

THE COUGAR OUTLOOK — 1953-54

As every BYU basketball fan knows, the biggest problem facing Coach Stan Watts at the start of the season was one of replacement. Three of last year's key figures—forward Joe Richey, guard Harold Christensen, and center Boyd Jarman—were lost through graduation. Essentially this meant Watts was losing a high-scoring All-American, an incomparable floor captain, and a 6-5 pivot man who was ranked as one of the greatest court magicians seen in the Skyline cage circles.

To fill in for these losses, the Y. mentor will draw from his stable of capable reserves and sophomores to work with three of his returned regulars. And, of course, just how the Cougars fare this season will depend largely on how well the boys click in the vacancies.

It's quite obvious that Watts will be relying heavily on three veterans, in particular—Nick Mateljan (6-4 center), Tom Karren (6-2 forward), and Dean Larsen (6-1 forward). For the most part these three will shoulder the brunt of the Cougar attack.

Positionwise the Cougars, for the most part, appear strong. The forward line sports a balance of speed and drive with plenty of experience to draw from. Three promising centers will be backing Nick Mateljan (they average 6-5½ in this slot). But the guard line needs a bit more seasoning and punch, which may be forthcoming as the season progresses.

Team height will be better than last year's. No less than seven members of this year's team are 6-4 or better. Two of these players—Herschel "Bones" Pedersen and Dick Horsley—are 6-7 or better.

BYU's bench should be as strong or stronger than last year, if they can get a bit more experience under their belts by the start of the season. Twelve of the boys on the Watts' roster are sophomores, thus giving promise of things to come, if perhaps not this year, later.

Team speed and fast break looks sound, and should be able to hold against most Young opponents. There's plenty of scoring punch to be tapped on the starting five, not to mention good potential among the reserves.

If the astute Y. mentor can clip off the rough edges and put his usual sheen on this year's club, such as he has in past seasons, the Cats may well be a serious contender in this year's Skyline derby.

THE SKYLINE PICTURE

WYOMING—The obvious choice of all Skyline hoop critics to win the league basketball bunting for second straight year. A veteran crew back in uniform for Coach Ev Shelton. Strong defensively with plenty of scoring power and height.

UTAH STATE—Always a potential spoiler for Skyline powers, the Farmers and Coach Cec Baker are picked as this year's dark horse. Missing some key players from last year's Holiday Festival championship club, but sporting good balance.

COLORADO A & M—Rated as best A & M unit of last four years. One of the strongest benches in the league with six returning lettermen, some outstanding sophomores, and good stable of transfers. Fair height and team speed is excellent.

UTAH—Utes, under new coach Jack Gardner, were off to a slow start, but should score .500 in conference play. Redskins have no seniors, only three returning lettermen. It's Gardner's year to build with practically new team.

NEW MEXICO—Coach Woody Clements, '53's Skyline Coach of the Year, has nine lettermen back. Look for plenty of fast break. Biggest problem here is lack of overall height, but the Lobos appear well conditioned and gunning for nothing short of first division berth.

MONTANA — Although handicapped for size, the Grizzlies will have stronger bench than in recent years. Missing some of last year's scoring punch and defense through graduation, but should have good speed and another first division contender.

DENVER—Center appears to be key to success for Pioneers with several candidates battling for pivot spot. Starting five will average 6-3 or better, and plenty of scoring punch to be found in forwards Tom Rhone and Keith Patton.