

1981-82 Basketball Season Roundup

Pushed by the play of a talented front court, the 1981-82 BYU basketball team achieved a 17-13 record. They did not win a fourth consecutive NCAA play-off berth, but finished the season convincingly enough to earn an invitation to play in the NIT.

Paced by center Greg Kite and forwards Fred Roberts and Steve Trumbo, the Cougars averaged 37.3 rebounds per game while holding opponents to 29.3. That difference of eight per game was fourth best in the nation last year.

The frontline first asserted themselves against 7-4 Ralph Sampson and the Virginia Cavaliers in the Hall of Fame Tip-off Classic (first NCAA game of the season). Playing on national television, BYU won the rebound battle 35-32 and almost won the war. The Cougars chipped their way back from a 38-26 halftime deficit, catching the Cavs, then nudging ahead on a three-point play by Gary Furniss with 46 seconds left. Virginia went on to win, but Sampson was limited to 14 points and 7 rebounds.

The Virginia loss was one of nine games played by BYU which were decided by three points or less. The snakebit Cougars lost seven of those games, four on last-second shots. Had BYU gone 5-4 in those close contests they would have claimed a fourth consecutive 20-game winning season.

The Cougars' biggest achievement of the year may have come when they joined the "We-beat-UCLA-at-the-Pavilion" Club with a 79-75 victory at Westwood. It was only the Bruins' 14th loss at Pauley Pavilion in 256 games. The Cougars also became one of the limited number of teams to have defeated the Bruins in back-to-back encounters. In the 1982 NCAA play-offs Danny Ainge and BYU handed the Bruins their worst defeat in 17 years, 78-55.

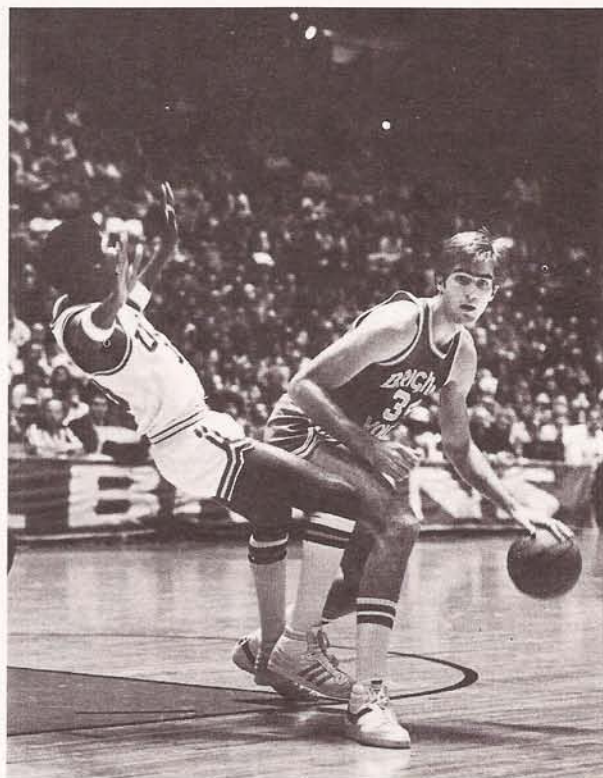
Other BYU achievements included winning their own Cougar Classic for the fourth consecutive time and tying for top honors in competition with the other schools in Utah.

Idaho State fell to the Cougars in the first game of the Classic, giving BYU its 100th victory in the Marriott Center. Western Carolina brought a 5-0 record into the championship game, only to be pushed to its first loss, 86-63.

BYU compiled a 3-3 record against the three teams which finished ahead of them in the WAC. The Cougars lost both games to nationally-ranked conference champion Wyoming. In the Provo encounter the Cougars dropped one of their "last-second" games, bowing 27-25 to the Cowboys on a tip-in at the buzzer.

BYU was the only team in the conference to sweep both games from conference co-runner-up Texas-El Paso. The Cougars split with the other conference runner-up, San Diego State, turning in perhaps their most impressive game in the win, a 106-66 decision paced by Scott Sinek's career-high 25 points.

Sinek's effort was timely for the Cougars, who had experimented with three different backcourt combinations during the season. The San Diego win was sandwiched between wins against Hawaii and UTEP, and undoubtedly aided the Cougars in securing the NIT bid.



Fred Roberts, last year's leading scorer

Besides finding a backcourt combination, other personnel problems included playing the Colorado State game (the Cougars' first WAC loss) without Steve Trumbo, due to a question of academic eligibility.

Injuries to Sinek and Craig Christensen compounded the backcourt difficulties. And a third guard, Mike Maxwell, was not at full strength after coming off a major knee operation.

Seniors Trumbo and Roberts were the team leaders. Trumbo finished 12th in the nation in rebounding with an 11.5 average. He had the fourth best rebounding season ever by a Cougar, and closed his career fourth on the rebounding list. He took down 17 or more rebounds in six games while at BYU, a feat only Kresimir Cosic bettered.

Roberts finished as the second leading scorer in school history, behind Danny Ainge. He shot a career average 55 percent from the field, the second best Cougar mark ever. His career rebound total was also third on the all-time charts at BYU. Roberts also finished high in the school books in points per game, most field goal attempts, most field goals made, number of free throws, and number of free throws made.

Trumbo and Roberts were unanimous selections to the first team All-WAC squad and Roberts made the Basketball Writers' District Seven team. During the four seasons they played for BYU, the Cougars won more games (86 of 119) and had the best winning percentage (.723) of any four-year span in the school's history.