

1980 Basketball Summary

Beginning with the 89-81 upset of the Russians back in November through the 114-81 win over San Diego State in the final game of the regular season, it was a campaign of huge proportions for the Cougars. In fact, no basketball team in the history of the school has finished a schedule with a higher percentage of wins: (.857).

In 29 starts---not including the Russians---the BYU club came out on top in 24 games. In eight of those games the margin of victory was two or less points, but the Cougars squeezed through wins in seven of the eight close ones. Even more surprisingly, the Mountain Cats successfully defended the Western Athletic Conference championship won in 1979, and they turned the trick by winning all seven WAC games on the road, a first for a WAC team.

But there were some nights when Coach Frank Arnold must have wondered about his club. There was the season opener in Provo against Illinois when the Cougars, who had been ranked as high as fifth by one sports maga-

zine, dropped a humbling 86-76 decision to the Big Ten team before a house full of disappointed fans in the Marriott Center.

However, the Cougars righted themselves quickly and rattled off a string of six straight wins. Defeat number two came in a two-pointer on the road against Long Beach State. A few doubts surfaced again at the Far West Classic when Oregon State pounced on BYU, 86-71, in the biggest loss of the season. Thereafter, however, the Cougars lost only one remaining game, a 56-53 decision to Wyoming in a slowdown game employed by the Cowboys. BYU won 12 straight after that, and in five of those wins the Cougs rolled up more than 100 points.

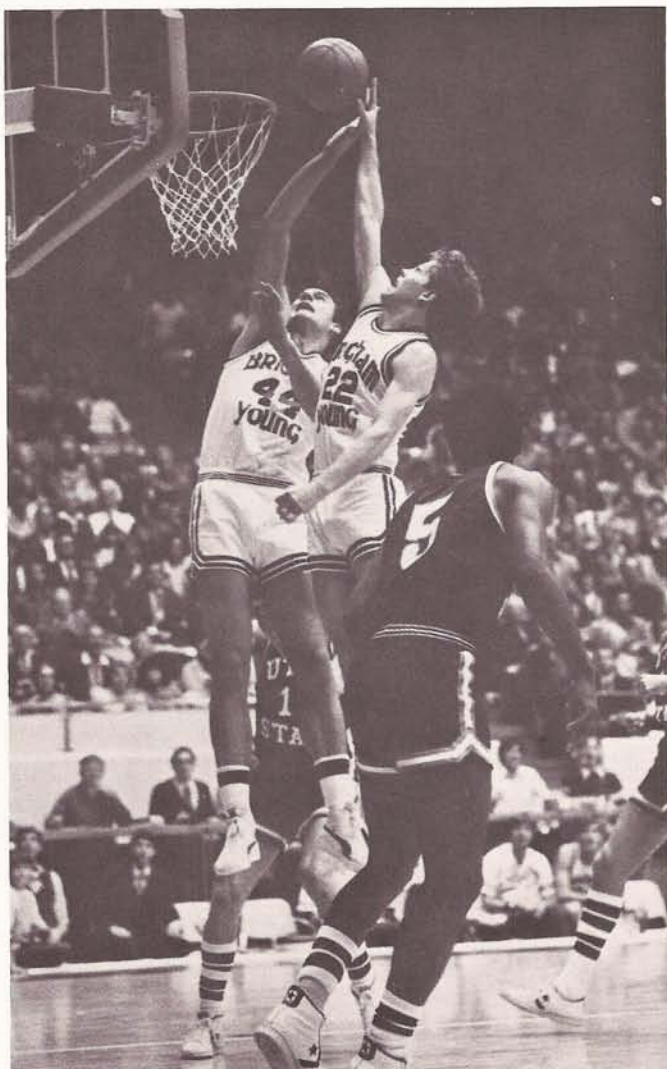
You don't have to buy a scouting report to learn the reasons for the Cougars' success. All of the starters from last year's 20-8 team returned last fall, and again they demonstrated good team balance (four starters in double figures) and good support on the bench. Indeed, the club's experience may have been a big factor in winning this year's close ones.

Individually, opponents can't overlook the performance---and the steadying influence---of All-American Danny Ainge. Ainge, who has already set two school records (632 points in a season, plus most points in a career), was picked all-WAC for the third year in a row. Danny topped the team in scoring, assists and steals.

Center Alan Taylor, one of only two seniors on the team, set a Marriott Center record in the season finale with 23 rebounds. Taylor, too, was named all-WAC first-team, and his work kept several wins alive. Senior guard Scott Runia, along with sophomore forwards Devin Durrant and Fred Roberts, completed the first five. And it should be mentioned that in junior guard Steve Craig the Cougars may have had the best "sixth man" in this part of the country.

Statistically, the Cougars had an impressive edge over opponents in all categories---field goal shooting, rebounding, points, etc.

It's been several years since the Cougars sported a stronger entry for a post-season tournament, but the season ended with a 66-71 loss to Clemson in the NCAA playoffs at Ogden.



WAC Final Standings - 1980

Team	W	L	PCT	Overall		
				W	L	PCT
Brigham Young	13	1	.929	24	5	.827
Texas-El Paso	10	4	.714	19	7	.731
Utah	10	4	.714	13	15*	.464
Wyoming	8	6	.571	18	10	.642
Colorado State	5	9	.357	10	17	.370
Hawaii	4	10	.286	13	14	.482
San Diego State	3	11	.214	6	21	.222
New Mexico	3	11	.214	6	22	.214

*Includes losses by forfeit (5)