



# BYU MEN'S BASKETBALL

BYU VS. ARIZONA STATE | DECEMBER 31, 2024 | PROVO, UTAH | MARRIOTT CENTER

The following notes and quotes are from BYU's 75-56 win over Arizona State on Tuesday, Dec. 31, at the Marriott Center in Provo, Utah.

**ALL-TIME SERIES:** BYU leads 29-22

**H/A/N:** 22-4/5-16/2-2

**ATTENDANCE:** 16,926

## TEAM NOTES

### New Year, New Me

The Cougars move to 10-5 on New Years' Eve games.

### 30+ Scorer over Sun Devils

This was BYU's ninth all-time game vs. Arizona State in which BYU had a 30-point scorer.

### Startin' Out Hot

BYU shot 42 percent in the opening 10 minutes of the first half going 6-14 from the field. The Cougars entered the second half with similar energy, shooting 62 percent while notching 10-of-16.

### Halftime Highs

The Cougars advance to 10-1 when leading through the first 20 minutes of play as BYU led 31-26 at halftime.

### Crash The Boards

BYU combined for 38 rebounds with 13 coming on the offensive glass. Keba Keita led the team in rebounds with 10. The Cougars also secured 16 second chance points marking the 10th time this season they have had 10 or more second chance points.

### In Young We Trust

Head coach Kevin Young becomes the fourth-fastest coach in program history to win 10 games, needing only 12 games to achieve the feat. Floyd Millett and E.L. Roberts went 10-0 in their first 10 games in charge while Alvin Twitchell needed 11 games to reach the mark.

### This Is The Place

The Cougars' home court win streak extended to 14 wins. BYU was tied for the 14th longest home court streak in NCAA Division I men's basketball heading into the contest.

### Defense is Key

BYU is now 131-2 since the beginning of the 2006-07 when holding opponents under 60 points.

## PLAYER NOTES

### Royal Richie

Richie Saunders tallied a career-high 30 points marking the first Cougar to score 30 or more points since Alex Barcello scored 33 at Pepperdine on Feb. 1, 2022. Saunders also recorded a career-high six 3-pointers and career-high 17 points in a half.

### Swift Start Saunders

Richie Saunders scored in double figures in the first half for the third time this season and the eighth time in his career. Saunders led the Cougars at the break with 13 points.

### King Of The Boards Keita

Keba Keita led BYU with 10 rebounds. The junior hit double figures for the fifth-time this season and ninth time in his collegiate career. He also tallied five offensive rebounds for the second this season and sixth time of his career.

### Trained Trevin

Knell played in his 126th game at BYU, tied for 19th most all-time with Ken Roberts (1990-91, 93-96). Tuesday was also the 91st win of his career, tied for the 12th most victories in program history.

## SEASON HIGHS

**Points:** Richie Saunders (30)

**Field Goals:** Richie Saunders (11)

**3 Pointers:** Richie Saunders (6)

**Free Throws:** Dawson Baker (3), Trevin Knell (4)

**Assists:** Dawson Baker (5)

**Steals:** Dallin Hall (2), Mawot Mag (1)

## CAREER HIGHS

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BYU HEAD COACH KEVIN YOUNG

## Opening statement

"I was happy with our defense. That is something that we have been harping on since that Providence game. I thought there was a lot of carryover with the things that we have been asking our guys to do against a high-level opponent. Offensively, outside of a couple of turnovers here and there, we played our identity. We really want to highlight driving, kicking and spraying out, which I thought we did a good job of. I am happy with the carryover and it's good to get that first Big 12 one out of the way and move on to a tough Houston team."

## On the team's success defensively

"We have harped on being connected on the defensive end of the floor with the goal to keep teams shooting the shots that we want them to shoot. We want them off the free throw line and for the most part, that was a big part of it. I thought the threes that we did give up were ones that were fairly contested."

## On Richie's career high 30 points

"He's a stud. I have said it from day one. I mean, he's a flat out stud. I love how hard he plays, number one. Number two, you don't have to run stuff for him to be able to get shots. Although we do run things for him from time to time, he's very opportunistic and looking to be aggressive. I think he takes good shots, puts a ton of pressure on the defense and he was a catalyst tonight. He really has been all year and I think I have made that known in terms of how important he is to our team."

## On the team's physicality

"I thought ball toughness was a game decider tonight. At the end of the first half, that's kind of how it got away from us. You know, we had a nice lead and then we turned it over too much on some loose ball type stuff where we were just loose with the basketball. So that physicality shows its head in a lot of ways, not just setting screens and rebounding. It's how hard you cut and how hard you sprint back. So that is something that we harp on everyday and I think we were the more physical team tonight."

## On getting points in the paint

"We've got physical guards that can get downhill. Our bigs do a tremendous job of creating havoc in the paint. Even if they don't have the ball, they're ducking in, creating driving lanes for our guys. Points in the paint can come from a lot of different areas I think. Our bigs are extremely selfless in that sense. They carve out a lot of room for our guards to drive in there and score at the basket."

## On the focus of the second half

"We have a good basketball team. We have got a lot of talent. We have got guys that play the right way, and I think our chemistry is really growing and so because of all of those factors, I think our guys should play with just an extreme level of confidence. I challenged them in the locker room to do just that. I thought the way that we came out of the second half, I was happy with their response to that challenge at Providence."

## RICHIE SAUNDERS

### On his 30-point performance

"Today might have been my day with offensive stuff but sometimes you bake and sometimes it goes down the line. That's how it works on a team. We worked really hard today at getting kickout shots from the paint. I was fortunate enough to be the recipient of those kickouts."

"As this team was starting to come together in the offseason, Danny Ainge told me that with a team of this talent, 'sometimes you're going to need to put up big numbers, sometimes you're going to need a big board or steal.' This is a team. It happened to be me today but I'm just glad we got the win."

### On returning from injury

"I just feel so grateful. Getting knocked out with a concussion [versus Wyoming on Dec. 14], that was really hard. I'm just so excited to play again."

### On the challenge of playing at Houston

"That's a big game. We know how good Houston is. It's hard to play on the road. We're excited to be back on the road and learn and grow more."

### On what he learned from the loss to Houston a season ago

"They're so tough defensively. They hang their hat on the defensive end. They're just a tough team. It's going to be a really fun one."

## DAWSON BAKER

### On improving defensively after the loss to Providence on Dec. 3

"After that game we found an identity for what we want to look like as a defensive team. We worked on making a tighter shell, being in our help, causing them to kickout and living with allowing shots we're okay with versus shots we're not. That's been really big for us. Being the low man in the help and correctly x-ing out, those have been principles we're really focusing on. We were really good defensively today. We frustrated them in a lot of ways. That will be really beneficial to us in Big 12 play because there's a lot of talented players."

### On playing with physicality

"That's part of our focus but we also know that's just the Big 12. You have to fight through things. It's going to be physical. We know that's what it's going to look like for the rest of the season."

### On the team being at full strength

"It's fun to have everyone back. We like having guys healthy and strong and at their full best. We love practicing with each other and getting better each day. It's fun to have Richie and Egor fully back and cleared."



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ARIZONA STATE HEAD COACH BOBBY HURLEY

## Opening statement

"I credit BYU and their aggression. They were pretty physical and did a good job of mixing their defenses up. I do think we left some things on the table, especially early in the game. Against a high quality caliber team like BYU, you have to try and get off to a good start, especially on the road. It was a very good environment, and loud."

## On losing the first conference game

"It's not ideal, that's for sure. It happens on the road and we kind of got punched in the mouth early in the game. I like the way we responded the last eight minutes of the first half. I thought that our defense stepped up and we got back within five. Then our struggle with shooting the ball in the first half kind of changed gears, and then we had a hard time taking care of the ball in the second half. We didn't do a lot of the things that you need to do to beat a good team on the road."

## On Kevin Young's BYU team

"I really like what they have. They jumped out at me on film. I knew it was going to be a really hard game because they have good young players and Saunders is a very good player. He was excellent tonight."