

Boise State basketball prospectus 2009-2010



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Roster

*Returning starters in bold

	1 Perryman, Westly	G	6-3	183	Jr.	Boston, MA (Monroe College) (East Boston HS)
	2 Montreal, Daequon	F	6-7	229	Jr.	Syracuse, NY (College of Southern Idaho) (Corcoran HS)
	3 Okoye, Ike	F	6-9	235	Sr.	Sacramento, CA (Wyoming) (Woodcreek HS)
	BLOCKED SHOTS	G	Bik	Bik/G		
	Okoye, Ike	32	60	1.9		
	Sanchez, Mark	32	22	0.7		
	4 Salzwedel, Justin	G	6-2	184	Jr.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Phoenix College) (Arizona Luthern Academy)
	11 Thomas, Anthony	G	6-0	211	Sr.	Mansfield, TX (Mansfield Summitt HS)
	STEALS	G	Stl	Stl/G		
	Thomas, Anthony	32	42	1.3		
	Anderson, La'Shard	32	36	1.1		
	14 Larsen, Nate	G	6-2	188	Sr.	Park City, UT (Treasure Valley CC) (Park City HS)
	20 Imadiyi, Sean	F	6-7	207	Sr.	Chandler, AZ (Arizona Western) (Corona Del Sol HS)
	21 Arnold, Robert	F	6-6	170	Jr.	Lancaster, CA (Antelope Valley CC) (Lancaster HS)
	23 Hill, G.A.	G	5-8	140	Fr.	Aransas Pass, Texas (Aransas Pass High School)
	24 Anderson, La'Shard	G	6-1	170	Jr.	San Diego, CA (Irvine Valley CC) (Juniperro Serra HS)
	25 Noonan, Paul	F	6-7	214	Jr.	Beaverton, OR (Beaverton HS)
	FREE THROW PERCENT	Made	Att	FT Pct		
	Noonan, Paul	61	72	.847		
	Anderson, La'Shard	46	64	.719		
	30 Young, Tyler	F	6-8	219	Fr.	Leesburg, VA (Bishop O'Connell HS)
	32 Moritz, Zack	C	6-11	245	Jr.	Vancouver, WA (Columbia River HS)
	42 Hicks, Sam	F	6-9	259	Fr.	Redding, CA (Liberty Christian HS)
	50 Cunningham, Kurt	C	6-9	265	Sr.	Sharpville, IN (Tri-Central HS)
	FIELD GOAL PERCENT	Made	Att	FG Pct		
	Cunningham, Kurt	134	199	.673		
	Imadiyi, Sean	28	52	.538		



Greg Graham, Head coach

It's safe to say Greg Graham has established an expectation for winning surrounding with the Boise State men's basketball program, as he enters his eighth season leading the Broncos. Graham is coming off his third consecutive winning season, which finished just one win shy of being his third 20-win season at Boise State as well.

In 2008-09 Graham led the Broncos to a 19-13 overall record, including a 9-7 record against Western Athletic Conference opponents. Boise State also showed dominance at home, finishing 13-3 in Taco Bell Arena. As a team, the Broncos finished second in the WAC in scoring (72.8 points per game), field goal percentage (47.3) and assists per game (15.94).

For the Broncos' regular season success, Boise State also earned the chance to play in the College Basketball Invitational tournament, where they would fall to Stanford University in the first round. The Broncos had three players earn All-WAC awards, as they were led by Mark Sanchez (Second Team All-WAC), Anthony Thomas (All-WAC Defensive Team) and Ike Okoye (All-WAC Defensive Team).

Coach Graham also improved his all-time record at Boise State to an impressive 127-95, with an overall career record of 145-100. He currently sits second for most wins in school history. On Feb. 7, 2008, Graham joined some select company as Boise State defeated Louisiana Tech 73-61 for his 100th career win with the Broncos. Graham joined Bobby Dye (213 wins) and Rod Jensen (109 wins) as the only coaches in Boise State history to win 100 games at the school.

- Courtesy BroncoSports.com



Boise State schedule

*Conference games in bold

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Time (MT)</u>
Fri, Nov 13	Loyola Marymount	at Missoula, MT	5:30 pm
Sat, Nov 14	Montana	at Missoula, MT	7:30 pm
Sun, Nov 15	North Dakota	at Missoula, MT	1:00 pm
Sat, Nov 21	Wyoming	at Laramie, WY	7:00 pm
Tue, Nov 24	Eastern Washington	at Cheney, WA	8:00 pm
Sat, Nov 28	North Texas	Boise, ID	7:05 pm
Sat, Dec 05	Illinois	at Champaign, IL	TBA
Wed, Dec 09	Idaho State	at Pocatello, ID	7:00 pm
Sat, Dec 12	San Diego	Boise, ID	7:05 pm
Sat, Dec 19	Houston Baptist	Boise, ID	3:15 pm
Mon, Dec 21	Portland State	Boise, ID	8:15 pm
Wed, Dec 23	Montana State	Boise, ID	7:05 pm
Tue, Dec 29	Northwest Nazarene	Boise, ID	7:05 pm
Sat, Jan 02	Fresno State	at Fresno, CA	8:00 pm
Mon, Jan 04	Hawai'i	at Honolulu, HI	10:05 pm
Sat, Jan 09	New Mexico State	Boise, ID	7:05 pm
Mon, Jan 11	Louisiana Tech	Boise, ID	7:05 pm
Thu, Jan 14	San Jose State	at San Jose, CA	8:00 pm
Sat, Jan 16	Utah State	at Logan, UT	7:05 pm
Wed, Jan 20	Nevada	Boise, ID	8:15 pm
Mon, Jan 25	Idaho	at Moscow, ID	8:05 pm
Sat, Jan 30	Fresno State	Boise, ID	8:15 pm
Sat, Feb 06	Idaho	Boise, ID	10:00 pm ESPNU
Thu, Feb 11	Utah State	Boise, ID	7:05 pm
Sat, Feb 13	Nevada	at Reno, NV	8:05 pm
Wed, Feb 17	Cal-State Bakersfield	Boise, ID	8:15 pm
Sat, Feb 20	ESPN Bracketbuster	Boise, ID	TBA
Thu, Feb 25	Louisiana Tech	at Ruston, LA	6:05 pm
Sat, Feb 27	New Mexico State	at Las Cruces, NM	7:05 pm
Thu, Mar 04	Hawai'i	Boise, ID	7:05 pm
Sat, Mar 06	San Jose State	Boise, ID	4:15 pm

WAC Tournament, Tue, Mar 09 - Thurs, Mar 13, Reno, NV



Interviews



Tell me a little bit about your reporter bio. Where did you go to school? How did you end up at the Statesman? Why the Idaho football and BSU basketball beats?

I attended Ohio University in Athens, Ohio and have a degree in journalism. The Statesman is the fifth paper I've worked at since graduating college. The others are (in order): Jefferson (Ohio) Gazette; Lancaster (Ohio) Eagle-Gazette; Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch; El Paso (Texas) Times. The beats are simple. One person shouldn't cover football and basketball, especially at a school like Boise State. The football beat has become so huge that it cuts into half the basketball season. I prefer basketball to football, and I get my football fix going to many BSU home games and some Vandal games. It's the best of both worlds.

Compare the quality of this year's WAC to the quality of WACs past. Will the WAC improve on last year's RPI? Is this the most wide open WAC race in years?

This year's WAC reminds me a lot of 2003-04, except the conference is deeper. That year, there were five WAC teams with 20 wins (if I remember correctly and I'm battling the flu and am too lazy to look it up this morning) and five teams made the postseason and three teams made noise. Nevada went to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA, Boise State and Hawaii both won NIT games. Hawaii destroyed Utah State in Logan, something that doesn't happen much. This year, I expect the same thing and for the conference RPI to flirt with the top 10 again.

Where do you see Boise State finishing in the WAC this season? Can they challenge for the top spot? Are they a middle-of-the-road team?

I predicted a fourth-place finish for the Broncos and might have put them fifth had I known what the status of New Mexico State players Wendell McKines and Troy Gillenwater. Those two are missing the first semester for academic purposes, but if they come back, I'd put the Aggies ahead of Boise State. Yes, Boise State can challenge for the top spot. The league will be tight this year. You may have a team playing on a Thursday in a game for first place. If a team loses, they might fall to fifth or sixth after one game. I expect teams to be clustered and would be surprised if any squad makes it through with less than 3 conference losses. "Middle-of-the-road team" is a tough description because if Boise State finishes 21-10, 10-6 that probably puts them in fourth or fifth place. It's the middle of the WAC, but who would be disappointed with that record?

What will be the No. 1 factor in determining where the Broncos end up?

Consistency. That's the magic word for this Boise State team. Both the team and individual players can't afford to be great one game and disappear the next. Shooting needs to be consistent, effort needs to be consistent.

A lot of previews have written about Boise State's lack of depth this season, yet I've seen you write about this being one of the deepest, most talented Bronco teams in years. Is this a case of misplaced perception by outside writers? Will depth be an issue for the Broncos? Or is experience the greater concern?

This is easily the deepest team that Boise State has ever had. When you are redshirting three players, that's a good sign. The three JUCO transfers are all talents. The vets have a ton of experience and have shown they can play. Seriously, opposing fans and coaches must be sick of seeing Anthony Thomas and Kurt Cunningham because they've been in Boise seemingly forever. Noonan will feel like that next year. The key will be for the team to mesh with different lineups so they can maximize the talent and experience.

What chance do you think the Broncos have of cracking 20 wins? What will have to go right for that to happen?

I think 20 wins is a possibility. It won't be easy, especially with seven of the first eight games away from home. Winning on the road is difficult, especially in Laramie. Idaho State has a strong team, and Boise State is one of the Bengals' biggest games of the year. Illinois is a Top 25 team. The key to getting 20 will be to win a ton of home games and steal a few on the road.

Who is the WAC's best player? Where does BSU PG Anthony Thomas fit on the list of WAC guards?

Best player is a tough call. Luke Babbitt and Paul George are NBA good, but I like Idaho's Mac Hopson. All the guy does is win and he's solid in all aspects of the game. As far as Anthony goes, he's a good player who I think is taking a lot of abuse for an emotional outburst (the guarantee) after a tough loss. I think some of the fans are a little down on him, which is too bad, because the guy has hit some big shots and isn't afraid to take the big shot and he wants to win more than anyone. I just remember the two free throws he hit against Idaho last year to tie the score -- those were pressure-packed shots that he drained. The WAC has some great point guards -- Armon Johnson, Hernst Laroche, Jared Quayle, Mac Hopson, Anthony Thomas. Hawaii and LaTech



**Nick Jezierny,
Idaho Statesman**

have new JC points and San Jose State's Justin Graham is finally healthy. Talk about some floor generals.

Give Bronco fans one player to watch this year who could surprise some people.

That's tough because I don't know if anyone would be surprised by anyone on this team. I'd say Paul Noonan. The Broncos now have guys who can get to the hoop, which means they'll be able to spread the floor and that means open looks. Noonan had an off shooting year last season. I don't see that happening again.

What do you see being the biggest reason why Boise State football gets exponentially more attention than Boise State basketball? Will Bronco basketball ever be as popular? What changes would have to be made?

Wins. Boise is a front-running town. You hear talk about the Bobby Dye era all the time. Well, Boise State football was getting drilled by Idaho for 12 years in a row and the fans backed basketball because that program was delivering conference titles and the occasional postseason bid. Boise State football has become such a national story that it deserves a ton of attention.

I also think it has spoiled fans. They aren't used to seeing a loss, so when they happen to catch a basketball game where the Broncos don't win, they get mad and say things like "I'm never coming back." Teams don't go unbeaten in basketball. Indiana did it in 1976 and it hasn't been done since.

Will hoops ever be as popular as football is now? Probably not. But if football suffers a dip and basketball remains steady, the gap between the two can close somewhat. But consider the size of the venues -- Bronco Stadium holds 33,500 or so and Taco Bell Arena holds 12,000. Football obviously will draw more fans, even if the Broncos go 1-11 on the gridiron. Changes? Well, the biggest complaints I've heard since I started covering BSU hoops in 2001 are 1) Not exciting brand of basketball. 2) Poor home schedule 3) No good recruits. I think coach Graham has smashed No. 1 with his style, and I think recruiting has picked up significantly. As far as the schedule goes, that's a tough thing. No BCS conference team is going to come here because there isn't much incentive. Scheduling will always be a challenge.

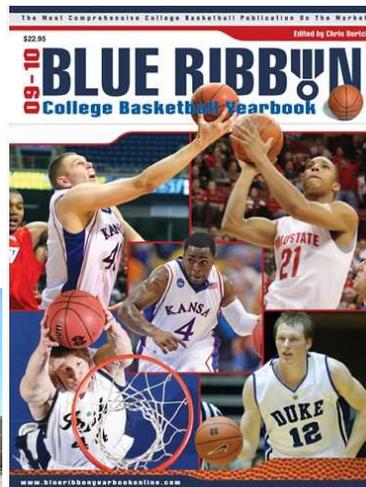
Lightning round. I'll give you a word, you tell me the first word that comes to mind.

- Roberto Bergersen:** Shooter
- Taco Bell Arena:** Loud
- RPI:** Necessary
- Greg Graham:** Loyal
- Robb Akey:** Fun
- 3-point shooting percentage:** Important
- Jay Bilas:** Long (he always uses that adjective)
- The NIT:** Should be 64 teams, drop other two tournaments
- WAC basketball:** Improved
- Utah State basketball:** The model.
- Blogging:** Enjoy
- Black taco:** Marginal
- The Jay Leno Show:** Don't watch



<http://www.blueribbonyearbookonline.com/>

Chris Dortch, Blue Ribbon Yearbook



The BRY team preview of the Broncos lists all sorts of positives: four returning starters, postseason experience, an up-tempo style of play. Yet the conference preview has Boise State picked to finish eighth out of nine teams. What do you see being the biggest factor in the Broncos near cellar-dwelling?



That prediction could certainly be debated, but it was based on the fact we think several teams in the league are ready to take a significant step forward.

How much of a talent gap is there between Boise State and the teams at the top of the preseason WAC rankings? Will the Broncos be competitive? Or is the rest of the WAC that much better?

I don't think there's a huge talent gap at all. Truthfully, like most conferences, the middle of the pack is very balanced, and as Idaho showed last year, it's possible to slip into the upper tier of the league fairly quickly.

Compare the quality of the WAC to years past. Can the conference improve on last year's RPI? Is challenging the 2006-2007 RPI of No. 9 a possibility?

It's certainly possible to get a top-10 RPI, but a lot has to happen. New Mexico State will have to adjust without Wendell McKines, a double-figure rebounder, and Troy Gillenwater in the first semester and with them in the second. Can Utah State adjust to the loss of WAC Player of the Year Gary Wilkinson? (Our answer is yes, given that four starters are back and it has been the league's most consistent program in recent years.) Can Nevada adjust to a new head coach?

And then there are the teams that aren't perennial contenders that figure to make strides. Idaho came a long way in Don Verlin's first year, and has four starters returning. Louisiana Tech showed signs last year and caught a break when its top two players, Kyle Gibson and Magnum Rolle, wisely decided to bypass the NBA draft and return to school. San Jose State returns four starters, and the program has made upward movement in the RPI each of the last five years.

Anthony Thomas might be Boise State's best player. Where does he rank among fellow PGs in the WAC?

He's clearly the guy that makes that team go and has to be considered one of the WAC's top lead guards. His numbers are solid across the board. If you were nitpicking, you might ask him to cut back on his 2008-09 turnover total a tad.

If the Broncos are to return to the NCAA tournament this season, what will have to happen? An Anthony Thomas out-of-body experience? Time travel?

As I mentioned earlier, there are a lot of teams of fairly equal ability to wade through. The bid will have to be earned in the WAC Tournament; there aren't a lot of opportunities on the schedule to make a statement in the regular season and build up an at-large bid resume.

What do you think Boise State's biggest game of the season will be? Why?

Again, looking at the schedule and picking out a game that can deliver some benefit down the road, I like the Dec. 5 game at Illinois. What a confidence boost if Boise State goes into one of the Big Ten's toughest arenas and brings back a win.

Name a Boise State player who could have a breakout year.

Kurt Cunningham's stats last year—including a remarkable .673 from the field that led the WAC—suggest to me he's capable of putting together his finest season as a fifth-year senior. You have to take notice of the 25-point game he threw at Stanford in the CBI.

What chance do you think the Broncos have of cracking 20 wins?

I think the schedule is fairly manageable, but the league will be a dogfight this year. That balance will hold down win totals as the teams beat up on one another.

Where can my friends and I buy the Blue Ribbon Yearbook?

Go to www.blueribbonyearbookonline.com or call 1-877-807-4857 Monday through Friday. We'll be happy to help you out!

Tell me a little bit about the Mid Major Madness and CollegenInsider.com. What brought you to SB Nation? How do you like it here? How'd you get started blogging about college sports and college basketball?

My firm, GAME Inc., represents over two dozen NCAA basketball coaches and runs several college basketball tournaments, one of which is the CollegenInsider.com Postseason Tournament (CIT). We partnered up with CollegenInsider.com to create a tournament that gives mid-major teams from traditionally one-bid leagues the opportunity to participate in the postseason. CollegenInsider.com gives out five national coach and player of the year awards, organizes the Mid-Major Top 25, and runs several tournaments. Most casual fans don't realize that they are one of the most influential entities in all of college basketball.

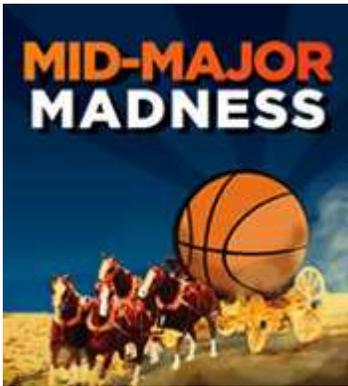
We decided to start Mid Major Madness to give college fans an opportunity to get news and insight from people who actually work within the business of college sports. We know what happens behind the scenes and can thus afford to give your readers information that they otherwise wouldn't get as quickly from other regular news sources.

Compare the quality of this year's WAC to the quality of WACs past. Will the WAC improve on last year's RPI? Is this the most wide open WAC race in years?

Last year the WAC ranked 11th in the RPI, which was a significant improvement from a No. 22 ranking during the 2007-08 season. Will the conference's RPI improve significantly this year? Probably not. The good thing is that I don't see it dropping off too far either. The WAC has some good teams this year, most notably New Mexico State and returning champ Utah State, but will also be dragged down by its bottom feeders... most notably Hawaii and San Jose State.

<http://www.midmajormadness.com/>

Jason Belzer, Mid-Major Madness



I think that from a league title standpoint, this will be one of the most competitive races in for the WAC title in recent years. Along with NMSU and Utah State, Idaho, Boise and Fresno should all be in the thick of things come February.

Where do you see Boise State finishing in the WAC this season? Can they challenge for the top spot? Are they a middle-of-the-road team?

Coach Graham did a hell of a job last season after losing four starters from 2008's tournament team. With the return of a solid nucleus of players in 2009, they should finish at least 3rd in the league, if not have a good chance of winning it all. With two returning All-WAC Defensive team players in Anthony Thomas and Ike Okoye, the Broncos should lead the league in blocked shots and steals. Although the defense and frontcourt will be solid, their lack of depth is what will hurt them in the end. They won't be able to keep up with the other teams when it comes to points off the bench, so they'll need to play a quick tempo early in their games to try and take a lead they can ride to victory with.

In your Ultimate Rankings Countdown, you have the Broncos at No. 148, just ahead of Oral Roberts and behind Murray State, and you list a lack of consistency as a big question going into the season. Who do you feel is key to helping the Broncos with consistency? Are you concerned about depth? Leadership? Coaching?

As mentioned before, the biggest concern for the Broncos this year is their depth. They will be solid up front and have a decent back court, but after the four returning starters, there isn't much experience on the team. The incoming recruits should fight for a starting spot at guard, and coach Graham has certainly showed that he is a quick developer of talent, so they Broncos have just as good a chance of winning the league as anyone else.

Who is the WAC's best player? Where does BSU PG Anthony Thomas fit on the list of WAC guards?

If I had to pick the best player in the league, it would have to be Jahmar Young at New Mexico State. He's the WAC's top returning scorer from last season. He's got the outside shot (.421 from the 3 point line) and a hell of a free throw shooting percentage at .824. He also finished seventh in the league in steals with 44 to go along with his 104 assists.

I think Anthony Thomas would be in anyone's Top 5 list of WAC guards, but he's definitely behind Young as well as Mac Hopson from Idaho and Adrian Oliver from San Jose State. If the Broncs have any chance of success this year, they'll need Thomas to have the best year of his career. He made the NABC's All-District 6 team last year, and I think he'll show everyone why he deserves to be at the top of that guard list.

What chance do you think the Broncos have of cracking 20 wins? What will have to go right for that to happen?

Boise has only broken the 20 win plateau only once in the last 5 years. The came close to doing it again last year, but fell short, even with the extra postseason game they played against Stanford. Can they do it this year? If the Broncos are as good as everyone thinks they are, they should shatter the 20 win plateau, based largely over a truly mediocre non-conference schedule. Other than their trip to Illinois on December 5, the Broncos don't play a game that they wont have a competitive chance at winning. To be

honest, even throwing in the conference schedule, any decent middle of the road BCS conference team would stand a good chance at going undefeated this year with Boise's schedule.

It pains me to see so many positive things written about the Vandals. Please tell me one disparaging thing about Idaho basketball.

Unless you were actually there, most people don't know that the Vandals didn't play their first round CIT game in the Kibbie Dome. Because that facility was under renovation, they ended up having to play it in their "auxiliary arena", which is really a 1500 seat middle-school like gymnasium with a big stage at one end. I'm sure nothing gets Vandal recruits fired up more then going to a school in the absolute middle of nowhere and getting to play in a gym smaller then the own highschools'.

Lightning round. I'll give you a word, and you give me the first word that comes to mind.

Taco Bell Arena. - Steve Merfeld going airborne after Hamptons #15 upset over #2 Iowa State in the 2001 Tourney

SB Nation blogs. So much classier than Deadspin.

RPI. Absolutley meaningless come the first round of the tournament.

Billy Packer. They won it... on the dunk!

The Missouri Valley Conference. Best mid-major conference in all of basketball

Point shaving. Old Spice or Gillette?

Greg Graham. King Smurf

The WAC. Boise and the 8 dwarves

Boise State football. Belongs in the MWC

Twitter. Insanely addicting

Teenage vampire love stories. That Robert Pattinson is total hunk...



PARSING THE WAC

"THE EASIEST THING TO CREATE IS HEAT, THE HARDEST THING IS LIGHT" -- ROBERT MCNEIL
AND "ONE OUGHT, EVERY DAY AT LEAST, TO HEAR A LITTLE SONG, READ A GOOD POEM, SEE A
FINE PICTURE AND, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, TO SPEAK A FEW REASONABLE WORDS." -- GOETHE

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2009

Your Fabulous Friday links

Here you go with we rounded up so far today:

Snakebitten Spartans try to get proactive with injury bug
Chris Murray
Reno Gazette-Journal
October 30, 2009

San Jose State coach George Nessman has to be thrilled that he can finally bury the memory of last season.

It's not because the Spartans tied for sixth place in the league last season and failed to break the .500 mark for the seventh straight season.



ABOUT ME



KEVIN MCCARTHY
CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES

long-time college and high school basketball writer and fan

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

How did you get started covering WAC basketball? What do you like about it? Why the WAC? Why blogspot? Why "Parsing"? A little "Parsing the WAC" history if you will.

Well, I absolutely have a nose for money so I began covering the WAC in order to enjoy the financial riches that come flowing from being associated with a mid-majority conference. Such has resulted in a lavish string of office suites, unlimited staffing featuring only the best and brightest, concierge services to meet our every need and accessibility to any of the powers-that-be who rush to return our inquiries.

Actually, San Jose State is the closest WAC school to my residence and, for reasons we've never been able to quite comprehend, SJSU granted me a college degree some time back in the Dark Ages. There's been hints about being asked to return it or at least playing down the association, but we're just ignoring the pleas until the police come to the door with a cease-and-desist order. The school joined the WAC, hence the coverage of the said conference. Plus, being Irish, the sense of an outcast status is customary so we couldn't support a BCS school regardless of incentive.

Blogspot was chosen as our medium after diving deep into a headlong search for the finest avenue of facilitation for sharing our brilliantness. Actually, between you and me, the fact that it didn't cost anything was the clincher but please don't tell anyone. The title of the blog just appeared out of the blue one day - although it's curious how that hasn't worked when we daydream about Scarlett Johansson, but we digress.

I like to write, I like basketball the most of any sport -- going against the grain, can Boise State just be crowned the 2009-2010 football champ now and the rest of the gridiron season discontinued so that basketball is front and center? -- so offering a daily infliction of WAC hoops, with no known antidote, is my job one.



Kevin McCarthy, Parsing the WAC

Compare the quality of this year's WAC to the quality of WACs past. Will the WAC improve on last year's RPI? Is this the most wide open WAC race in years?

The WAC is absolutely wide open in 2009-2010 with actually every team having at least a possibility of winning the WAC tourney. We don't see anyone running away in league play, especially not like Utah State did last season. The competition will simply be fiercer this season. A look at the first team all-WAC coaches poll is quite indicative that the WAC is on the rise: it contains a sophomore and two juniors plus a sophomore and a junior on the second squad.

The RPI is something of which I claim no expertise. But it seems that too often, the WAC teams have to play the so-called prime-time opponents from the uber conferences on the road which, more often than not, results in a loss and puts the league RPI ratings out of whack, so to speak. Some of those losses could/would be wins if the WAC member was playing host, thus becoming an RPI boost. My analogy: the BCS schools are Cromwell/England -- the WAC members Michael Collins/Ireland. Our day will come!

What is the biggest difference between Boise State and the teams that are traditionally at the top of the WAC? Is it depth? Recruiting? Playmakers? Fan support? Please, don't say fan support because I don't see that changing any time soon.

What comes first to mind is that Greg Graham seemingly doesn't take many chances in the personal caliber of whom he recruits, something you can argue is good or bad. Forgive any memory loss if I'm overlooking someone, but when was the last time a Bronco basketballer got a mention in the crimes/police/court section of the newspaper? His guys play tough, do well in school and graduate. Some coaches will take in a 'questionable' recruit hoping to get lucky or that the team leaders will be a positive effect on such a kid and other coaches gamble much, much more. It doesn't appear that way with Graham.

What is Boise State's biggest weakness this season? Its biggest strength?

As for the former, does Greg Graham have a go-to, crunch-time scorer on his squad this season? I've been wrong before and certainly will be again but I don't see Anthony Thomas in that role. Is there someone else on the roster who can step up? Hmm. With the latter, it's the team cohesiveness Graham's teams display where their effectiveness exceeds the singular ability of the players.

What is it about Anthony Thomas that polarizes people? Where do you stand on him?

With the admission that we've seen him live just a couple of time, we've witnessed him willingly engage the opposing fans whereas most players ignore or try to ignore any chants or call-outs. But the bottom line is delivering the win or backing up whatever was said and he isn't batting a thousand in that aspect. But he is entertaining, without crossing any sort of line so he's cool. I am sure getting such a stamp of approval from such a media giant is an enormous relief and will allow him to enjoy his senior season.

What do you think Boise State's biggest game of the season will be? Why?

In non-conference play, a December 5th win in Champaign, IL, would make some good noise, possibly some national reverberations, however short-lived. Wyoming is picked to finish sixth in the Mountain West but a November 21 victory in Laramie would be welcome ammunition against the MWC-ers. In WAC play, it's a tie: February 6th at home against Idaho is a must win while January 25th in Moscow would be quite the prize in helping with state dominance and in the WAC standings.

Name a Boise State player who could have a breakout year.

If Anthony Thomas can convince some of their Texas-based brethren to move up to Boise, then he's our guy. Actually, it's the trio of newcomers with the best odds: Daequon Montreal, Westly Perryman and Robert Arnold. Perryman is our choice due to playing time opportunity. But we certainly didn't foresee Kurt Cunningham making the move forward that he did last season.

What chance do you think the Broncos have of cracking 20 wins? What will have to go right for that to happen?

Declare BSU the Isle of Boise and never leave home during non-conference games -- hint: Bob Nash/Hawaii have one non-conference away game this season. Discounting Northwest Nazarene, Concordia and Willamette, BSU should have at least 10-11 wins in non-conference D-1 play. Then it has to go 10-6 or so in the WAC which is running the table at home and picking off two road contests. Call it within the realm of possibility -- if nobody gets hurt.

In your honest opinion, how good of a coach is Greg Graham?

There are about a thousand and one aspects to judge a coach which would require something like a senior thesis to truly answer the question. So I'll cop-out with this: a coach is successful if the sum of his team performs better than the individual talents should allow. Greg Graham achieves this. Can/should he recruit better? Seemingly, yes. Does he have to to be successful? No. But successful means different things to different people.

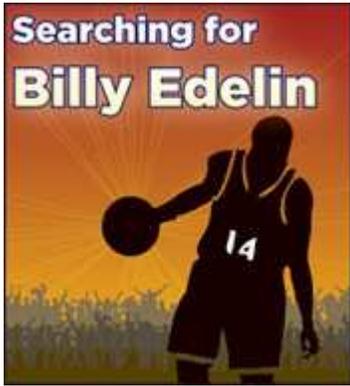
It pains me to see so many positive things written about the Vandals. Please tell me one disparaging thing about Idaho basketball.

I don't usually buy into guilt by association but the Vandals did sack Rome in 455 -- in addition to San Jose State this season -- which seems quite the affront to Catholicism and Spartans so how about moving away from this questionable school sports nickname? Doesn't Don Verlin and the Gems have a wholesome ring to it? I'll even settle for Verlin and the Wide Stancers but I realize this is a dual-edged sword since the retired Mr. Craig amply represented all Idaho-ans.

Lightning round. I'll give you a word, and you give me the first word that comes to mind.

- Greg Graham** - quiet assassin (I cheated)
- Utah State** - machine
- RPI** - unfair
- Clark Kellogg** - so-so
- Midnight madness** - manufactured
- Mac Hopson** - saviour
- Luke Babbitt** - going, going, gone
(it's my uncontrollable cheating impulse at work again)
- WAC tournament** - beer
- Boise State football** - monolithic
- Health care** - Sisyphus
- Three Musketeers bar** - Dumas





<http://www.searchingforbillyedelin.com/>

Nick Fasulo & Matt Parsons, Searching for Billy Edelin



Tell me a little bit about the Searching for Billy Edelin's history. What brought you to SB Nation? How do you like it here? How'd you get started blogging about college basketball?

We're high school buddies who were the guys that for one week each March traded in backpacks for yellow folders filled with empty brackets - forcing even the most disinterested kids to cough up \$10 to "get in on the action." We were always intrigued about this Edelin guy. If you live on the East Coast, you can't really go more

than five days without meeting a Syracuse alum. We would sometimes ask people just what happened to Billy because he had such a bright future. Many either didn't know or, no joke, gave us odd looks to suggest "we don't talk about that." It was very strange because why were these alums so privy to the truth but we couldn't be? The title is just our attempt at being clever. We launched the blog on WordPress last November and by February SBNation came calling. We were shocked people actually read our stuff, if that is in fact true.

If you could change anything about college basketball, what would it be and why?

Implement a mandatory two year rule. That way you a) weed out the kids who truly have no interest in anything other than professional basketball, and b) simply create a better brand. I really think one additional year of cohesion between a top recruiting class can make a huge difference for a program. You would also have more solid teams that make college basketball that much more exciting to watch.

Also, clone Gus Johnson a lot. That way he's on the call for every relevant game.

If college football could learn anything from college basketball, what would that be?

The obvious answer is a playoff system. When Boise State won the greatest college football game of our generation (the Bush Push would be a close second) the debate for who was that year's national champion was on...but the season was over.

As a business model though, college football really doesn't have much to learn. The top football programs bring-in more money than top basketball programs, university presidents are fixated on that bowl game payout, and they can tout Tim Tebow until our eyes bleed.

Personally, there is nothing better in the world of sports than that first weekend of March Madness. It's sacred. But college football on the whole is probably more relevant in the world of sports. Maybe someday that will change.

Compare the quality of this year's WAC to the quality of WACs past. Will the WAC improve on last year's RPI? Is this the most wide open WAC race in years? Who is your favorite?

It is fairly open because when you thumb through the preview mags, there's really no consistency as to who is the favorite. The conference on the whole has realized they must bolster up their non-conference schedule in order to be taken seriously, which in turn will improve the conference's RPI.

We'd like to say Nevada is the favorite. The Wolfpack has the most opportunity to catapult to the top of the tournament resume pile with games against UNC, BYU and VCU, but they have a new coach and junior college transfers who may or not be eligible to play. So with that, we'll take the safest pick in Utah State. They only lose one starter (albeit the WAC POY Gary Wilkinson) and were the best team last season. Bottom line, it's likely a one bid league with no clear cut favorite.

Where do you see Boise State finishing in the WAC this season? Can they challenge for the top spot? Are they a middle-of-the-road team?

Yes, middle of the road at best. But again it's a wide open league, and the Broncos do return four starters. Build off that chemistry,

catch fire come March, and just like that you could have your second NCAA Tournament berth in three seasons. We're going to need to see lots of W's. Circle that Illinois game as a must win.

Who is the WAC's best player?

I don't think you can really look past Luke Babbitt. He was a McDonald's All-American who actually decommitted from Ohio State because he wanted to play close to home. If he can improve on his 17 ppg and 7.4 rebounds a game, his draft stock will only go up. Heck, he probably could declare early and go pro.

How does WAC talent compare to what you'd find in a non mid-major conference? What mid-major conference would pose the biggest challenge to a non mid-major conference?

We would put the WAC a notch or two above the Southern and Sun Belt type conferences, but it's not up to the level of the Mountain West. That is a multi-bid league with an OK tournament track record of late, and it also has a nice TV deal with CBS College Sports.

A lot of people are saying good things about the Idaho Vandals. I hate the Idaho Vandals. Please tell me one disparaging thing about Idaho basketball or make something up if you've got nothing.

Both your schools are in, sadly, Idaho. Lucky for you your football program is top notch and you have a bevy of games and players you can boast about. The Idaho Vandals don't swell up anyone with pride, right?

Lightning round. I'll give you a word, and you give me the first word that comes to mind.

- Taco Bell Arena** – Fourth Meal
- SB Nation blogs** – Unquestioned fan-dom
- RPI** - whatever the opposite of chic is.
- Jim Nantz** - recently divorced (but a damn good life otherwise)
- The NIT** – YMCA rec league
- Hoosiers** - Hinkle Fieldhouse
- Billy Edelin** - enigma
- Boise State football** - Statue of Liberty
- Duke** - Notre Dame
- Facebook quizzes** - For your girlfriend and people who like to watch Entourage
- 30 Rock** - Inferior to Curb Your Enthusiasm and It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia



Sam Wasson, Bleed Crimson



Compare the quality of this year's WAC to the quality of WACs past. Is this the most wide open WAC race in years? How many teams realistically have a shot of winning?

This is absolutely the deepest the WAC has been in years. Perhaps even dating back to the days when the WAC was ruled by Utah, BYU, New Mexico and UTEP. The WAC could get two teams in the NCAA tournament, two teams in the NIT and two teams in either the CBI or CollegeInsider.com postseason tournament. Postseason tournaments are like college football bowls now, there are entirely too many but I digress... There are at least five or six teams that have a shot at winning the WAC this season. Utah State, Nevada and New Mexico State are the favorites with Idaho, Louisiana Tech being the dark horse candidates.

One of the problems for Boise State basketball gaining traction in the Boise community is that fans are so used to a dominating winner (the football team) that they have trouble getting behind an up-and-down b-ball team.

What is the biggest difference between the Broncos and the teams that are traditionally at the top of the WAC (Utah State, for instance)? What does Boise State need to be doing differently? Recruiting? Coaching? Developing playmakers? What's your take?

Fan support is probably the number one thing that Boise State lacks. Last season the team was coming off an NCAA appearance and yet they had possibly the lowest attendance for any of those 65 teams that made The Dance the year before. As far as recruiting, coaching, playmakers are concerned? Boise State probably has as good an inside-outside combo with Anthony Thomas and Kurt Cunningham, as anyone in the league. Boise State plays an exciting up tempo brand of basketball. It's surprising the team doesn't draw more fans.

Tell me the best thing about the Broncos this season and the worst thing.

The best thing about the Broncos this season is Kurt Cunningham. He got virtually zero press from any preseason media or coaches but the guy led the WAC in shot percentage and he played a ton of minutes last season. At one point in the season his field goal percentage was better than the free throw percentage of everyone in the WAC.

The worst thing about the Broncos this season? The non-conference home schedule. YUCK! It's hard to get fans to be excited about Bronco basketball when your non-conference lineup looks like: North Texas, Houston Baptist, Portland State, Montana State, Northwest Nazarene, CS-Bakersfield and San Diego (although USD is a decent team). Granted it's hard to get big names to come and play the mid-majors (as your football counterparts can attest to) but come on, at least one recognizable name would be nice.

Would you rank Anthony Thomas among the WAC's best point guards? What would that list look like?

Anthony Thomas is definitely one of the top point guards in the league. He was third in the conference in assists per game last season and was also one of the most hated players in the league by opposing fans (taking over that mantle from Nevada's Nick Fazekas). Jared Quayle from Utah State, Hernst Laroche from New Mexico State both come to mind when talking best point guards in the league.

What do you think Boise State's biggest game of the season will be? Why?

Boise State's biggest game(s) will be the in-state battle with Idaho. Last season Anthony Thomas guaranteed victory over Idaho (I think twice) and failed to back it up either time. He had one of the quotes of the decade saying, "I'm guaranteeing victory. I guaran-

tee we won't lose to Idaho again as long as we play them."

What has to go right for the Broncos to crack 20 wins? How easy will that be this year in a WAC that seems to have some very solid teams?

Boise State should have between nine and 11 wins by the time conference play rolls around. For them to reach 20 wins this season they'll need to take care of business and sweep the season series with San Jose State and Hawaii plus at least split with Fresno State, Idaho, and Louisiana Tech. That would give them between 14 and 16 wins. Then if they can win the CS-Bakersfield and ESPN Bracketbusters game that would put them close to 20. A surprise win over Nevada, Utah State, or New Mexico State plus a win in the conference tourney could put them over the 20 win mark.

If you could have one Boise State player on New Mexico State's team, who would it be and why?

Kurt Cunningham. Anyone that takes 199 shots and makes 67% of them is a gamer.

It pains me to see so many positive things written about the Vandals. Please tell me one disparaging thing about Idaho basketball.

Their head coach looks like he's working on a porn 'stache.

Lightning round. I'll give you a word, and you give me the first word that comes to mind.

Karl Benson. Napoleon-esque

Utah State. Mascot Fight

RPI. BCS

Dick Vitale. College Basketball

Midnight madness. Underrated

Duke. Hate

Luke Babbitt. Short

Sweet sixteen. A Dream

Hal Mumme. White Towel

The Amazing Race. Fun

Cash for clunkers. Scam

The three-point line. Nightmares of BSU sharpshooters from the 2008 WAC title game.



Tell me a little bit about the Blogging the Bracket. What brought you to SB Nation? How do you like it here? How'd you get started blogging about college basketball?

Well, Blogging the Bracket is SBNation's bracketology site, though I do a lot more than just putting out a bracket every few days during the season. Right now, I'm deep in season preview mode, which is a new endeavor for me. During the season, I write a lot of preview/recap-type posts, along with posts about my travel experiences. I'll also be providing a lot of the content on the new SBNation.com NCAA Basketball page throughout the season, focusing on gamenight discussion and commentary. My contributions there have been on the backburner for the past couple of weeks because of some temporary craziness at my day job and my blog time being taken up by conference previews.

As for how I ended up on SBNation, well, I started a bracketology blog in 2006 (when I was living in Florida, definitely not a college hoops hotbed) on a Blogspot site. After the 2007 season, I moved to the DC area, which gave me access to far more live games than I could have ever had in Central Florida. So last season, I decided to buy a dedicated domain and branch out a bit. For the first time, I added nightly TV previews to the site. I also started writing about the games I attended in person. Plus, I went to a couple of early season tournaments, the CBE Classic in Kansas City (as my two favorite teams, Florida and Syracuse were both there) and the Old Spice Classic (as it's close to my parents' house in Florida). The other big thing I started last season was Twitter, which is how Peter Bean over at Burnt Orange Nation found me and brought me here to SBN. Moving to this network is one of the best decisions I've ever made: great leadership, great writers, great design, great technology. I'm constantly blown away by the stuff I see on the 220+ sites on the network.



Chris Dobbertean, Blogging the Bracket

<http://www.bloggingthebracket.com/>

Compare the quality of this year's WAC to the quality of WACs past. Will the WAC improve on last year's RPI? Is this the most wide open WAC race in years?

The conference race is going to be a dogfight as always, but I am a bit disappointed by most teams' non-conference scheduling. Outside of Nevada, the rest of the league contenders didn't really schedule any eye-popping matchups, which could hurt come selection time. I mean, Idaho scheduled a home and home with Seattle. That's not something you'd expect from a team that wants to be taken seriously for a higher seed or auto bid. Utah State has several mid-major contenders (Cal State-Fullerton, Morehead State, Weber State) coming to Logan, and their usual games with Utah and BYU, but no BCS opposition on the schedule. That's something that's been a major knock on them. New Mexico State at least mixes in a trip to UCLA with all of their games against regional rivals.

I really think the league is going to be fun to watch this year with so much star power returning, but I think it could all be for naught because impact non-league wins could be lacking. It's too bad that the WAC isn't getting more invites to exempted events. Sure, the conference is now sponsoring the Diamond Head Classic with ESPN, but Hawai'i will be involved in that every year as that tournament exists to help them schedule non-conference games.

Where do you see Boise State finishing in the WAC this season? Can they challenge for the top spot? Are they a middle-of-the-road team?

I see the Broncos finishing at in the middle third of the conference, but where they end up ultimately depends on if they can replace, or even improve on, Mark Sanchez's output. That forward core of Paul Noonan, Ike Okoye, and JC transfer/All-Name Team pick Daequon Montreal could really boost BSU's fortunes if they produce. I don't see them at the level of Utah State or New Mexico State, but Nevada and Idaho have enough holes that the Broncos could move up to 3rd if things break right.

Who is the WAC's best player? Where does BSU PG Anthony Thomas fit on the list of WAC guards?

I named Luke Babbitt as my preseason Player of the Year. Sure he's the only McDonald's All-American in the league, but he lived up to those expectations last year. Thomas, meanwhile, gets a bit lost in the shuffle, especially as so many of the guards in the WAC, like Kyle Gibson, Mac Hopson, Armon Johnson, Adrian Oliver, Jared Quayle, and Jahmar Young, are going to get a lot of attention because they score more. But in terms of providing real leadership to his team, he's one of the best in the league. The Broncos wouldn't have won as many games as they did last year without his court vision and ability to make the right pass at the right time.

What chance do you think the Broncos have of cracking 20 wins? What will have to go right for that to happen?

Of the 15 non-league games, I think only one is a guaranteed loss (Illinois). There are a few games that will be tough: at Wyoming, at Montana, and the home games with North Texas, San Diego, and Portland State. Plus, who knows who the Bracket-Buster will be at this point. Eleven non-league wins is certainly doable, and BSU should be able to equal that 9-7 league mark from last year, which would mean 20 wins. One thing I would suggest is that you don't get swept by your archrivals.

Personnel-wise, it all depends on who steps up after Sanchez's graduation. If Greg Graham can replace his output, the Broncos will do fine and get to 20 wins.

It pains me to see so many positive things written about the Vandals. Please tell me one disparaging thing about Idaho basketball.

At least Boise State plays in an arena that's in the NCAA rotation, even if they made you put down one of those ugly Stepford floors last year. Why does the NCAA hate orange and blue so much? Plus, the Broncos aren't afraid to travel more than 9 miles to take on a BCS conference opponent this season.

Lightning round. I'll give you a word, and you give me the first word that comes to mind.

Cinderella. March
SB Nation blogs. Quality
RPI. Misguided
Bracketology. Maddening
Gus Johnson. AWESOME
Big East basketball. Orange
Duke. Overrated
Coby Karl. Fighter
The WAC. Underestimated
Boise State football. Blue Turf
The Office. TiVo
Movies with monkeys as lead characters. Chortle-worthy



The End

