

'76 Review

Series of Close Ones



Frank Arnold's first year at the helm certainly lacked nothing in the way of effort, even though the Cougars fell short of expectations in the way of a winning season. But they did prove one thing—they were able to make up in excitement and thrills what they may have lacked in wins and losses.

The Cougars' overall record will go into the books as 12-14, an identical mark as the 1975 finish. BYU tied with Colorado State for fifth place in the final WAC standings.

However, four of the Cougars' league losses came by a combined margin of only five points. And in another couple of games BYU had a comfortable lead in the late stages of the game before victory dissolved into defeat. Had those four close ones been reversed, the Cougars would have had a 10-4 league record.

There was also some consolation in the fact BYU played two of its best games against WAC champion Arizona. In the league opener in Tucson the Cougars led most of the way before the Wildcats put in the winning point, 79-78, with 17-seconds remaining. BYU's desperation shot at the buzzer didn't drop. The second meeting between the two teams ended in a 79-75 decision for BYU.

The Cougars also kept the pot boiling with two games against second-place Texas-El Paso, losing two one-point games to the Miners.

"Overall, I think we were able to accomplish some significant things last year," said Arnold "I'm satisfied we were able to establish a good foundation to build on in the future, and felt we were a much better team the longer we were able to work together."

Arnold felt, too, that the Cougars let several

close ones slip away. But he didn't mention that injuries and illness may have altered the outcome. Knee problems slowed Terry Gugat before he left the squad, and Veryl Law, starting guard on last year's team, missed a half dozen games because of illness. Veryl scored only 14 points in the final 12 games of the season.

Another regular, Mark Handy, suffered a detached retina midway through the WAC season, and was out for the balance of the season. Handy had averaged 13.2 points and 8.8 rebounds per game before he was sidelined.

Individually, the Cougar standout was all-conference star Jay Cheesman, the 6-9 junior who finished the season as the team's leading scorer (441) and rebounder (223). Cheesman, who played in all but the Niagara game, averaged 17.6 points and 8.9 rebounds per game. He also had the best free throw shooting percentage on the team, .752.

Cheesman, who was high point player in 15 games for the Cougars, now has 979 points and 487 rebounds in three years with the varsity. With one season remaining, he seems destined to find a place in the Cougar record books for future seasons.

Transfer Verne Thompson, who was nothing short of spectacular in the late stages of the campaign, finished the season with a 14.5 scoring average and 7.0 rebounding average. In the last six games of the

season Thompson averaged an even 20.0 points per game.

The five top scorers on this year's team—Cheesman, Thompson, Handy, and the Law brothers, Veryl and Vance—are returning this year.

As a team, the Cougars out-shot their opponents from the field, out-rebounded them and out-scored them overall. The Mountain Cats shot .467 from the field, shaded opponents 4.5 rebounds per game, and had a slight one-point edge in offense over defense.

BYU's best shooting effort came in the second meeting with rival Utah. The Cougars shot a hot .625 from the field that night in Salt Lake City.

Twice during the season the Cougars hit 94% from the free throw line, and their biggest margin of victory came against Pacific. In the second of a two-game series with the Tigers, BYU romped to a 27-point win over Pacific.

In tournament action the young Cougars were defeated by St. Johns in the finals of the Cougar Classic at the Marriott Center. However, they traveled east during the holidays to capture the Old Dominion tournament championship at Norfolk, Va.

There was another positive note, one that Arnold really appreciated. During the 1976 season the Cougars drew 168,136 fans to 12 home games in Provo; that's an average of 14,061 per game, an increase of 1,615 per game over last year.

1975-76 Statistics

Date	BYU	Opponent	OPP	Site	High Point	High Rebounder	Game Att.
Dec. 4	66	Pacific	71	Stockton	Jones—16	Cheesman—10	2,500
Dec. 6	89	Pacific	62	Stockton	Cheesman—26	Thompson-Handy—10	2,600
Dec. 12	84	Long Beach	76	Provo	Cheesman-Ver Law—17	Thompson—10	12,241
Dec. 13	65	St. Johns	78	Provo	Thompson—18	Cheesman—9	14,509
Dec. 17	76	Utah State	87	Logan	Handy—16	Cheesman—9	8,569
Dec. 19	85	Nevada-Reno	76	Provo	Cheesman—19	Handy—7	8,869
Dec. 20	89	Weber State	80	Provo	Handy—29	Handy—15	10,983
Dec. 22	79	New Mexico St.	90	Las Cruces	Cheesman—25	Cheesman—14	4,528
Dec. 29	91	Texas	86	Norfolk	Cheesman—26	Thompson-Handy—13	5,119
Dec. 30	80	Old Dominion	77	Norfolk	Cheesman—20	Cheesman-Handy—10	6,237
Jan. 2	60	Niagara	75	Niagara	Thompson—17	Jones—11	3,800
Jan. 10	73	Utah State	75	Provo	Cheesman—22	Cheesman—15	19,175
Jan. 16	78	Arizona	79	Tucson	Cheesman—24	Cheesman—10	12,152
Jan. 17	68	Arizona St.	83	Tempe	Cheesman—17	Cheesman—8	4,800
Jan. 24	74	Utah	76	Provo	Thompson—18	Thompson-Handy—8	15,673
Jan. 30	81	New Mexico	67	Provo	Cheesman—18	Cheesman—11	14,388
Jan. 31	56	Texas-El Paso	57	Provo	Thomp-Hand-Craig—13	Handy—7	14,292
Feb. 6	94	Wyoming	80	Laramie	Cheesman—22	Cheesman—10	3,364
Feb. 7	84	Colorado State	93	Ft. Collins	Cheesman—20	Handy—11	4,852
Feb. 13	93	Arizona St.	89	Provo	Cheesman—33	Cheesman—17	14,152
Feb. 14	79	Arizona	74	Provo	Thompson—27	Thompson—11	15,365
Feb. 21	84	Utah	83	Salt Lake	Thompson—24	Cheesman—12	14,622
Feb. 26	50	Texas-El Paso	51	El Paso	Chees-Thomp-Law—10	Cheesman—8	4,450
Feb. 28	74	New Mexico	79	Albuquerque	Thompson—25	Thompson—11	14,036
Mar. 5	81	Colorado State	85	Provo	Thompson—21	Cheesman—11	15,261
Mar. 6	82	Wyoming	60	Provo	Cheesman—22	Cheesman—14	13,228

Western Athletic Conference Finish: 6-8 (tie for fifth)

Overall Record: 12-14

Home Record: 7-5

Road Record: 5-9

Attendance:

Overall: 259,765
Home: 168,136

Home Average: 14,016
Overall Average: 9,991