



# BYU MEN'S BASKETBALL

NOTES AND QUOTES | BYU VS. FRESNO STATE | FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2023

The following notes and quotes are from BYU's 85-56 win over Fresno State on Friday evening at the Delta Center.

**Series Results:** BYU leads all-time series 14-5.

**Attendance:** 11,360

## TEAM NOTES

### *Changes Continue*

In just its seventh game of the season, BYU used its third different starting lineup with Aly Khalifa replacing Fousseyni Traore.

### *Forcing Turnovers*

The Cougars forced 21 Bulldog turnovers on the night, a season-high for opponent giveaways. BYU capitalized on Fresno State's miscues, recording 36 points off of turnovers.

### *Delta Center Magic*

BYU improved to 23-5 in games played in the Delta Center, restoring dominance at the venue after a 69-68 setback to South Dakota last season. Prior to last year's loss, BYU had won 17 straight games at the home of the NBA's Utah Jazz.

### *Winning is better*

The Cougars have now won seven straight, tied for the second-longest streak under head coach Mark Pope. For the seventh time since 1949-50, BYU has opened the season at 7-0 or better.

### *Dominant Leads*

Jaxson Robinson's sixth 3-pointer of the night with 5:06 remaining put the Cougars up 79-48, marking the fourth contest this season that BYU has led by 30 or more.

### *Double digits from downtown*

The Cougars nailed 11 3-pointers, extending the team streak to a program-record seven consecutive games with 10 or more 3-pointers.

## PLAYER NOTES

### *Downtown Jaxson*

Robinson registered a career-high 24 points to lead all Cougars. His point total wasn't the only career-high as the senior notched six 3-pointers on 6-of-8 shooting from beyond the arc, besting his previous total of five triples against Gonzaga on Jan. 12, 2023. His 21 3-pointers on the season leads the team.

Robinson has now finished in double figures seven times in just eight games this season.

### *Spark Plug Spencer*

Spencer Johnson scored 12 of BYU's first 17 points on 5-of-6 shooting in just 6:36, marking the first time this season and seventh for his career that he has scored in double figures in the opening 20 minutes.

Johnson posted a career-high 22 points on 9-for-12 shooting (75 percent), surpassing his 20 earlier this season against Houston Christian on Nov. 6.

### *Fortune 500*

Trevin Knell's jumper with 15:00 remaining in the opening half moved the junior to 500 career points. Knell finished with 10 points on the night, extending his 3-point total to 19 on the season and 116 for his career. The Cougars moved to 18-2 all-time when Knell scores in double figures.

### *Off the Bench*

Richie Saunders connected on 5-of-10 shots to lead all bench scorers and match his season-high of 12 points.

## CAREER HIGHS

**Points:** Spencer Johnson (22), Jaxson Robinson (24)

**Field Goals:** Jaxson Robinson (9), Spencer Johnson (9)

**3-Pointers:** Jaxson Robinson (6)

**Rebounds:** Trevin Knell (6)

**Steals:** Jaxson Robinson (3)

## SEASON HIGHS

**Points:** Spencer Johnson (22), Richie Saunders (12), Jaxson Robinson (24)

**Field Goals:** Jaxson Robinson (9), Spencer Johnson (9), Richie Saunders (5)

**3-Pointers:** Jaxson Robinson (6)

**Rebounds:** Trevin Knell (6)

**Assists:** Aly Khalifa (5)

**Steals:** Spencer Johnson (2), Dallin Hall (2), Jaxson Robinson (3), Noah Waterman (1), Trey Stewart (1),

**Blocks:** Aly Khalifa (1)



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## Head coach Mark Pope

### *Opening Statement*

"I'm really proud of the guys. The same things remain and we're trying so hard to be an improved team in terms of protecting the ball, and I thought the guys were extraordinary tonight," said head coach Mark Pope. "Four turnovers in the first half and three in the second half, that's a huge win for us."

### *On the team's progress on defense at this point in the season*

"I don't know if we're ever where we want to be, but Coach Fennell is helping the defensive side do something we haven't done in our four years here, and that's to throw a bunch of changing defenses in there. I thought he did a masterful job tonight and that our guys did a masterful job of responding to the changes. We threw three different full-court presses out there tonight and a zone out there for a few possessions and it was really effective. Our team could not have responded to changes in real time last year. These guys have come so far and the best thing we have going right now is our guys' elite communication."

## Spencer Johnson

### *On what led to his strong start*

"Cutting hard in passing lanes, shooting the ball confidently when I'm open. I knew we had to come out and lay it to Fresno State and let them know early. It always helps to get out and create turnovers, get steals and take care of the ball on the opposite side as well."

### *On the clean basketball from start to finish*

"It's super fun. I've talked about this before, but I felt like last year we had pretty much the same group of guys. We lost a couple, but we've had a year to play with each other. We've been with each other all summer. Now we know where we're cutting and where the ball goes and it's super fun to play."

### *On the team depth*

"We're a deep team. A lot of dudes can play and a lot of dudes can shoot. Credit to [Coach Pope] and his whole staff."

## Jaxson Robinson

### *On performance defensively*

We try to stay disruptive and get our hands on the balls and in the passing lanes. Coach makes an emphasis to make sure that we're guarding our yard, and make sure we're keeping our man in front.

### *On teammate Spencer Johnson*

He was amazing. We need him every night. He's been stepping up and he will proceed to step up every single night so I'm excited for Spencer. He looked great tonight.

### *On team depth*

This team is super deep. We have so many different options, offensively and defensively. We have a lot of different schemes that we can throw. This group is well connected so I think that's what really makes a big difference from last year's team, and we're seeing that out on the court.

### *On team morale*

Trust came from playing with each other for a year, and getting experience with each other. That's something this summer that was super big for us as a team, getting to really connect. It's showing. Everybody wants to see everybody win and it's working out.