

# 1998-99

# IN REVIEW

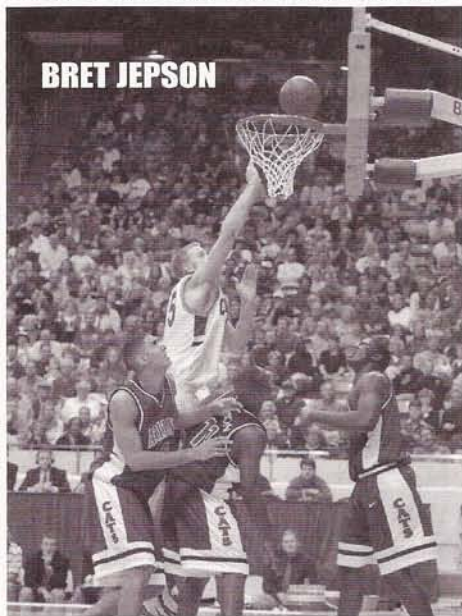
## BYU CONTINUES TO IMPROVE DURING SECOND YEAR OF THE CLEVELAND ERA

Highlighted by a 90-74 WAC Tournament upset over heavily favored TCU, BYU's men's basketball team continued its steady improvement under second-year coach Steve Cleveland in 1998-99.

Cleveland's Cougars improved to 12-16 and became the first BYU squad to win a WAC Tournament contest since 1994 despite playing a schedule – the toughest in the conference – that featured four Pac-10 teams and 13 games against schools that earned post-season tournament berths. The Cougars non-conference opponents included NCAA No. 1 seed Auburn, No. 10-ranked Arizona, NIT champion California, and NIT semifinalist Oregon.

For the second time in as many years, Cleveland began the season without a core group of returning players on which to build. New recruits Mark Bigelow, a 6-foot-6 freshman guard from Olympia, Wash., and Silester Rivers, a 6-foot-7 junior forward who transferred from Utah Valley State College, joined returned missionaries Michael Vranes, Nathan Cooper and Todd Christensen as key players in Cleveland's rotation.

Despite the tough schedule and numerous injuries requiring Cleveland to juggle his lineup, the Cougars were rarely out of any contests, with six losses being decided by four points or less. Four particularly heart-breaking defeats were one-point losses to California and Washington State and overtime losses to Arizona and San Jose State.



After qualifying for the WAC Tournament in their final regular season game the previous season, the Cougars earned a tournament berth with several weeks remaining in 1999 and improved to the fifth seed in the powerful WAC Pacific Division. BYU also improved its home record from 4-10 to 9-5 and won its

second straight Cougar Classic title with wins over Louisiana Tech and Cal State Northridge. Cougar Classic MVP Nathan Cooper earned WAC Player of the Week honors while averaging 18.5 points and seven rebounds during the Classic.

BYU won three straight games in January to jump out to a 3-1 conference record. The wins included road victories over San Diego State and Hawai'i and a 75-44 drubbing of San Jose State in the Marriott Center. Mekeli Wesley's game-winning three-point shot in Hawaii capped a double-digit Cougar comeback and was recognized nationally as one of the Compaq College Basketball Shots of the Week.

The Cougars suffered their longest losing skid in the heart of the conference schedule, dropping games to Fresno State, UTEP, New Mexico and Utah. The Cougars nearly pulled out a win over Fresno in front of 21,645 cheering fans in the Marriott Center before falling by four, 79-75, and attracted the largest crowd of the season, 22,502, in the home loss to Utah. BYU's swing through New Mexico included Bret Jepsen's backboard-shattering dunk.

Like Cleveland's first season, BYU finished strong to end the year, defeating UTEP in its final regular season game, 85-64, led by Silester Rivers' 22 points and 10 rebounds. The Cougars then hit a season-high 13 three pointers and dished out a season-best 21 assists in its WAC Tournament win over TCU. Freshman Michael Vranes made 5-7 treys and dished out eight assists to complement Cooper's 24 points and Rivers' 10 rebounds. Rivers continued to show signs of what people will see during his senior season, scoring 23 points in one of his best performances of the year in the final game against Utah.

On the year, Bigelow was BYU's top scorer, averaging 15 points per game. Against Washington State, he wowed his home-state fans scoring 33 points, the second most points ever scored by a freshman at BYU (Danny Ainge scored 36 and 33). The freshman sensation, who earned WAC Freshman of the Year, WAC Newcomer Team and All-WAC Second Team honors, also led the Cougars in rebounding (6.7 rpg) and steals (1.4). Vranes led the team in assists with a 2.9 average.

As a team, the Cougars shot 45 percent from the floor, 37 percent from three-point range and nearly 73 percent from the free throw line. BYU averaged 71.8 points per game with a much improved offensive attack and out rebounded their opponents on the year, averaging 36.2 to the opposition's 34.7.

1998-99 GAME BY GAME RESULTS

Date	Opponent	W/L	Score	Site	Attd.	Scorer	Rebounder	Assists
11/13	Wofford College	Won	73 67	Home	7358	Cooper, N 16	Cooper, N 9	Bigelow, M 2
11/19	@Weber State	Lost	80 83	Away	8541	Bigelow, M 19	Rivers, S 9	Bigelow, M 6
11/23	@Auburn	Lost	43 62	Away	4082	Cooper, N 14	Jepsen, B 13	Archibald, L 1
11/28	ARIZONA	Lost O/T	74 78	Home	13846	Bigelow, M 24	Bigelow, M 6	Cooper, N 4
12/01	DENVER	Won	89 71	Home	5239	Rivers, S 26	Bigelow, M 14	Bigelow, M 5
12/05	@Oregon	Lost	62 93	Away	8072	Bigelow, M 15	Hawkins, J 5	Vranes, M 4
12/08	Washington State	Lost	69 70	Away	3793	Bigelow, M 33	Vranes, M 7	Vranes, M 4
12/11	LOUISIANA TECH	Won	76 68	Home	6189	Bigelow, M 20	Rivers, S 8	Vranes, M 4
12/12	CS NORTHRIDGE	Won	84 78	Home	7157	Cooper, N 20	Bigelow, M 14	Bigelow, M 3
12/19	CALIFORNIA	Lost	70 71	Home	6171	Bigelow, M 22	Jepsen, B 14	Vranes, M 3
12/22	UC Irvine	Lost	75 82	Away	1763	Rivers, S 20	Cooper, N 10	Bigelow, M 5
01/02	UTAH STATE	Won	61 59	Home	10426	Vranes, M 21	Bigelow, M 10	Bigelow, M 6
01/09	@Utah	Lost	54 75	Away	15298	Bigelow, M 13	Bigelow, M 10	Bigelow, M 3
01/14	@San Diego State	Won	83 76	Away	3190	Bigelow, M 20	Bigelow, M 9	Dignan, B 4
01/16	@Hawaii	Won	60 59	Away	8086	Rivers, S 20	Rivers, S 9	Vranes, M 9
01/21	San Jose State	Won	75 44	Home	8785	Christensen, T 11	Rivers, S 12	Cooper, N 4
01/23	FRESNO STATE	Lost	75 79	Home	21645	Vranes, M 17	Rivers, S 13	Bigelow, M 2
01/28	@TexasEl Paso	Lost	72 87	Away	9021	Bigelow, M 11	Bigelow, M 5	Christensen, T 4
01/30	@New Mexico	Lost	68 78	Away	17773	Wesley, M 24	Wesley, M 7	Dignan, B 5
02/06	UTAH	Lost	46 71	Home	22502	Bigelow, M 11	Bigelow, M 7	Rivers, S 1
02/11	HAWAII	Won	81 68	Home	6513	Rivers, S 18	Rivers, S 9	Dignan, B 3
02/13	SAN DIEGO STATE	Won	93 76	Home	7513	Christensen, T 17	Wesley, M 11	Christensen, T 4
02/18	@Fresno State	Lost	71 80	Away	10220	Bigelow, M 23	Bigelow, M 11	Bigelow, M 5
02/20	@San Jose State	Lost O/T	74 76	Away	3976	Bigelow, M 19	Wesley, M 7	Dignan, B 5
02/25	NEW MEXICO	Lost	64 85	Home	6835	Bigelow, M 21	Wesley, M 8	Vranes, M 4
02/27	TexasEl Paso	Won	85 64	Home	7142	Rivers, S 22	Rivers, S 10	Vranes, M 5
03/02	Texas Christian	Won	90 74	Neutral	3234	Cooper, N 24	Rivers, S 10	Vranes, M 8
03/04	Utah	Lost	62 81	Neutral	8973	Rivers, S 23	Rivers, S 5	Vranes, M 5

1998-99 FINAL WAC STANDINGS

MOUNTAIN DIVISION

WAC

OVERALL

	W	L	Pct.	H	A	W	L	Pct.	H	A	N
UNLV	9	5	.643	5-2	4-3	16	13	.552	10-6	6-5	0-2
Tulsa	9	5	.643	6-1	3-4	23	10	.697	13-1	5-6	5-3
Rice	8	6	.571	6-1	2-5	18	10	.643	13-1	2-7	3-2
TCU	7	7	.500	4-3	3-4	21	11	.656	14-4	7-5	0-2
SMU	7	7	.500	4-3	3-4	15	15	.500	8-6	6-6	1-3
Colorado State	7	7	.500	5-2	2-5	19	11	.633	14-2	5-8	0-1
Wyoming	7	7	.500	6-1	1-6	18	10	.643	12-2	3-7	3-1
Air Force	2	12	.143	2-5	0-7	10	16	.365	8-7	1-9	1-0

PACIFIC DIVISION

WAC

OVERALL

	W	L	Pct.	H	A	W	L	Pct.	H	A	N
Utah	14	0	1.000	7-0	7-0	28	5	.848	14-0	8-2	6-3
New Mexico	9	5	.643	6-1	3-4	25	9	.735	19-1	3-6	3-2
Fresno St.	9	5	.643	6-1	3-4	21	12	.636	15-2	4-7	2-3
UTEP	8	6	.571	6-1	2-5	16	12	.571	14-4	2-7	0-1
BYU	6	8	.429	4-3	2-5	12	16	.429	9-5	2-10	1-1
San Jose State	5	9	.357	5-2	0-7	12	16	.429	10-4	2-11	0-1
Hawaii	3	11	.214	3-4	0-7	6	20	.231	6-13	0-7	0-0
San Diego State	2	12	.143	2-5	0-7	4	22	.154	4-11	0-11	0-0