

Review of Last Season

From the tipoff of the first game (Oklahoma in the NIT) to the final buzzer of an NCAA playoff game (New Orleans), the 1987 season was packed with more than its usual share of drama. Playing a challenging schedule (which included Notre Dame, Iowa, Pittsburg and Michigan State), the Cougars finished the year with a 21-11 record, a success by nearly any measure.

A second-place-or-worse pick by the WAC media and coaches before the season got underway, the Cougars finished a strong second behind WAC champion UTEP. Moreover, the WAC tournament was won by Wyoming, a team the Cougars beat twice during the regular season. Five of the WAC teams, including BYU, went into post-season tournament play (BYU, UTEP and Wyoming to the NCAA, Utah and New Mexico to the NIT).

In terms of games won, the Cougars' 1987 season was the best record since 1981. But the season was streaky. Six of the Cougar losses were of the back-to-back variety, while the wins came in the form of an eight-game stretch and a pair of four-game streaks. The Mountain Cats proved to be a good road team, posting an 11-7 record away from home.

As for the tournament play, BYU was involved in what might be broadly defined as five tournaments: the Coca-Cola NIT, their own Cougar Classic, the Cable Car Classic, the WAC tournament and the NCAA Mideastern tournament at Birmingham. Overall, the Cats were 4-4 in tournament play, and were champions of the Cable Car.

Although they did not range as far from home as usual, the Cougars did play in Norman (Oklahoma), South Bend (Notre Dame), Iowa City (Iowa), Santa Clara (California), Birmingham (Alabama) and all the usual WAC stopovers. In all, BYU played before 445,856 fans, not to mention some large national and regional television audiences. In the Marriott Center on campus they drew a shade under 19,000 fans per game, about a 12% increase over the previous season. The largest home crowd of the year was 22,676 fans for the second go-round with rival Utah.

A study of the combined statistics for the 32 games reveals the Cougars had a statistical edge over opponents in nearly every category: field goal percentage, free throw shooting, rebounding, assists, blocked shots and steals. In fact, only five other BYU teams have had a better field goal percentage for the season, and only two other former teams have had better free throw shooting (.746 completion) for a season.

Individually, the first player to be mentioned is **Michael Smith**, the 6-9½ sophomore forward, who made the Cougars get up and go on offense. The California sophomore finished the year with 643 points, enough to vault him into fourth place among those players with the "most points scored in one season." Only **Devin Durrant** (1983-84) and **Danny Ainge** (1981) have scored more points in a season.

Smith led the team in scoring (20.1), rebounding (8.5), free throw shooting (90%) and three-point shooting (49%). Other leaders were **Tom Gneiting** in field goal shooting (62%), **Brian Taylor** in assists (118), **Jeff Chatman** in blocked shots (40) and **Bob Capener** in steals (32).

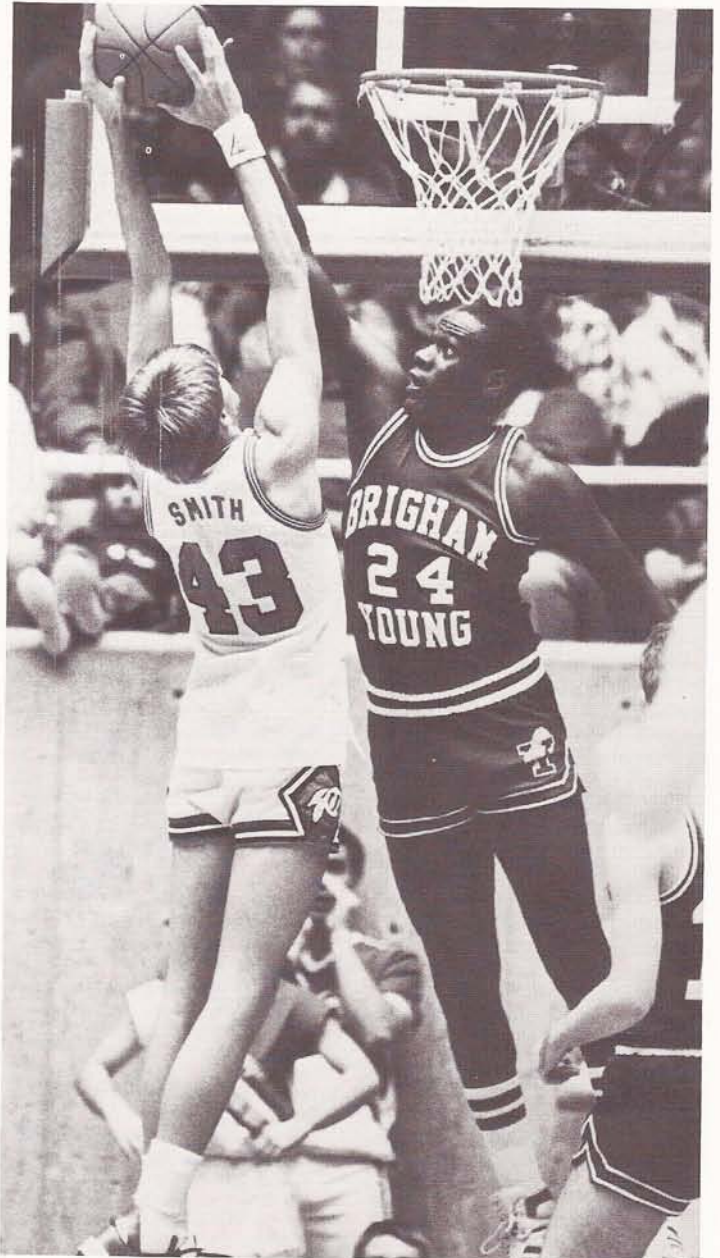
As a team, the Cougars led the WAC in scoring offense (81.6 points per game), rebound margin (4.2), free throw

shooting (.749) and were runners-up in turnover margin and defense against the three-point play.

While **Smith** had a tremendous sophomore season on the court, he also graded high in the classroom. In addition to his first-team all-conference honors, Michael was first-team Academic All-American with a 3.5 GPA in pre-medicine. Team-mate **Jeff Chatman** was named second-team in the nine-school conference selections.

The 1986-87 season was Coach **Ladell Andersen's** fourth as head coach of the Cougars, and he improved his record at BYU to 74-50 (.597).

All in all, '87 was one of the better seasons the Cougars have had in recent years.



Three-year starter Jeff Chatman