

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF SPORTS INFORMATION

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Tied with a blue ribbon, and with more than a few memorable highlights tucked away inside, the 1968-69 basketball season at BYU was wrapped up and packed away this week by the Cougars.

The season, which began last November, finally came to a close last Saturday night when the Cougars lost to New Mexico State in an NCAA playoff game on the Aggies' floor. A win would have taken the Cougars to Los Angeles for the Far West regionals.

As it was, BYU was forced to settle for a 17-12 season record and co-championship of the Western Athletic Conference. It was the third title that Coach Stan Watts and the Cougars have won or shared since the WAC was organized seven years ago.

Reflecting on the season, Coach Watts can find a lot of satisfaction in the fact that the Cougars performed well for a team that was picked as third or lower in the WAC pre-season polls.

The Cougar offense averaged 83.0 points per game, and shot well from the field. BYU hit 45% from the floor during the season and was on top in the average number of rebounds taken down against opponents.

Twice during the season the Cougars were forced into overtime competition, losing to Oregon in the second round of the Far West Classic and beating New Mexico by six in an overtime period at Albuquerque.

Looking ahead to next year, the Cougars will lose four seniors. But they will have back the number one and two scorers from this year, Doug Howard and Paul

Ruffner. The departing seniors are starting forwards Marty Lythgoe and Kari Liimo, guard Lynn Parsons, and reserve guard Jon Dresser.

In the statistical department, the most remarkable thing about the '69 season was the fact that a total of six players ended the year with scoring averages in double figures.

Doug Howard, junior guard from Salt Lake City, captured the scoring title for the team with a 15.4 average. Howard tallied a total of 430 points, just eight more than teammate Paul Ruffner.

The six who handled most of the Cougar scoring were Howard (15.4), Ruffner (15.1), Kari Liimo (15.0), Lynn Parsons (11.4), Marty Lythgoe (10.9), and Scott Warner (10.4). Three of the six will be returning next season.

Ruffner carried off rebounding honors, averaging nearly 10 rebounds per game. This is rather unusual, since he shared the duties at center with Scott Warner. Liimo was second in rebounding with nearly nine rebounds per game.

Best individual performance of the season, in terms of scoring and rebounding was turned in by Liimo against St. Francis (Pa.). Kari, who has been a regular since his first game as a sophomore, scored 34 points and accounted for 19 rebounds against the St Francis club. Both were season high for a BYU player.

Like most teams, the Cougars fared best on their home court in 1969. They held a 12-1 record at home and were 5-11 on the road.

Once again the Cougars drew well at the gate. In all, the team played before 231,035 fans, not including the countless thousands who watched them on television.

Kari Liimo scored enough points this season to become the third highest scorer (behind Joe Nelson and Dick Nemelka) in BYU history. His three-year total of 1,156 also produced the third best scoring average over a three-year span, 15.2. Only three other BYU players have had higher field goal percentages than Liimo for three seasons of play.