

SPORTS



BYU's Hill switches from wideout to tight end
After a disappointing 2023 season, BYU senior Keanu Hill has bulked up and is switching positions from wide receiver to tight end. » C4

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Hard-earned reputation

The national image of Utah football? It will rule and reign over Big 12 in its first year.

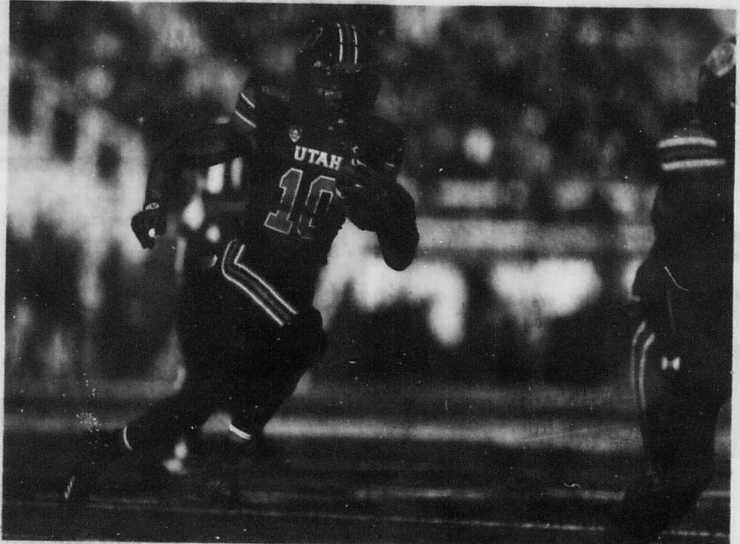


GORDON MONSON

Remember those old television commercials for a camera company featuring Andre Agassi in which he dipped his sunglasses down and oh-so-cooly declared, "Image is everything?"

It is said that ad campaign haunted the tennis great for years, and while some criticized it for promoting style over substance — which was big at the time — it also prompted a divisive philosophical discussion among the thoughtful or perhaps it was among the really, really bored, some believing there were at least a few drops of veracity in the proclamation, some saying, "No, no... image is nothing." Well, if the former is partially true, if image reflects style and substance, if it represents not just what's on the surface, but what's going on two or three layers down, that's both good news for and says something important about Utah football. Something important and something hard-earned.

In the comprehensive, Kyle Whittingham's program has an image, all right, a reputation of being a buzzard-tough outfit, an annual collection of dudes you could see working on an oil rig or melting down steel over at the plant or mining for coal 2,000 feet down or fishing for the latest catch on a distressed boat in the Bering Sea or maybe even teaching fourth-graders at a local elementary school. Guys who get a messy job done regardless of the degree of difficulty. They play football the way Bo Schembechler



University of Utah wide receiver Money Parks carries the ball during a game against Arizona State last November at Rice-Eccles Stadium. FRANCISCO KOLOSETH / The Salt Lake Tribune

would have wanted it played — with a socket wrench in one hand and a crankshaft in the other, all governed by unusual grit.

Whittingham gets credit for setting the tone for all of that.

But there's more — necessary stuff, like talent, skill and speed.

That's the rep. It's been like that for years, but on a national scale it went throttle up in more recent seasons, beyond vague

memories of the Fiesta Bowl at the conclusion of the 2004 run and the Sugar Bowl after 2008. Can you believe those wins were some 20 and 16 years ago now?

Whoa. Making an almost yearly trip to Pac-12 championship games, even without wins in the Rose Bowl or any other bowl over the Utes' past five postseason appearances, including two losses to Northwestern, one to Texas, one

to Ohio State and one to Penn State, hasn't diminished the way Utah football is thought of, not among many fans, many national football observers.

Evidence of that is seen in the predictions for the Utes as they enter the Big 12. It's not often that a newcomer to a strong league is projected to win the thing in that inaugural year. There's a lot to get used to — opponents

never faced before, venues never visited before, crowds never heard before, travel routes never traversed before, coaches never strategized against before, and more. It's like an amateur golfer playing a course for the first time, not knowing precisely where the dastardly unseen bends in the fairways and greens are. But no matter, that's exactly where a lot

Photo by MONSON, C1

Jazz hoping to beat the odds in NBA Draft Lottery

Utah has a 6 percent chance of landing the top overall pick on Sunday.

By ANDY LARSEN
The Salt Lake Tribune

Once again, the Utah Jazz will be hoping the pingpong balls fly their way.

After staying put in the NBA Draft Lottery of 2023, the Jazz go into the 2024 edition in a similar spot. This year, they enter as the team with the eighth-highest number of combinations in their favor, giving them a 6% chance at the top pick.

The prize last year was Victor Wembanyama, who wowed

league-watchers this season with a variety of never-before-seen plays. This year, the prize looks to be another French center — Alexandre Sarr — but one with much larger warts to cast doubt on his future as an NBA star.

How does the lottery work?

The results of the lottery this year will be televised on ABC this Sunday at 1 p.m. MDT. But just before then, league executives and team representatives will gather in a room just adjacent to the broadcast studio for the actual lottery procedure.

There, a selection of 14 balls will be put into a pingpong ball

hopper, out of which four balls will be drawn, one at a time. Math tells us there are 1,001 possible combinations when you do this, and the Jazz have 60 of those combinations assigned to them. In general, bigger initial numbers drawn are good for the Jazz, pushing results away from the worst teams in the league like Detroit, Washington, Charlotte and Portland, and towards more unlikely results.

The winner of the No. 1 overall pick is selected first in that room, though announced last to the public. Because teams can't win multiple times in the lottery, that raises the Jazz's odds for the second pick to 6.34%, their odds for the third pick to 6.74%, and fourth pick to 7.21%.

Photo by LOTTERY, C4

