

seasonoutlook

New Look: Same Winning Style

Seven incoming freshmen provide the biggest influx of new talent in the eight years Roger Reid has served as BYU's head coach.

For the second year in a row, the Cougars graduate two starters. And again, two key players opted for LDS

Church missions, as BYU lost seven lettermen from the 1995-96 squad.

Gone via graduation are starters Kenneth Roberts and Randy Reid. Roberts was a first-team All-Western Athletic Conference performer while Reid was named to the All-WAC Defensive Team. Departed for missions are freshman

guards Todd Christensen (Chile) and Nathan Cooper (Portugal).

"We had one of the better recruiting years we've had in many years and have gotten some national recognition for this group," says Reid. "We're going to be a very inexperienced team. With the losses we have, there might be a more veteran team in the mission field, but eventually all those players will be back.

"Every position is wide open. We have some freshmen who will push people who got playing time last year. We really don't know what to expect."

Justin Weidauer, a 6-7 junior, leads the five lettermen returning from last year's 15-13 squad which posted a 9-9 record for fifth place in the WAC, finished third in the NCAA free throws at 76.5 percent and missed qualifying for a post-season tournament for the first time since Reid took the helm.

The unexpected departure of senior Bryon Ruffner, 6-6, puts a damper on BYU's 1996-97 season.

Ruffner was named to the WAC All-Newcomer team in 1995-96 and led BYU in scoring for most of the season. He finished the year with an 18.8 scoring average, second best on the team, and 6.0 in rebounds.

With Ruffner's departure, Weidauer will be called on to score more than he had to last year.

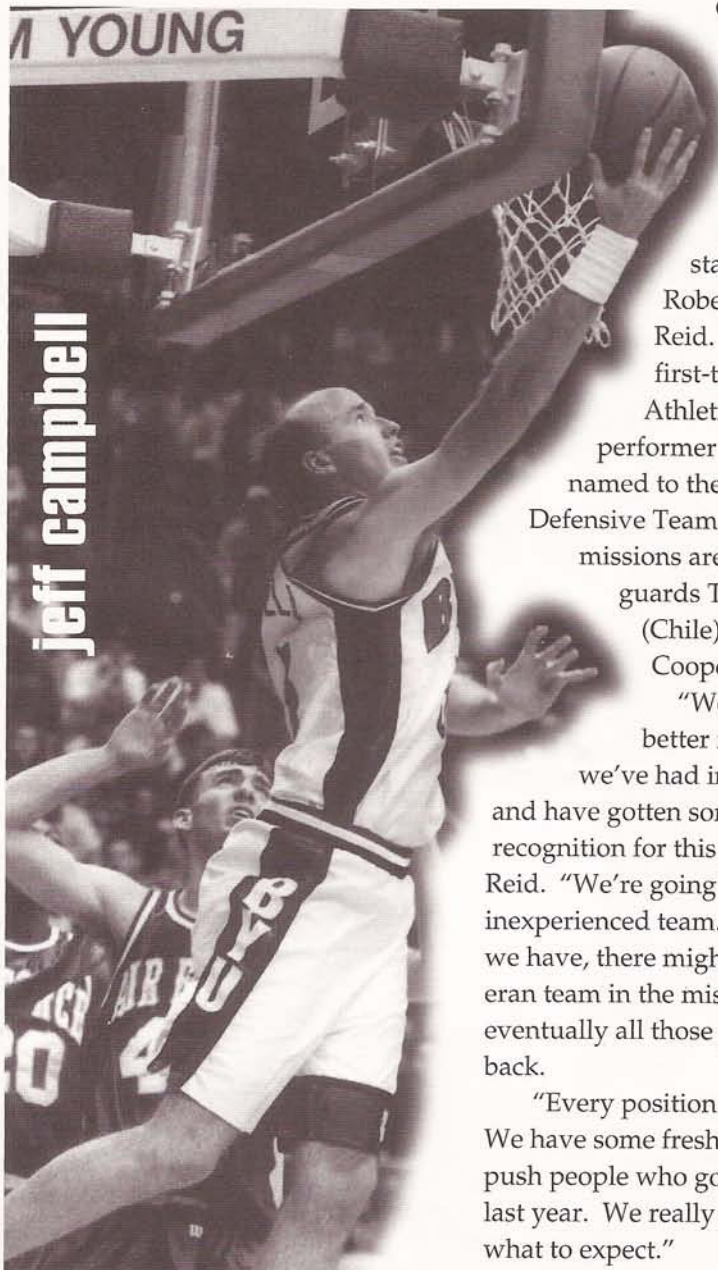
"Everyone's roles will change from last year," said Weidauer. "We will have quite a few freshman that will see some playing time."

"Weidauer is a tough player and had a very good year coming off a redshirt season," says Reid. "We expect a solid year from him."

One of the big question marks as the Cougars enter the season is 'who will assume the leadership position at the guard spot.

"With Randy leaving after four stalwart years, the inexperience at the guard position is very critical," says Reid. "It is not an easy chore to have freshmen come in and run the team, but with time we will be able to do a great job."

One of the forwards spots will be filled by Weidauer, who was the



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team's leading rebounder with a 7.3 average last season and was the fifth-leading scorer at 8.5 points. He pulled down 15 rebounds at eighth-ranked Mississippi State last season.

Senior Jeff Campbell, a 6-9 forward/center, is the other returning starter, averaging 9.4 points, the fourth best on the squad, and had 3.8 rebounds last season.

"Jeff has done a nice job the past few years and might see some time at the five position with the departure of Roberts," says Reid. "Center is an unknown for us and will be tough to fill. We will also look to Jarkko (Ahlbom) and David Anderson for help in this area."

Journeymen who could contribute are juniors Grant Berges, a 6-8 guard/forward who started the first two games last season, Jarkko Ahlbom, a 6-10 junior center from Finland and Lance Archibald a 6-3 sophomore from Potomac, Maryland.

The newcomers are freshmen David Anderson a 7-0, 245-pound, center from Lamar, Colo., Matt Montague a 6-1, 185-pound guard from Louisville, Ky., Eric Nielsen a 6-8, 205-pound forward from Fremont, Calif., Scott Sonnenberg a 5-11, 165-pound guard from Warrenville, Ill., Michael Tompson a 6-8, 215-pound forward from Nelson, New Zealand via Minn., Michael Vranes a 6-3, 168-pound guard from Taylorsville, Utah, Robbie Yates a 6-2, 170-pound guard from Salt Lake City, Utah and Nick Taggart a 6-8 Freshman from Raleigh, N.C. Also signed was David Nielsen a 6-4, 200-pound guard from Salt Lake City, Utah who is going on a mission out of high school.

Yates is just returning from serv-

ing a mission to Mexico.

"We consider this season as phase two of our rebuilding," says Reid. "We started it last year, yet we had two key people with a lot of playing time leave on missions — that was part of our rebuilding.

The Cougars are competing in the Mountain Division of the newly-expanded 16-team WAC with newcomers TCU, SMU, Rice, Tulsa (San Jose State and UNLV are members of the Pacific Division) and quad members Utah, UTEP, New Mexico. BYU's cross-over opponent is Wyoming. Five teams on the Cougar schedule played in the NCAA post-season tournament last season: Georgia, Penn State, Utah, Tulsa and New Mexico, while Washington was in the NIT field.

"We are always excited about a new season," says Reid. "We are looking forward to the new WAC alignment."

Reid has logged a 151-71 (.680) record with six 20-win seasons in his seven years at the helm. He has a 83-37 WAC record, which is the best in league history at .692, five NCAA berths, an NIT berth, three WAC regular-season titles and two league post-season crowns.

