



BYU MEN'S BASKETBALL

NOTES AND QUOTES | NO. 20 BYU VS. UCF | MARCH 13, 2024

The following notes and quotes are from No. 20 BYU's 87-73 win over UCF on Wednesday morning at The T-Mobile Center in Kansas City, Mo.

Series Results: BYU leads 3-0

TEAM NOTES

Guess Who's Back?

Today's second round game marks the second time BYU has played at the T-Mobile Center. The first was in November 2013 when they played in the CBE Hall of Fame Classic.

That Makes Three

Today's game marks BYU's third win of the season over UCF marking the second time during head coach Mark Pope's tenure that BYU has defeated a team three times in the same season.

Neutral Court

BYU is 4-0 this season on neutral courts including winning both of its games at the Vegas Showdown for their first MTE title since 2010.

Crown Him

With its win on Wednesday, Pope became the third-fastest head coach to reach 110 wins as he only needed 160 games to reach the mark.

Dialed In From Deep

The Cougars knocked down 14 3-pointers in the win over the Knights marking the 21st time this season that BYU has hit 10 or more 3-pointers.

We Are All Swifties

All three of BYU and UCF meetings this season took place on the 13th day of the month.

Winning When It Matters

BYU has won at least one conference tournament game in four straight seasons under Pope.

PLAYERS NOTES

Do-It-All Spencer

Spencer Johnson filled the statsheet for the Cougars as the senior finished with nine points, eight rebounds and seven assists. He now has at least one offensive rebound in seven of BYU's past eight games. The Cougars are now 16-1 this season when he has three or more assists.

Dialed In

With his two three-pointers, Trevin Knell moves up to 9th place for 3-point field goals made in an individual career (164) and 18th for 3-point field goals in a season (67), tied with Terrell Lyday (1999-00).

Action Jaxson

Jaxson Robinson extended this 3-point streak to 19 games on his first shot of the game. That is the seventh-longest streak in a single season in program history.

The Egyptian Magician

Aly Khalifa finished with eight points and five assists marking the 12th time this season he has had five or more assists in a game this season.

Mr. 1000

Fousseyni Traore became the 53rd player in program history to reach 1,000 points in Tuesday's win over UCF.

Block 'Em

With three blocks against the Knights, Traore has tallied 84 career blocks, which is tied for the 14th most in program history. It was also the ninth time he has had three or more blocks in his career which is tied for the 10th most in program history.

Double Trouble

Traore recorded his first double-double of the season and 19th of his career after finishing with 14 points and 10 rebounds. That is the 20th most double-doubles in program history.

SEASON HIGHS

Free Throws: Fousseyni Traore (6)

Blocks: Fousseyni Traore (3)

Minutes: Spencer Johnson (35)



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BYU Head Coach Mark Pope

You guys jumped out to the 14-0 run. What was working for you early and Richie and Fous, talk about what it was like to see the shots fall in the opening minutes?

"We had some good fortunate and some good ball movement. The guys came out on the floor on attack from the very beginning of the game. Playing on our toes is something we talk about every day. This Aly Khalifa has really complicated the guard and he made a couple of shots early and Dal made a couple shots early, and kind of got us going in a good direction. But most exciting for us was our defensive focus to start the game I thought was excellent."

The run in the second half after they had come back to get close and you guys went on a 12-0 run, Spencer draws a charge. What are some of the elements of that defensive that work?

"Yeah, I thought it was -- for us all night long it was a defensive -- like we had to find a way to guard against a team that really is talented at putting down their head and getting to the rim and Darius Johnson was a massive problem tonight making shots. He made difficult shots that were incredible. And it all started from the transition. You think about how they opened their game yesterday. The first three or four possessions when you watch 'em on film they are just racing down the floor in transition. So I felt like our guys really shored up the transition part of it and finished with rebounds and a lot of rebounds were being finished with our undersized guys which was really important."

You played three tough games with this UCF team. They have to wait until Sunday to find out if they're going anywhere. What makes them worthy of an NIT entry?

"There is no doubt they should be playing somewhere, they are incredible. It took them a minute to find themselves in the non-conference for sure, but this team is -- this is an incredibly well-coached team. Obviously Johnny Dawkins is one of the best there is in the country with unbelievable toughness and resilience. Their physicality, they can beat you on the glass, they can beat you in transition, they can definitely beat you by turning you over and guarding you. You think about the teams in this league that they beat this year, they won 4 out of 6 coming into this game. This is a good team. I'm so grateful we don't have to play them again. I have nightmares about this team, actually, because they scored 15 points in the last minute of our last game."

"I didn't share this with the guys before, but this is really important. When I was in this building seven months ago I talked about how we were excited to be picked 13, because it's Taylor Swift's favorite number. This morning I found out courtesy of the greatest statistician SID ever, that our first game against UCF was on January 13th, our second game was on February 13th, and so we knew that with our third game on March 13th, like, the deck was stacked against these guys, man, it's not even fair. It's not even fair. Plus we're in Kansas City. I mean, what? It's beautiful. If I had told you guys that before the game would be like, our dude has lost his mind?"

How do you feel Aly handled things, with what was going on with him?

"He was incredible, and he sure didn't miss a beat to start the game. He threw one pass today, guys, that little pocket pass around the wrong side. I was like, what is happening here? I thought he was absolutely terrific. He was great and, you know, he's a believer. We're all believers, so let's go."

Fousseyni Traore

What does Richie Saunders bring to this team? And then if I could follow up with Richie. I got to ask about the headband, where it comes from, how he gets his super powers. First, Fous, what does Richie bring to this team?

"Oh, man, never seen anybody like Richie, you know. Like I'm just trying to live with him, he's got no chill. He's got something going on all the time. Sometimes I would like to feel like him, how he's flying around everywhere. I should never play anybody hopefully as hard as Richie. I say amazing what he adds to the team. He just help everybody, you know, try to be like him."

Richie Saunders

What was working for you guys in the second half to pull away after they cut it down to 3 points?

"Yeah, every second half the focus is we're going to win it on the defensive end and it was no different for this game, getting stops in transition, protecting the ball, being strong with the ball. Fous did an incredible job. He had some early things, but he came back and was the man with the ball and was so strong like Fous is. That's what it came down to. Awesome win."

Every time they kind of made a run at you, Darius Johnson playing incredible, you guys seemed to have an answer. Where did you find that response from?

"When I'm protecting the ball, the first thing that comes to my mind, just like I just said, because we protected the ball we were able to do what we do offensively and either push it in transition or get into our half-court sets, which because people like Fous were protecting the ball we were able to get open shots that we thrive on."