

## 1949-50 SEASON SUMMARY

Brigham Young University's Cougars started the season off with a bang, winning two straight from Idaho State before entraining for Denver, Colorado, and the Skyline Six pre-season tournament. Consecutive wins over Regis College, Wyoming University and Denver University gave the Cougars the pre-season trophy and tabbed them as the team to beat for the conference title.

The Denver tourney ended late Saturday night and the Cougars were due in Los Angeles, some 1500 miles away, on the following Tuesday to open the annual Los Angeles Invitational tournament against Culver-Stockton. They advanced to the semi-final round before bowing to Pepperdine and Gonzaga during the two final days of the tournament, and ended the tournament in fourth place. Coach Watts explained his team's poor showing in the L.A. tourney as too many games in too short a time—8 games in fifteen days.

### Big Three Win Honors

During the two tournaments Brigham Young University placed three men on each all-tournament selection. Joe Nelson and Mel Hutchins were each given honors in two tourneys, with Roland Minson being chosen as the outstanding player in the Denver pairings, besides being given the sportsmanship trophy in the Los Angeles Invitational.

The team returned from the coast for Christmas, then left by train for the East. They dropped their first game against Beloit by two points, fought Toledo on an even basis for most of the game before wilting in the final minutes, were swamped by a hot Bowling Green team, and then finally broke into the winning column again with a convincing win over Loyola of Chicago. Joe Nelson, top scorer for the season, missed the last three games of the eastern trip after being called home because of the death of his mother.

### Finally Hit Their Stride

The Utahns returned home, or rather to the conference, to tackle the Wyoming Cowboys in a two-night stand at Laramie. Two disastrous losses to the 'Pokes' sent the Cougars reeling to Denver before they found their needed spark and won the next eight straight games over Denver (twice), Utah (twice), Utah State (twice), and Colorado A & M (twice). Then came the much-talked-of mid-season slump and the Provo team dropped consecutive games to Denver, Colorado A&M (twice), and the University of Utah to drop all the way from first place in the conference standing to a poor fourth.

Wyoming and Denver battled down to the wire for the title, but the Cowboys had to meet the Cougars in two games and the Pioneers

were due for a single game against BYU. The Cougars warmed up to these games with resounding victories over Utah University and two with Utah State, then prepared to play two games with Wyoming and one with Denver in four nights. After beating Wyoming the first night, the conference race was deadlocked in a three-way tie between Wyoming, Denver, and Brigham Young University. The stage was set for one of the greatest conference finishes of all times.

### **Win Crown in Story-book Fashion**

Brigham Young blasted Wyoming out of the title picture with a convincing 70-52 victory on Saturday night, March 4, then turned their attention to the invading Pioneers on Monday. When the final gun sounded Brigham Young University had won its second conference title in three years by defeating the Denverites 75-50.

Brigham Young's "Terrible Trio" had done it again. Joe Nelson scored 59 points in the final crucial three-game series, Roland Minson came through with 38 points and Mel Hutchins scored 11 points each night for a total of thirty-three. The starting five was rounded out by Jack Whipple with 18 and Dick Jones with 25, both from the guard line. BYU scored an even 200 points in three games to win undisputed possession of the title.

### **Heartbreak at the NCAA Meet**

The Cougars were then chosen to represent the area at the Western Division NCAA playoffs at Kansas City. The first evening they drew Baylor and ran into the toughest game of their season. Baylor wasn't particularly difficult but the Cats were so keyed up that they couldn't get going all night.

Said the experts: "Brigham Young picked Kansas City to play their worst basketball of the season. At home they could beat Baylor and day in the week."

Here's what happened: Within sixty seconds they were jerked to bitter defeat from the threshold of victory and a trip to Madison Square Garden. BYU was ahead 54-50 in the last minute. Baylor sank a quickie and a foul taking a 55-54 lead. Then Joe Nelson was fouled and made the free throw for a 55-all tie. With seven seconds to play Jack Whipple crashed into Heathering. And, you guessed it, he sank the toss as the buzzer sounded.

The next night BYU got hot, but it was too late. They smacked down UCLA in an 83-62 romp and returned home confident they could have taken the championship but lost the chance. Nelson was elected to the all-NCAA team, and Hutchins and Minson made the second team.