trying to salvage their season. Which means the season ending rivalry game against the Cougars could have a lot of wait for the Aggies, moreso than just emotionally.

Meanwhile Down South

When last we saw the Cougars, their head coach was busy icing a kicker on a PAT Attempt, not once, but twice. The Same kicker then booting a long figgie to ice the game in overtime, immediately followed by a lousy baseball stadium layout leading to an ugly brawl full of beat downs, helmets as weapons, and ugly sucker punch and runs. (No seriously, who thought that having both teams family one one side of the field, causing players from both teams going to one side of the field to greet them post game, was a good idea?)

I bring up the brawl not to take a shot at the Cougars (that's what the comment about icing the PAT was for) but because it's repercussions will extend into this season, as Bronco has said there will be suspensions, even if they won't be officially made known who, and how long until after the Nebraska game starts. Rumors state there could be up to 10 suspensions for at least part of the Nebraska game. Of course it's all conjecture at this point, as the only suspension we know of is LB Sione Takitaki being suspended for the Nebraska game after being charged with 2 counts of theft. Based on Bronco's history I would guess Kai Nacua gets 2 games for the sucker punch, Harvey Langi And Trey Dye get 1/2 a game for having their wild punches caught on camera, and everyone else receives the "handled internally" slap on the wrist.

Offensively, the conversation begins and ends with QB Taysom Hill. Hill, as we know, is returning from his second major lower leg injury in the last three years. When healthy there's not a more dynamic QB in college football with his legs. Hill is a player who has the ability to take a broken down play and run it for a big game, leaving even the biggest, and baddest out there diving at air. Hill is as confident with his legs, and Peyton Manning is with his arm (before neck surgery.) Of course, it's exactly that confidence that gives Cougar fans the biggest concern, as Hill tends to bail on plays too early, and take off. Which is why the biggest offensive missing piece will not be because of a brawl suspension, but it will be the loss of RB Jamaal Williams who left the school for personal reasons during the summer. With Williams back there, the Cougars had another legitimate running threat for which to work the zone read. Unless Adam Hine, and Algernon Brown can prove they are reliable every down (even if as a committee) teams will have one less thing to take away their attention from Taysom.

In the air, the Cougars are excited to finally see the promise that WR Nick Kurtz was showing before offseason injury forced him to miss all of last years. In addition the Cougars are hoping returning WR Devon Blackmon has finally matured enough to be a factor. Mitch Matthews is the leading returner and was a major reason Christian Stewart was able to get comfortable last year.

The Cougar offense is in a tough spot, as we saw last year with Stewart just how effective the offense could be if it slowed down just a bit, and had a QB who was willing to make the reads, and not just run. On the other hand Taysom dynamic abilities are enough to overcome so many mistakes by the rest of the team, assuming he stays health, and Go Fast, Go Hard, doesn't run him into the ground.

Defensively the Cougars were absolutely dreadful last season. When Taysom went down, we saw just how much of a factor Taysom was. Hill's ability on the offensive end, was able to put up enough points to save the dreadful defense, and when he went down, the Cougars suffered drastically as they waited for Stewart to come up to speed.

Supposedly last year's Defensive Coordinator remains in the job, but with Head Coach Bronco Mendenhall managing the play calls. While we've seen how effective his defenses can be when Mendenhall calls the plays, we've also got plenty of evidence that tells us Mendenhall really struggles managing the rest of the game and duties as Head Coach when he does. Mendenhall even admitted as much after a 55-30 shellacking by Boise State last year.

The Cougars will be tested early and often, as they play arguably the toughest September slate of games. They have 3 games on the road, going to Lincoln to face Nebraska, the Rose Bowl to play UCLA, and end September at the Big House against the Michigan John Harbaugh's Wolverines. The lone home game isn't a treat either, as it's a rematch of the aforementioned Bronco beatdown versus Boise State.

And Up On The Hill

After a few years of struggling to adjust, the Utes finally broke through in 2014 and posted a 9 win season. A 9 win season that Ute fans could legitimately say was 2 plays (Dres' drop versus Washington State, Dominique Hatfield's missed interception vs. Arizona State) from being an 11 win season. One would think that finally all would be calm in the offseason for Utah.

Think again.

Shortly after the season, media took hold of the fact that Utah Athletic director Chris Hill didn't want to extend coordinators for more than the next season. A not all that crazy notion, considering after 2 consecutive 5 win campaigns, Whittingham entered 2014 on the hot seat, and the Utes were honestly as close to 6 wins in 2014 as Kaelin Clay was to crossing the goal line against Oregon. One can't be entirely sure that the Utes have turned it around after one season. Hill understandably wants to see a repeat performance, and doesn't want to be on the hook for contract buyouts should it not work.

Matters were only made worse when Dave Christensen did what all Utah offensive coordinators do, and change positions or leave after one year. The cherry on top was when former Utah Defensive Coordinator, former Utah State Head Coach, former Wisconsin Head Coach, and new Oregon State Head Coach decided that screwing Bronco over during a call for references wasn't enough, and offered Kalani Sitake a chance to prove his mettle outside of Kyle's system by joining him in Corvallis.

Now the Utes needed a new Offensive, and Defensive Coordinator and the calendar hadn't even changed to 2015.

This time though Kyle went with continuity and promoted from within on the offensive side, returning Aaron Roderick to play calling duties, and promoting Jim Harding to Offensive Coordinator, and reached out to long time defensive Assistant John Pease to take over the defense.

On the field the Utes had an amazing defense in 2014. A defense that led the nation in Sacks. A defense that saw standouts Eric Rowe and Nate Orchard go to the NFL, and saw it's second best defensive back Dominique Hatfield get kicked out of school for a couple of off the field legal issues. While charges for Hatfield are dropped in one case, and soon to be dropped in another, and he's been allowed back in school, don't expect to see him on the field as he'll likely be forced to Redshirt.

Despite all the losses, there is a solid chance that 2015's defense might be even better. The Utes will see the return of Tevin Carter, who despite playing on a few games in 2014, made more impact in those few games, than some players do their entire career. The front seven will see Hunter Dimick move over and take over Orchard's spot as the main pass rusher, while the middle will be occupied by Lowell Lotulelei, younger brother of Star. As a freshman in 2014, Lowell was giving Offensive lines fits.

The linebackers will be led by Jason Whittingham, Jared Norris, and Gionni Paul. It's clear that this defense will be the hallmark of the 2015 team, and will be what Whittingham relies on. There's a reason Steve Sarkisian, David Shaw, and Jim Mora all said that Utah is the team they hate playing the most, because they know win or lose, they are going to get beat up.

And the Utes need that defense to be sharp because the offense is just as questionable as ever. The highlight of the offense is Devontae Booker, and he'll be the main focal point. Booker had the most yards by a running back in Pac-12 conference play in 2014, and despite not starting until the 4th game of the year, came up just 7 yards short of breaking the Utah single season rushing mark. Booker will be the undisputed starter from week 1.

Problem is if the passing game doesn't get itself sorted out, Booker will be going up against a lot of 8 and 9 men fronts. Defense and a ground game will always be Whittingham's preference and calling card at Utah. However, if Utah is going to succeed and build off of 2014 instead of reverting back to 2012 and 2013, the passing game cannot be the bottom of the Pac-12 again. The Utes don't need an Oregon, or Baylor like firework show either. Simply put, if the passing game can simply be an average unit in the Pac-12, the defense and Booker are good enough to see this team succeed. So what does that mean?

60 yards. 60 extra yards a game moves the Utes from last, to 6th in the Pac-12 in passing efficiency last year. 15 extra yards per quarter. 1 extra first down per quarter. It's not a lot. It just means more consistency.

More consistency from a WR group that couldn't seem to get open last year, especially when Dres Anderson went out for the year. Kenneth Scott is the leader of this unit, and has a knack for making great catches, but he's not a field stretcher. The Utes need somebody to stretch the defense out. This big name out of camp this year was true freshman Britain Covey. There wasn't a practice that went by where the coaches weren't singing his praises, but can you really rely on a 5'9" 165 pound true freshman to stretch the field? Bubba Poole who started the season last year as a running back was moved to WR. It's a move that could benefit him, as he has some speed, but was always a little indecisive in the back field. As a receiver he can (hopefully) just catch it and run.

Of course it a WR can only catch what is thrown his way, and this year doing the throwing will likely be Travis Wilson. Last year the Dave Christensen did everything he possibly could to undermine the QB position. Refusing to make a choice, flip flopping back and forth between Wilson, and Kendall Thompson, and not calling plays suited to either's style. Just as Thompson looked like he was getting a grasp on the job against Oregon, he blew out his knee. But it was clear the rest of the year that Wilson's confidence had been shot.

This year Wilson once again enters the season as the starter after showing the most consistency during camp. But which Wilson are we going to get? Is going to be the Bulldog who tried to detach his nose against Michigan, and confidently led the offense down the field to beat Usc. Or will we get the Travis Wilson that is suffering from PCSD (Post Christensen Stress Disorder). If a change has to be made will Thompson be able to actually hold onto the job, or will his lackadaisical attitude with ball security never fully earn him the trust of the coaches.

I guess it's a good thing the Utes have the best set of kickers in the nation with Andy Phillips, and returning Ray Guy award winner Tom "Bacon" Hackett. Hopefully the Utes won't have to be as reliant on them and can get those extra 15 yards per quarter.

How's It Going To Play Out

Thankfully, for all of our sanity, the many questions around the teams are going to start to be answered in just a few short days. All three teams have a wide variance between their floors and ceilings. I wouldn't be shocked to see any of the teams win 10 games, or struggle to make the postseason. With that said, here's how this season is going to play out. Guaranteed or Curtis will give you your money back.

Week 1

Utah State (0-0) vs. Southern Utah - The Thunderbirds have won games against Div 1-A teams twice in the last 5 years. They won't make it three. Outcome: A rusty Aggies team pulls away midway through the 2nd quarter.

Byu (0-0) @ Nebraska - This is an interesting game because both teams will be having players suspended, which makes it difficult to know what we'll get. Nebraska's new head coach Mike Riley has said 5 players will be suspended, but we don't know who. Rumors say up to 10 players could be suspended for portions of the game for Byu. Beyond that though, we at least have a better idea of who the Cougars are. We're not really sure about Nebraska. They have a new Head Coach, and a new system in 2015. Not to mention that Mike Riley's teams are historically slow to start the season. Riley has often been a thorn in the side of the Cougars, but there's just too much unknown. This is the best chance out of the first four for the Cougars to make national noise with an upset. Outcome: The Cougars do just that, as eventually Taysom and the frenetic pace is just too much for a rebuilding Cornhusker defense, and Byu pulls away from a small deficit in the 3rd quarter and get a multi score victory.

Utah (0-0) vs. Michigan - The College Football season kicks off with the biggest non conference game ever in Rice-Eccles stadium, and the Utes have very very little to do with it. On the field though not a lot is known about the Michigan Khakis Wolverines as Harbaugh has locked down all access completely. Last year the Utes went into the Big House and dominated the game, but Harbaugh has a history of rebuilding. Last year's it was Michigan's offense that was a large part of their woes, and their two most talented players have moved on from the program. The Quarterback position hasn't even been decided (as far as we know) as there is a competition between Shane Morris and newcomer, and 4 year players and 2 year starter at Iowa Jake Rudock. Outcome: The game is a defensive battle early as both offenses try to find their way against what will possibly be the toughest defense either will face the rest of the year. Before the game the name everyone has been and will continue to talk about is John Harbaugh. But the name that will end the night will be the loud chant of "AL-EX SMI-ITH, AL-EX SMI-ITH" Harbaugh was serenaded with as he left the field. Interesting note, Harbaugh is the 2nd of the last three Utah coaches to start their Michigan careers against Utah. He'll be the 2nd to start his Michigan career 0-1.

Week 2

Byu (1-0) vs. Boise State - When it comes to Bronco Mendenhall struggling to call the defensive plays and manage the overall team as head coach, there is no better reminder of just how much he struggles than Boise State. Whether it's the beat down last year, or the 2 point conversion attempt at the end of one of the all time boringest games a few years ago, Mendenhall really struggles to multi task against the Broncos. To be fair though Boise State has some weird voodoo over the state of Utah as a whole. This year the game is much more competitive, and comes down to the end. Outcome: The game is a close affair going down to the end, but sloppy mistakes and a young defense allows the Broncos to escape with a victory.

Utah State (1-0) @ Utah

Week 2 (1-0) @ Utah Utes - The last time the Aggies played Utah was the last really good game for Chuckie Keeton. This time around Keeton just may not have enough weapons, and the Utah defense is a bit faster than it was. For the Utes, the offense will have spent a good chunk of the previous week getting beat up, and probably won't have much of a rhythm yet, and hope that this week they can begin to find themselves. Outcome: As with all in state games lately it's a hard hitting affair, but the Utes start to find some semblance of consistency in the second half as they put away the victory.

Week 3

Utah State (1-1) @ Washington - The Aggies fortunately have an extra day to put the in state battle behind them and travel to play the Washington Huskies. The Huskies under Chris Petersen have been a bit of an enigma. The Washington Defense has 2 first round draft picks on their team last year, despite being a very poor unit. Petersen has struggled to introduce his system and find the same success he had at Boise, as he's had to undo a bit of the culture left behind by Steve Sarkisian. Outcome: The Aggies rebound after the previous week against as Husky fans begin to get uneasy with Chris Petersen.

Byu (1-1) @ Ucla - Brett Hundley may no longer be the QB, but all signs point to true freshman Josh Rosen being something special. Of course he is still a true freshman. Want to know what helps a true freshman QB find his way? A loaded defense, led by Myles Jack, and the Pac-12 leading rusher from the previous season in Paul Perkins. Outcome: For being the leading returning rusher in a Power 5 conference, very few people know of Paul Perkins. After this game Byu fans know him all too well as he runs over the Cougar defense. We

Utah (2-0) @ Fresno State - Last year when these two teams played the Bulldogs were still trying to figure out how to replace Derek Carr before ultimately turning their season around. This year, they won't be quite the pushover they were in 2014. The Utes meanwhile will be trying to use one last non conference game to tune up their offense before entering the grind of conference play. Outcome: The Bulldogs are frisky this year and the outcome is way too close for Utah fans liking.

Week 4

Utah State on Bye

Byu (1-2) @ Michigan - The Cougars September of doom wraps up with a trip to the Big House. Despite being only three weeks later, expect a Michigan team much different in both looks and execution than the one that starts the season at Rice-Eccles Stadium. Outcome: If this game were at the start of the season like it was for the Utes I'd predict of Byu victory. If the Utes were playing Michigan in the 4th week as opposed to the first week, they too would lose like Byu does here.

Utah (3-0) @ Oregon - The Ducks are in a rebuilding year. History tells us the Ducks do miss a beat during rebuilding but it's not a big one. This time though it will be interesting to see how well QB Vernon Adams is handling the transition for Division 1-AA. That said you can always count on two things from Oregon. Multiple uniform combinations and speed. Utah fans can expect lots of reminders about Kaelin Clay from their Byu fans in the lead up to this one. Oregon is one of 3 team the Utes have yet to beat since entering the conference. Outcome:(Not so)Fun fact for Utah fans. They've yet to win their conference opener in the Pac-12. They'll have to wait till next year.

Week 5

Utah State (2-1) vs Colorado State - The Rams put together a bit of a rebuilding year last year by running the ball, a lot. This is a game where the Aggies will be glad to have Kyle Fackrell back in the middle of their defense. Outcome: In the first of many divisional battles on the season the Aggies squeak one out in overtime.

Byu (1-3) vs. UConn - The Cougars are finally out of the month of September, and are finally home for the first of 5 home games in the final 8 weeks, including the next 4 at home. Meanwhile UConn is a basketball school that also has a Football team. Outcome: Go Fast, Go Hard all day long as Taysom runs for over 200 yards, with an extra 150 yards thrown in by Hine and Brown.

Utah on Bye

Week 6

Utah State (3-1) @ Fresno State - The Aggies will be coming off of the close game with the Rams, and will have the Broncos the following week. The key to this game will be how well Matt Wells can keep his team focused. Outcome: In the first Ackbar Alert game of the year for the Beehive State teams, the Aggies trip up in California.

Byu (2-3) vs. ECU - Last year the Pirates were a surprise G5 team and a candidate for the New York 6 bowl berth deep into the season. Last week the Cougars righted their ship and found their rhythm on offense. Outcome: This year, the Pirates are rebuilding, and Byu will continue getting on track.

Utah (3-1) vs. Cal - Sonny Dykes has the Bears back on track with a high powered offense, and a darkhorse Heisman candidate in QB Jared Goff. The Bear Raid offense likes to put up points, and put them up fast. After falling just short, thanks to a season ending loss to Byu last year, this looks like the year the Bears get back into the post season. Outcome: While this should be a good year for the Bears, it'll be a bad week as the Utah defense breaks up the timing of Dykes' offense early and often. 4 defensive turnovers power the Utes.

Week 7

Utah State (3-2) @ Boise State - The Aggies were hoping this would be a battle for conference superiority. The Broncos look to still be not only the cream of the Mountain West, but the cream of the G5 crop altogether. Outcome: Aggies hang tough, but fall on the smurf turf.

Byu (3-3) vs. Cincinnati - With the Big 12 getting left out of the Championship game last year, expansion rumors began flying this offseason. Two teams frequently mentioned are Byu and Cincinnati. Outcome: The Cougars wish this could be a Big 12 play in game as they continue a trend under Bronco of rebounding when seasons start poorly.

Utah (4-1) vs. ASU - Not only are the Sun Devils one of three teams the Utes haven't beaten since joining the conference, the Utes haven't beaten Arizona State in over 30 years. Todd Graham seems to have the Utes number. The first two matchups as conference mates were two of the worst games the Utes have played in the past 4 years, while the last two games have been two of the most frustrating losses the Utes have suffered. Outcome: This time Andy Phillips gets the field goal in overtime, and if you listen carefully you'll hear me celebrating all the way from Disneyland.

Week 8

Utah State (3-3) @ San Diego State - The Aggies start to see the light at the end of the tunnel of their difficult season start. The Aztecs used a 6-0 home record in 2014 to carry them to a division tying 5-3 conference record last year. Outcome: The Aggies put the disappointment of the last two weeks behind them with an emphatic victory.

Byu (4-3) on Bye - Well technically the schedule says they play Wagner. Meh, same thing.

Utah (5-1) @ USC - USC QB Cody Kessler will be in the middle of a Heisman campaign. Unfortunately for the Trojans they are coached by Steve Sarkisian, and they'll be busy frustrating everyone by not fulfilling their expectations, but Sark the coach (despite being average at best) has had success against Utah. The Utes meanwhile are in the middle of a 6 game win streak against teams from California. Outcome: Kessler throw for over 350 yards, as the Trojans let Utah know they are no longer the Kings of L.A. Fortunately I'm flying home from Southern California this day otherwise I'd be in the stadium, and I'd be extremely upset.

Week 9

Utah State (4-3) vs. Wyoming - Does anyone know if Wyoming will ever be good again? Outcome: Not this week anyways, as the Aggies try to cling onto their small hopes for the division crown.

Byu on Bye - This week it's an actual bye.

Utah (5-2) vs Oregon State - Locally this game is going to get played up as a major rivalry due to all the local ties the Beavers have. However the cupboard is pretty bare for the Beavers, and Gary Andersen is extremely overrated as a coach and will be struggling during a rebuilding season. Outcome: The Utah defense welcomes back it's last two former coordinators by terrorizing the Beaver offense. Meanwhile Booker picks up where he left off last year against Oregon State: Running for TD's, and carrying the Utes to bowl eligibility.

Week 10

Utah State (5-3) @ New Mexico - You know say what you want about some of the crappy teams the Cougars have had to schedule during independence, but it still beats two weeks in a row of Wyoming and New Mexico. Outcome: Aggies by virtue of playing before 11:30 p.m. EST become the 2nd Utah based team to become bowl eligible.

Byu (5-3) @ San Jose State - The last time these two teams played the Spartans pulled a major upset. Outcome: Taysom is having none of it. All three teams are now bowl eligible.

Utah (6-2) @ Washington - The Utes had missed the Huskies due to the schedule rotation the last couple years. By this point of the season, Petersen should finally start to have forced his influence on the team and they'll be playing much better than earlier in the season. Outcome: The Huskies are the last of the three teams the Utes had yet to beat since joining the conference. This time they pull it off.

Week 11

Utah State (6-3) @ Air Force - Playing the Falcons requires assignment sound football, as even the smallest mistakes can turn into big errors. The Falcons play a triple option which is a style nobody likes to play. Add in the cut blocking the undersized linemen use to make up for their size and there is a reason this is a hell week for opponents. Outcome: The Falcons wear down the Aggies and pull off the victory.

Byu (6-3) vs. Missouri (In Kansas City) - During the offseason the SEC said they would count games against Byu in their requirement for teams to play 1 P5 non conference opponent, which opens the door to more opportunities like this for the Cougars. Missouri is the two time defending SEC East champion and a favorite to make it three. Outcome: The Tigers and Cougars are very similar in their style, but the Tigers are just a bit bigger, and just a bit faster, and despite a great game on the national stage by Taysom, he has a few too many mistakes.

Utah (7-2) @ Arizona - The Utes have had a problem with the State of Arizona the last few years. With a chance to ultimately win the South last year, the Utes laid a complete egg against the Wildcats last year in their worst performance of the season. Outcome: Rich Rodriguez seems to have the Utes number. Maybe he's upset over the Utes winning in his Michigan debut.

Week 12

Utah State (6-4) vs Nevada - This will be the conference closing game for the Aggies, and they will have a slim chance at winning the division if Boise stubs it's toe along the way. Outcome: Ultimately a 3 loss conference campaign won't be enough, despite a big victory here.

Byu (6-4) vs Fresno State - The Bulldogs complete the Utah triangle with their 3rd matchup against in state teams. Outcome: Byu clinches a winning record after starting the season with a major stumble.

Utah (7-3) vs. UCLA - Last year Travis Wilson stumbled before the Kendal Thompson led the Utes to victory thanks to a 10 sack performance by the defense. Outcome: The Utes don't get 10 sacks, but Devontae Booker reigns supreme in the Pac-12 running back showdown.

Week 13

Utah State (7-4) vs Byu (7-4) - It sucks that the Holy War isn't the last game of the year, but at least there is one in state rivalry game being played during rivalry week. Outcome: If Taysom makes it this far, it means that no matter what Utah State will end his regular season for the 3rd time in 4 years. Fortunately this year it's not due to injury, but much like last year it is with an Aggie victory.

Utah (8-3) @ Colorado - The Pac-12 want you to believe this is a rivalry game. It's not. That said Mike Montgomery has made some strides and there is a very good chance Colorado is either bowl eligible by this point or playing for a bowl

game. Outcome: Colorado better home it's clinched a bowl game before this game.

Final Records: Utah 9-3, Byu 7-5, Utah State 8-5

Games most likely to lose they shouldn't: Utah: Utah State, Michigan, Washington. Byu: Cincinnati, Fresno State. Utah State: Washington, Fresno State, Air Force, San Diego State

Games most likely to win they shouldn't: Utah: Usc, Asu, Arizona. Byu: Nebraska, Boise State, Ucla. Utah State: Utah, Boise State

Plausible best case scenario: Utah: 10 wins with the right breaks and health by also winning one of the Usc, Arizona games. Byu: 10 wins. Beat Boise in week 2. Take advantage of true freshman Josh Rosen in week 3. Avenge selves against Utah State. Utah State: 11 wins. Take care of business against Air Force and Fresno. Beat Boise.

Plausible worst case scenario: Utah: 5 Wins. Lose to the Khakis on Thursday. Lose to the Aggies. Lose to the Bruins, and stay 0 for 30+ years against Arizona State. Byu: 6 Wins. Go 0 for September. Rest of the schedule is just too easy to keep them out of the bowl game. Utah State: 5 Wins. Lose to Byu, Lose to Colorado State, Lose to Washington.

Games least comfortable predicting Utah: - Any game that's not Colorado and Fresno State. Byu: Nebraska, Boise State, Ucla, and Utah State. Utah State: Byu, Colorado State.

Final Thoughts

It's almost upon us. It just a few (36 or so) short hours the season begins. All three teams could be set up for really good years. All three teams could stumble badly and fall flat on their face. For Utah this year is a chance to show they weren't a fluke last season, but the Pac-12 slate, especially the South which was the best division in college last season, is such a grind. There's a great chance the Utes are better than they were in 2015 and end up with less wins.

For the Cougars the season is all about surviving September. If Taysom comes back, reads the defense, and gets better recognition of when to take off, as opposed to panicking at the first sign of trouble, the Cougars even have a slim chance of thriving in September. But if Taysom sticks with the same stuff we've seen from him the last three years, the Cougars are looking at another average, ho-hum season.

The Aggies are trying to punch through their glass ceiling. It's Chuckie Keeton's last ride, even if there is an argument to be made for him not being the best option at QB anymore. Matt Wells is a phenomenal head coach. It's no coincidence that the Gary Andersen Aggies moved beyond mediocrity and failed opportunities after he came on board. He won't be around in Logan much longer, so now is the time for Utah State to break through.

Where To Watch, And What To Know

The Utah game kickoffs the season Thursday night at 6:30 Mountain time. It will be broadcast, Haurghbus, Khaki-Cam and all by Fox Sports 1. Collin Cowherd is making his Fox Sports 1 debut in the booth that night, so that means you can basically expect as much fawning over Harbaugh and Michigan, as he did over Riplinger in the movie Planes.

30 minutes later, the Aggies will kickoff. Amazingly enough in this day and age there are games that aren't broadcast on Tv. This would be one of them.

The Cougars and Cornhuskers have earned the afternoon slot on ABC. They'll kickoff Saturday at 1:30 Mountain Time.

Posted by Sideshow in Red, Blue And Pigskin at 06:17