



BYU MEN'S BASKETBALL

NOTES AND QUOTES | BYU VS. MORGAN STATE | SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2023

The following notes and quotes are from BYU's 93-50 win over Morgan State on Saturday night.

Series Results: BYU leads all-time series 2-0

Attendance: 13,736

TEAM NOTES

Starting Strong Across the Board

With his layup at the 18:36 mark in the opening half, Fousseyni Traore became the fourth different player to open the scoring for the Cougars this season. Saturday also marked the first time that BYU didn't win the tip.

Early Dominance

With BYU up 33-16 with 6:14 remaining in the first half, the Cougars have now doubled their opponents after scoring at least 30 points in three of the first four games this season.

Best Half of Shooting

The Cougars' 61 percent shooting (17-of-28) in the first half marked BYU's most efficient shooting in any half of the season thus far, with the second highest the most recent half before tonight - a 53 percent performance against Southeastern Louisiana on Wednesday.

Bench Power

The BYU bench continued its impressive play early in the season, outscoring the Bears 44-23 to extend its outsourcing of opponent second units to 171-53 on the season.

That 4-0 Feeling

With its win over Morgan State, BYU opens the season 4-0 for the first time since 2021-22 when they won their first seven games of the season and were ranked as high as No. 12 in the AP Poll.

Free Throw Efficiency

The Cougars ended the game ranked second in the Big 12 and 40th nationally in free throw shooting percentage. BYU shot 17-of-19 from the charity stripe (89.5 percent) for a season-high.

Home Sweet Home

With Saturday's win, BYU has now won nine straight non-conference games including eight straight at the friendly confines of the Marriott Center. The Cougars head to Michelob ULTRA Arena next week where the streak started with a 83-80 win over No. 21 Creighton.

PLAYER NOTES

Forecast: It's Going to Rain

Noah Waterman registered his first block of the season with 2:50 to go in the first half and another with 17 seconds remaining in the opening half. The senior forward now has 15 blocks as a Cougar and 39 throughout his career.

Going 7-of-8 from the line, Waterman attempted and made the most free throws of any game during his time at BYU. The last time he had as many makes and attempts was a 4-of-7 showing from the charity stripe during a 63-57 home victory over Weber State on Dec. 22, 2022. His 15 points marked a BYU career-high, surpassing a 14-point performance last season (also against Weber State).

Fouss on the Loose

Fousseyni Traore opened the second half with perfect 4-4 shooting and 1-1 from the stripe, scoring the Cougars' first nine points. Traore continued his high-efficiency shooting, going 8-for-11 from the field for 17 points and four rebounds.

Last Wednesday against Southeastern Louisiana, Traore claimed the top spot in BYU history for field goal percentage (minimum 300 FG made) as the only player in program history to shoot over 60 percent. Now at 313-of-519, Traore holds a 60.3 career percentage.

Super Spence

With a 3-pointer early in the first half, Spencer Johnson has now connected from downtown for 11 consecutive games, a career-best dating back to last season. The senior currently ranks ninth in program history in 3-point field goal percentage.

Johnson also recorded a career-high, eight assists. In just four games this season, Johnson has already tallied 24 dimes which is one less than he had in 27 games in his first season in Provo (2020-21).

Meet the Robinson

Jaxson Robinson has now scored in double figures in all four games this season and six of the seven times he has come off the bench after finishing with a career-high 19 points. The senior was 7-of-13 from the floor, 2-of-7 from three and a perfect 3-of-3 from the charity stripe. He has now led BYU in scoring three times.

Streaky Saunders

Richie Saunders went 2-of-2 from the free throw line on Saturday, extending his consecutive free throw streak to 18 which dates back to last season.

CAREER HIGHS

Points: Jaxson Robinson (19), Noah Waterman (15, BYU)

Free throws: Noah Waterman (7), Jaxson Robinson (3)

Assists: Spencer Johnson (8), Trevin Knell (4), Richie Saunders (4)

Rebounds: Noah Waterman (8), Trevin Knell (5)

Steals: Richie Saunders (3)

Blocks: Trevin Knell (1), Dallin Hall (1)

SEASON HIGHS

Field Goals: Fousseyni Traore (8), Jaxson Robinson (7), Richie Saunders (4)

3-Point Field Goals: Richie Saunders (2)

Free throws: Noah Waterman (7), Jaxson Robinson (3)

Rebounds: Noah Waterman (8), Trevin Knell (5), Dallin Hall (3), Jaxson Robinson (6)

Points: Jaxson Robinson (19), Richie Saunders (12)

Assists: Spencer Johnson (8), Trevin Knell (4), Jaxson Robinson (2), Richie Saunders (4)

Steals: Trey Stewart (1), Spencer Johnson (1), Dallin Hall (1), Jaxson Robinson (1), Richie Saunders (3)

Blocks: Noah Waterman (2), Fousseyni Traore (2), Trevin Knell (1), Dallin Hall (1), Jaxson Robinson (1)



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Head Coach Mark Pope

Opening Statement

"Morgan State is a solid team. I like their size and they've got some guys that can make plays. I love coach [Kevin Broadus], and he's got a really interesting approach to the game. His offense put us in some difficult spots mindset wise, but I'm really proud of our guys. I'm proud that we were under 12 turnovers again, even though we had nine in the first half. We were over 30 transition possessions. I thought guys stepped up and had an impact on the defensive end for us."

On first half turnovers

"I felt like our energy was really good, but just felt like we weren't as sharp as we'd been with nine turnovers in the first half. That's not us. I thought our execution just wasn't exactly on-point. We're one of the top teams in the country protecting the ball right now, so I'm really proud of that. Protecting the ball in games like this that end up being 40-point games can sometimes be way harder than it is in a really competitive game, so I feel like we're in a great space protecting the ball. It's probably the best of any team I've coached here."

On Noah Waterman

"When junior college players come to the Division I level, it's usually about a six-month process to understand the urgency and intensity you have to play every possession with. The difference between this year and last year for Noah is that he is one of our highest energy guys on every single possession. The beautiful thing about Noah and the way he's playing right now is that whether he makes or misses shots, he's still a massively important piece to have on the floor. Even if he's not making shots, he's playing with urgency and that's been the number one thing. You have to learn that, and it's actually a skill, not a character trait. He's done a great job picking it up."

On Richie Saunders

"He is fantastic. There were points in the game where it felt like we were on our heels, and Richie was able to cause some disruption. He's had a huge impact on the defensive end for us. He is urgent in his talk and he's having a huge impact for us on that side of the ball and his energy is unquenchable."

On the defensive identity

"Right now, I want it to be focused on communication. If we get frustrated or things aren't going perfectly, our talk decreases. It needs to increase. That's something we're trying to learn. Our togetherness needs to increase and I'd like that to be the DNA of us defensively: being incredibly solid and incredibly together."

Noah Waterman

On rebounding improvements from last season

"I attribute the improvements to the competition and energy that we're playing with every day at practice. We're competing at a high level in practice every day. Because of that, games feel easier with rebounding."

On playing with confidence as a team

"I think experience and chemistry on and off the court give us that confidence. I feel like everybody clicks on and off the court. I think to have a good team, you really need to have that. Going to activities with everybody when you're not at practice builds a team up."

On having a three point centric offense

"Being a shooter, I'm not going to complain. Who doesn't like shooting on the court? I think it's really good for us but the main key is that when we have an off shooting night, we have to wedge and get the offensive rebounding. That's what we've been doing these past games."

Jaxson Robinson

On difference this year versus last year.

"I think the second year experience is helping us to gel as a team. We are able to communicate with one another and work for each other. There is no selfish person on this team. Coach has made a big emphasis that we are working as a team and communicating which are things people don't see on TV or in the stands."

On heading to Vegas next week

"I think it's important that we come back fresh and come in next week with a clear mind, focusing on Arizona State and being ready to compete. It's going to be a dogfight. We need to make sure we come in next week focused and ready to handle business."