

Brett Rypien looking for big finale with Broncos

QB a big reason why Boise State is ranked No. 22

By TIM BOOTH Associated Press

Brett Rypien is about to become a rarity in college football, a quarterback with the skill from the time of his arrival on campus to be the starter for the majority of his four years at Boise State.

He's won a conference title. He's won bowl games. Yet there was a time a year ago as a junior that his spot as the Broncos starter was being questioned by outsiders and challenged from within.

"I don't think frustrating was the right word. You know, I never really try to get frustrated. I think that's just negative for yourself and not really positive for the entire team as well, showing frustration. Especially in the position that I'm in," Rypien said.

Rypien will start his senior season Saturday when the 22nd-ranked Broncos open at Troy. While Rypien didn't get his first start until the fourth game of his freshman season, he'll join Kelvin Moore in rare company as a four-year starter for the Broncos.

good as Moore's but he's still one of the most decorated quarterbacks in the school's history.

He ended up leading the Broncos to a Mountain West title and a Las Vegas Bowl victory over Oregon during his difficult junior season. He also nearly lost his starting job to graduate transfer Montell Cozart.

"I thought Brett, that's the neatest thing, he handled it well," Boise State coach Bryan Harsin said. "I think there was some of that frustration of, at times, being taken out of the plan and the reality of, 'If this is what it takes for us to win, I'm all in.'" He really was. He showed that, too. That's a maturity that I haven't seen from many people and Brett handled that."

Cozart was different from Rypien and the Broncos needed what his skills provided. Cozart could run and pass. He challenged Rypien's standing early last season when the Broncos stumbled to a 2-2 start.

"I definitely think it made me better just from the standpoint of I was competing literally every single day in practice and I really got to the point where I didn't know how many snaps I was gonna be able to take during the game," Rypien said. "And knowing that every single one of those matters, that kind of upped my practice habits I think a little bit. And made me focus that much more on every single rep, knowing every single rep I took had to be perfect."



AP Photo/Denis Poroy, File Boise State quarterback Brett Rypien (4) breaks away from San Diego State defenders.

Rams NFC West favorites

By JOSH DUBOW Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The Los Angeles Rams have gone from one of the NFL's biggest surprises to one of the top Super Bowl favorites in just one year.

The Rams didn't rest after an impressive turnaround campaign in coach Sean McVay's first season, bringing in an impressive offseason haul led by three former All-Pros on defense in defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh and cornerbacks Marcus Peters and Aqib Talib, along with big-play receiver Brandin Cooks.

It's perhaps the most talent added in one offseason since the San Francisco 49ers brought in Deion Sanders, Ken Norton Jr., Rickey Jackson and Richard Dent 24 years ago and ended up as Super Bowl champs.

The newcomers join a roster that features a promising young quarterback in Jared Goff, an elite running back in Todd Gurley, a stout offensive line led by left tackle Andrew Whitworth — and perhaps Defensive Player of the Year Aaron Donald, who held out for a second straight training camp but could be back for the start of the season.

The Rams figure to be challenged most in the NFC West by a rejuvenated San Francisco team that won the final five games last year after Jimmy Garoppolo took over as quarterback.

Seattle still has Russell Wilson but few other key pieces from the 2013 Super Bowl team, and Arizona has three of the division's top players in receiver Larry Fitzgerald, cornerback Patrick Peterson and running back David Johnson, who is coming back from a wrist injury.

Some things to know about the NFC West:

STABLE OFFENSE: For all the big changes on defense for the Rams, they predictably kept things very stable on offense after going from worst to first in the NFL in scoring in the initial year under McVay.

Los Angeles brings back 10 of 11 starters on offense, with the only change at



AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File

FILE - In this Sunday, Oct. 8, 2017, file photo, Los Angeles Rams quarterback Jared Goff (16) hands the ball to Todd Gurley (30) during an NFL football game against the Seattle Seahawks, in Los Angeles. The Rams have gone from one of the NFL's biggest surprises to one of the top Super Bowl favorites in just one year.

receiver where Cooks replaced Sammy Watkins. It's a far cry from last year when the Rams broke in two new offensive linemen and a new receiver around Goff, who was getting ready for his first full season as an NFL starter in a brand new offense.

This team clearly has big-play potential. Cooks is one of the league's best deep threats and Gurley led the NFL in yards from scrimmage (2,093) and TDs (19) last season, earning him the rare big-money contract as a running back.

JIMMY G: The 49ers fortunes changed almost immediately after acquiring Garoppolo at last year's trade deadline. A team that started 2017 with nine straight losses finished with five straight wins after Garoppolo took over as starter.

He completed 67.4 percent of his passes last season, averaging 8.8 yards per attempt with seven TDs, five interceptions and a 96.2 rating to improve to 7-0 in his career as a starter. His 308.4 yards passing per game in his five starts also would have led the league had he played a full season.

The Niners added Jerick McKinnon as a versatile running back but have

some questions on defense, where they are hoping Richard Sherman can get back to his pre-injury level as a shutdown cornerback, and someone can provide an outside pass rush to complement defensive tackle stud DeForest Buckner.

QB SHUFFLE: There have been big changes in Arizona with quarterback Carson Palmer retired and coach Bruce Arians moving from the sideline to the broadcast booth.

But the biggest deal for the Cardinals this year is the health of Johnson, the do-everything back whose 2017 season ended with an injury in the opener. Johnson is healthy again, and if he can get back to the form with which he ranked second in the NFL with 2,118 yards from scrimmage in 2016, that should take plenty of pressure off the quarterback.

Oft-injured Sam Bradford begins the year as starter, but he has only played 80 games in eight seasons. He has torn the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee twice, and another left knee injury wiped out nearly all of his 2017 season in Minnesota.

But Bradford is likely only a stopgap. The Cardinals traded up to take Josh Rosen 10th overall in hopes that he can be a franchise

quarterback for new coach Steve Wilks.

LAST HURRAH: The Seahawks have been one of the most consistent teams in the league under coach Pete Carroll the past few years. Seattle has posted six straight seasons of top two finishes in the division and winning records, missing the playoff only last year. But much of the core of the team that went to back-to-back Super Bowls in the 2013 and '14 seasons is gone.

Defensive end Michael Bennett was traded, cornerback Richard Sherman was cut and wound up with the archrival 49ers, tight end Jimmy Graham left as a free agent and defensive stars Cliff Avril and Kam Chancellor have had career-ending injuries. Even safety Earl Thomas' status is in doubt as he has held out all offseason in hopes of getting a new contract.

While star power remains led by Wilson, receiver Doug Baldwin and linebacker Bobby Wagner, the rest of the roster likely has too many holes for the Seahawks to be able to challenge the top teams in the NFC.

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH: Rams, 49ers, Cardinals, Seahawks.

LeBlanc's pitching sets tone in Mariners win over Athletics

By MICHAEL WAGAMAN Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Wade LeBlanc pitched seven scoreless innings, Mitch Haniger hit his 23rd home run and the Seattle Mariners jumped on the Oakland Athletics early and held on for a 7-1 victory on Thursday night.

Robinson Cano had two

hits and an RBI after being dropped down a spot in the batting order after second baseman Jean Segura was scratched. Dee Gordon and Ryon Healy added two hits apiece.

Seattle had lost three straight and five of seven before taking the opener of this four-game series. The Mariners pulled within 4 1/2 games of the A's for the second

AL wild card. Oakland remains 2 1/2 back of Houston for first place in the AL West.

Jed Lowrie had an RBI single for the A's.

LeBlanc (8-3) allowed three hits and three walks with four strikeouts. He retired 12 of his final 13 batters to win for the second time in his last seven starts.

Adam Warren and Nick

MLB logos for Mariners (7) and Athletics (1)

Haniger homered off Frankie Montas (5-4) with one out in the fourth. He also singled leading off the game, extending his season-high hitting streak to 11 games. Haniger went into the day leading the AL with 38 hits this month.

The Mariners scored five runs with two outs and took advantage of a throwing error by third baseman Matt

Chapman in the first inning.

Cano doubled and scored on Healy's single before Ben Gamel drew a bases-loaded walk to make it 2-0. Two more runs scored on Chapman's error. Gordon added an infield single to drive in Gamel.

After Denard Span tripped to open the second, Cano singled to push the lead to 6-0.

Local slate

Local slate table including Prep Football, Prep Volleyball, Prep Boys Soccer, Prep Girls Soccer, and Baseball.

National League table with columns for Team, W, L, Pct, GB.

American League table with columns for Team, W, L, Pct, GB.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard table with columns for Team, W, L, T, Pts, GF, GA.

Golf

Golf table including PGA TOUR and Cambia Portland Classic.

NCAA

NCAA table listing Top 25 Schedule for Thursday and Friday.