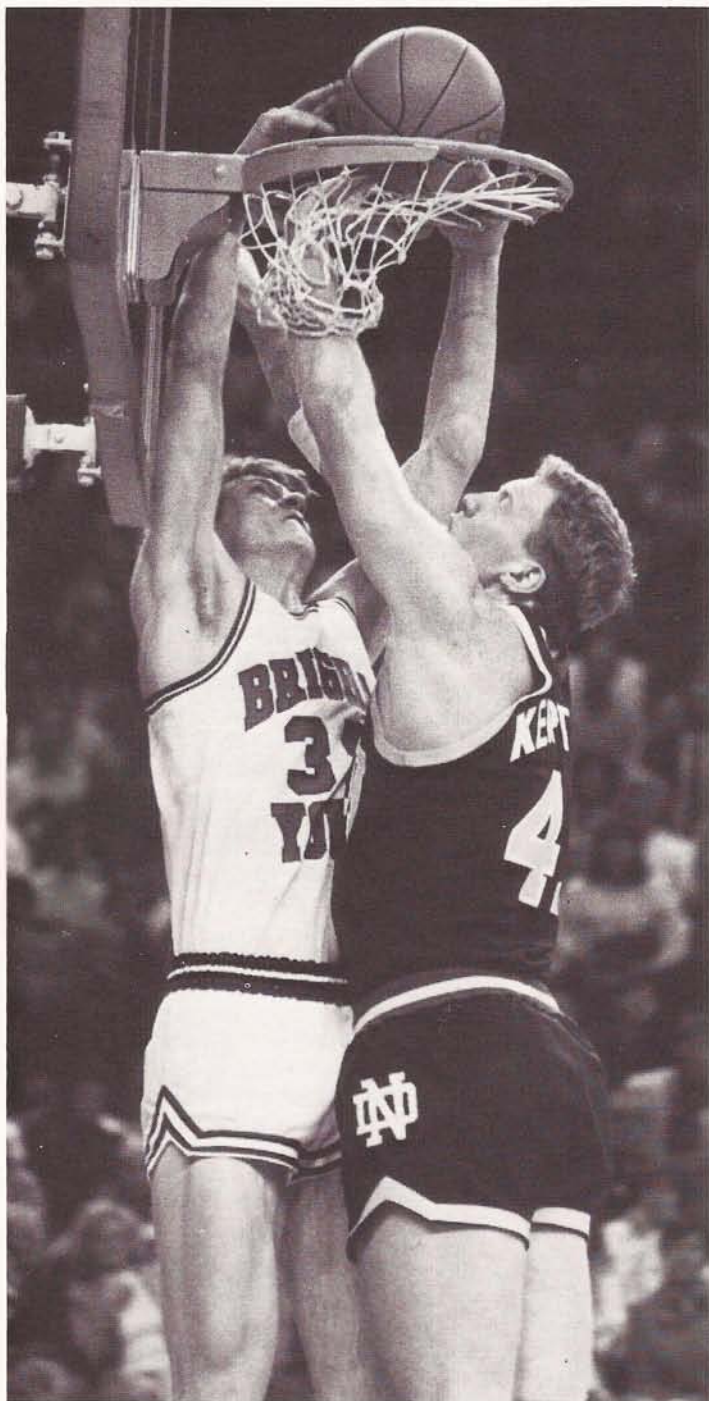


1985-86 Season Summary



One of last year's highlights was an 80-76 overtime victory over Notre Dame. Tom Gneiting had 18 points and 14 rebounds in that game.

Anyone who enjoys rollercoaster rides would have loved the 1985-86 BYU basketball season. The Cougars experienced the gamut of emotions last year, ranging from the high of winning 12 straight games and reaching the quarterfinals of the National Invitational Tournament to the low of losing seven of their first nine games and coming within one game of winning the Western Athletic Conference championship.

Projected to finish sixth in the WAC before the season began, BYU did nothing to disprove the prognosticators early in the year. The Cougars started the season slowly, losing

three games before finally defeating Fordham in the Cactus Classic in Tempe. In the next four games, BYU managed only one more win.

However, an 88-86 overtime win against Weber State seemed to put a spark into the Cougars, and they began to play with renewed enthusiasm as conference play began.

BYU's first conference games were on the road against WAC favorites UTEP and New Mexico. The Cougars took UTEP to overtime, only to lose 69-64. Against New Mexico, BYU again came close but lost 60-57. That was the last defeat the Cougars would experience in nearly seven weeks.

Led by center Tom Gneiting, forward Jeff Chatman and guard Bob Capener, the Cougars reeled off 12 straight victories. Eleven of those were conference wins. The other was an 80-76 overtime upset victory over nationally ranked Notre Dame.

By the middle of February, the Cougars sat atop the Western Athletic Conference heap, having beaten every team in the conference except Wyoming, a team they had to play twice in the last two weeks of the season. Had the Cougars split with Wyoming, they would have been assured at least a share of the regular-season WAC title.

The Cowboys, however, smelled a conference title of their own and defeated BYU 66-56 in Laramie and 65-62 in Provo. Also, BYU lost to Utah near the end of the season to finish fourth in the conference, one game behind WAC tri-champs UTEP, Wyoming and Utah.

With the WAC post-season tournament, BYU still had one last chance to reach the NCAA tournament. But New Mexico upended the Cougars, 79-68, in Laramie to stifle any further hopes of the Cougars going to the NCAA party.

New life was breathed into the Cougars, however, when BYU received an invitation to play in the post-season NIT. Southern Methodist visited the Marriott Center in the first round and lost 67-63 to the Cougars. In the second round, BYU played a powerful Cal-Irvine team and again came out ahead, 93-80.

The quarterfinal matchup featured BYU against Ohio State. The game was played in Columbus, and BYU dropped its last game of the season, 79-68.

Overall, there were many standout performers for BYU. Chatman was named to the first team All-District 7 squad and to the All-WAC second team after averaging 17.5 points and 5.2 rebounds per game. He also was the Cougars' best field goal percentage shooter with a .545 average.

Capener, a true big guard, switched to point guard and averaged 14.9 points per game, mainly on long-range jump shots. He, too, was a second team All-WAC selection and twice was named WAC player-of-the-week.

One of the key performers in the Cougar attack was Gneiting. The 6-10 center started the season slowly and was benched after a couple of games. Midway through the season, however, he replaced an ailing Alan Pollard and began to tear up the opposition. He pulled down double-figure rebounds in six straight games when the Cougars started their win streak. As Gneiting went, so went the Cougars.

Even Coach Ladell Andersen was in on the awards at the end of the season, being named District 7 coach-of-the-year for his part in turning the Cougars around and producing an 18-14 season, despite predictions that BYU's record would be much worse.