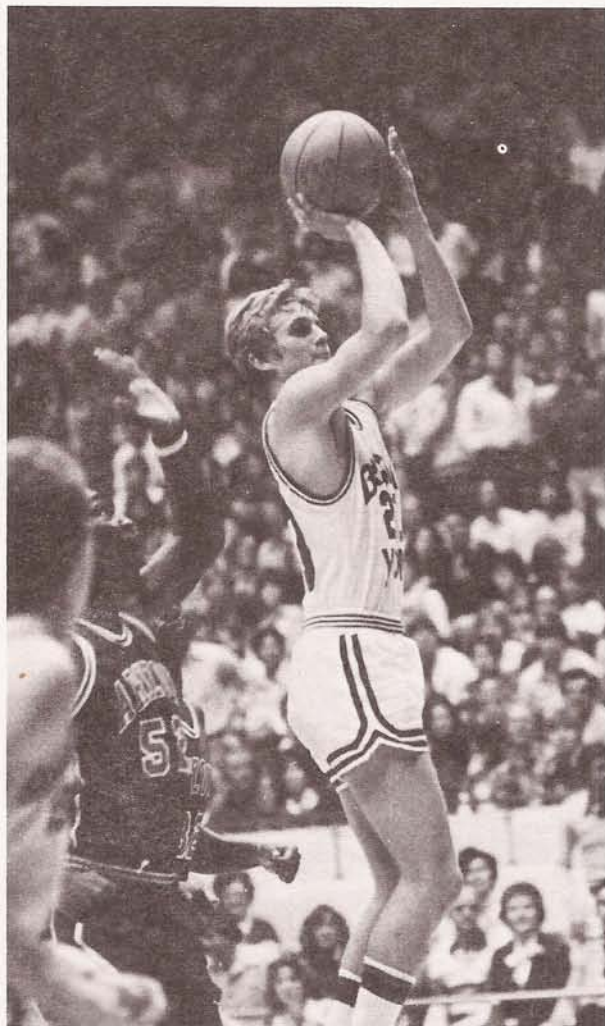


# '78 Basketball Season Summary

Almost from start to finish, the 1978 basketball season at Brigham Young University was a package of surprises—some of them bad, but most of them good.

The unexpected came in the form of injuries and illness that hampered the Cougars from game to game. However, the most pleasant surprise was BYU's tie for fourth place in the Western Athletic Conference race, after being picked for seventh by the media in a pre-season poll.



Because of their youth, the Kindercoogs did not figure to be much of a threat in the WAC chase. But they managed to come up with a 6-8 league mark that tied them with Arizona State and Arizona in the final standings.

Playing a total of 30 games, which was more than any BYU team had tackled in the last 25 years, the Cougars finished with an overall 12-18 record. It was the fourth consecutive season that BYU has completed the year with 12 victories.

While the Cougar schedule was one of the heaviest in recent years, it was also one of the toughest. Eight of the teams BYU played during the 1977-78

season moved into post-season tournaments (UCLA, Cal-Fullerton, Utah State, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Weber State, New Mexico and Utah). At least three other tournament participants, perhaps more, are on BYU's 1978-79 schedule: Texas, Rhode Island and St. Johns.

Despite their losses, five of which came by a margin of two or less points, the Cougars produced a most exciting season.

A general upsurge in interest was best reflected in the Marriott Center attendance figures. Overall, the Cougars drew more than 48,000 over the season total of the previous season. In 1977-78 the total home attendance was 223,216.

Last year the Cougars' average attendance was 14,632, while figures for the 1978 home games soared to 17,171 per game. The increase of 2,539 per game will put BYU among the national leaders again.

On the night of Feb. 25, fans flocked to the Marriott Center in record numbers for the New Mexico game in Provo. According to the official count, a record 22,998 fans witnessed the encounter, 11 more than the previous record set at the Utah game five years before.

Improvement was also noted in the scoring department. In 1978 the Cougars increased their scoring average more than five points per game (80.0 to 74.6). Field goal shooting hiked two percentage points, but rebounding fell off by a little more than two rebounds per game.

There was also evidence of more balanced scoring. Four players on the 1978 team had scoring averages in double figures, where there were only three the previous season. Team wise, the Cougars climbed back into the 80's in scoring for the first time since 1972.

And, not since the days of Kresimir Cosic (1973) has a BYU player had a higher scoring average than Danny Ainge. In his first season with the Cougars, the freshman from Eugene, Ore., became the highest scorer (single season) in the school's history. Ainge scored 632 points, an average of 21.1 per game.

Previous high in that department was 619, a total credited to Roland Minson, BYU All-American of 1951. Danny's scoring average (21.1 points per game) places him among the top five in the BYU record books.

Ainge also picked up a host of other honors in his first year with the Cougars. He was voted to the all-tournament team of the Rainbow Classic in Hawaii, and was also named player of the week by *Sports Illustrated*. Danny finished the season as the team's leading scorer, and also led the squad in assists and steals.

Sophomore center Alan Taylor led the Cougars in rebounding (246 for the year) and had the best field goal percentage of any of the regulars (57%). Taylor was also credited with 28 blocked shots.

As for the 1979 season, the Cougars will lose only two seniors, neither of whom were regulars. All members of the Cougar starting five will be returning.