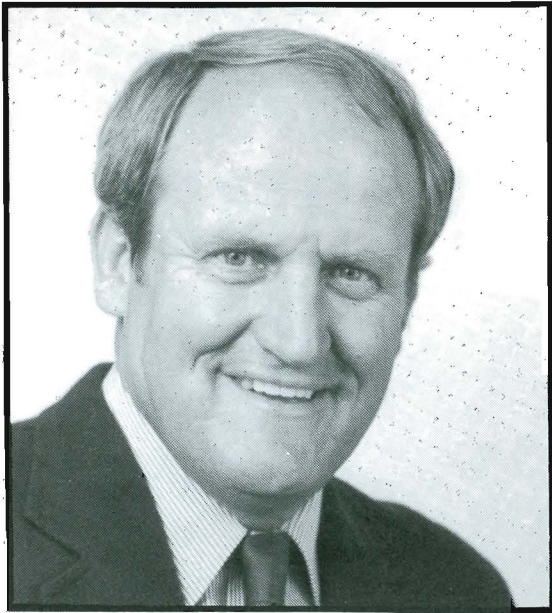


OVERCOMING ADVERSITY



About Lavell Edwards

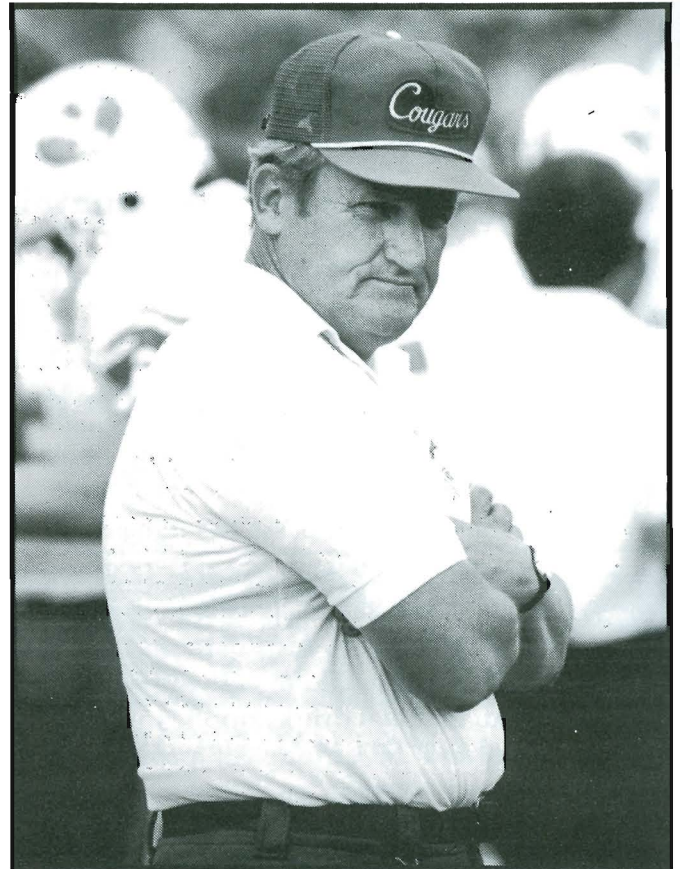
By Greg Shepard

Coach Lavell Edwards is one of the great college coaches and he is also greatly respected and admired by his coaching peers throughout the United States. He has one of the winningest records in coaching today and has won 9 consecutive Western Athletic Conference titles. His best previous record was 11-1 but this year the BYU Cougars are 12-0 and ranked number one as of this writing just before the bowl games. Under his tenure since 1972, no name quarterbacks have risen to the top of N.C.A.A. statistics (Gifford Nielson, Marc Wilson, Steve Young, Jim McMahon, Robbie Bosco). A long list of his assistant coaches have gone on to become head coaches. The BYU stadium has been increased to hold 65,000 and games are always sold out. As players and assistant coaches come and go, the one constant that remains is Coach Lavell Edwards and the BYU commitment to excellence in athletics.

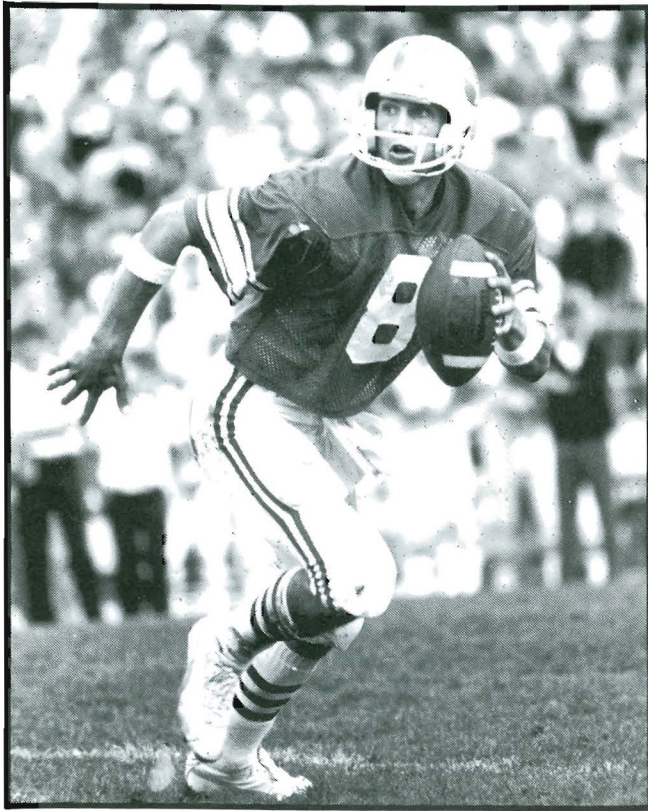
Coach Edwards grew up just a few miles from Cougar Stadium and played on the line at Utah State University. He then became a high school football coach but had only minimal success. He then moved to BYU as an assistant coach on a struggling football program. BYU struggled for another 10 years and then in 1972 Coach Edwards became head coach. The BYU Cougars did not exactly have great coaches beating on their door. It was thought that winning would always be impossible at BYU because of two things. First, many players would play a year or two, then go on a two year church mission. Second, all players like all BYU students must follow strict rules of conduct which include modest dress, good moral behavior and no smoking or drinking. Coach Edwards was given the job because he had done well as an assistant but mostly because of his fine Mormon-Christian background.

Coach Edwards turned adversity into prosperity. He encouraged the Mormon players to go on those missions. He figured they would be more mature and better organized and committed to play when they returned. Today over 50 players are returned missionaries and over half the players are married. As far as the rules, Coach Edwards figured we could win because of them not in spite of them. Two of BYU's very top receivers this year were asked to sit out a year and think about those rules in their younger years. They both came back better men and more determined than ever to be successful.

In spite of BYU's success it is still very difficult to recruit top players. Last year, the coaches identified the four top QB's in the country. They figured every QB should want to come to BYU. They were wrong. Not one wanted to come and so they continue to rely on QB's that no one else really wants like Robbie Bosco. However, Coach Edwards cares very much about each individual and he and his fine staff seem to have the continual ability to draw the best out of the BYU players. Coach Edwards recently addressed a very large group of men and youth at a church conference on the topic of overcoming adversity. It is our privilege now to share parts of that talk in our BFS journal.



Typical Coach Edwards sideline pose. He always remains cool under pressure to analyze where to pass next.



Steve Young, ex-BYU Great, now with the L.A. Express of the U.S.F.L. Steve finished 2nd in Heisman Trophy voting and broke many N.C.A.A. passing records.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

By Lavell Edwards
Head Football Coach
Brigham Young University

In the field of athletics, we tend to look at successful athletes and make them almost bigger than life. It has been my experience to be a teacher and coach for over thirty years. I have seen many young men who have achieved greatness. I have also seen those who have come up a little short of their potential. I don't know what the answer is, but I do know that those who succeed have been able to do two things.

One, they recognize within themselves the potential to do something well and then work hard to prepare themselves for that eventual opportunity. Others wait for the opportunity to come and then start to work, thus coming up a little short.

Every year on the football team there are players on our team who are bigger, stronger, and faster than those who are playing in their position. Why is this? I'm not sure, but after so many years of coaching, one overriding principle stands out. Potential does not always ensure success. In other words, the greatest players have not always been the most endowed. In athletics, we often hear the phrase, "He has the will to win." I think this is wrong. We can be in a game, taking a test, giving a talk, or whatever the experience may be. We can have the greatest will to do well. But unless we have prepared, it is of little use. Really, it should be the "will to prepare." Those who succeed have this will, whether it be in athletics, whether it be in school, whether it be in their chosen vocation, whether it be on a mission, or in almost any other phase of their life.

Two, those who have succeeded have also had the ability to overcome adversity, disappointment, and even tragedy in their lives. Since our quarterback position has such a high visibility and everyone seems to know about them, let me share two short stories with you.

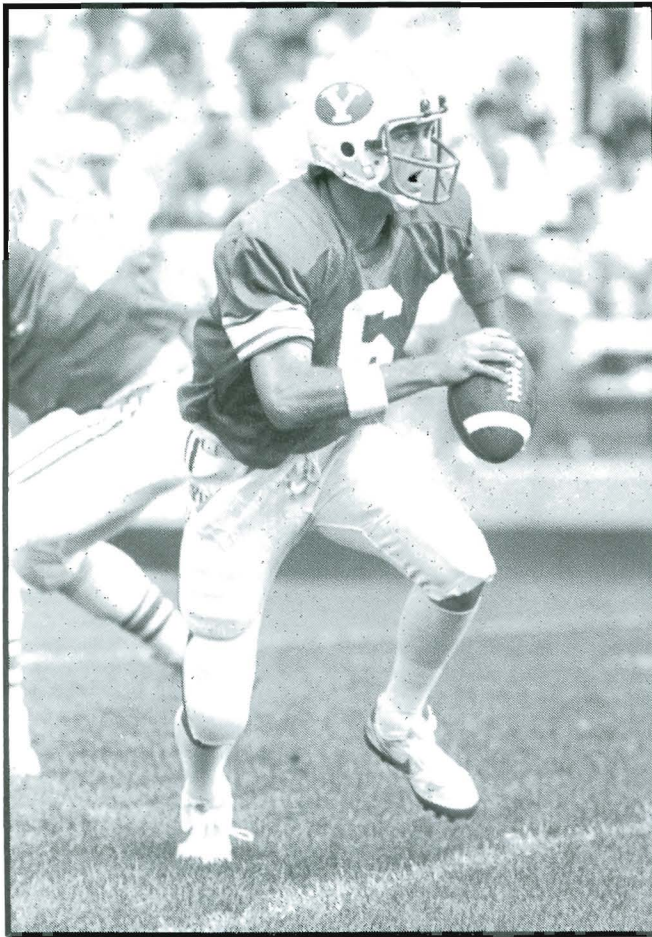
Steve Young is one of the most gifted young men that I have ever known. He is fast, strong, big, handsome, . . . and rich. It is easy for us to look at Steve and say, "With all those attributes, you ought to be great." However, it is more than his physical attributes that have made him great; it is the way he thinks! When Steve was a junior and was starting his first season as our quarterback, we had one of the greatest opportunities presented to us in our football program at BYU. We were scheduled to play Herschel Walker and the University of Georgia, the defending national champions. We worked very hard and felt we had a chance to beat them if we played our very best and did not make mistakes.

Before 82,000 fans, and on a "rainy day in Georgia," Steve threw five interceptions in the first half of the game — more than he would normally throw in five games! In spite of the interceptions and two missed field goal attempts, we were still tied 7-7 at halftime.

Going into the dressing room I thought to myself that I must talk to Steve and assure him that everything would be fine. The rain, the crowd, the tipped balls, etc. — I had all the excuses ready for throwing five interceptions in one half. I started explaining this to Steve and before I could finish, Steve stopped me, looked at me as if I was crazy, and said, "Hey coach, there's no problem. I can hardly wait to get back out there. We're going to win." I found myself thinking, "What do you mean there's no problem, you dummy. You have just thrown five interceptions!" It's the way he thinks. That's what has made him what he is and enabled him to accomplish what he has done. As you know, this was just the start of a career that would see him become one of the finest quarterbacks to play the game of college football.

The second story happened this year with our present quarterback, Robbie Bosco. We were playing the University of Pittsburgh. They were preseason ranked third in the country. We were leading 3-0 in the third quarter and had a good drive going. Robbie threw a bad pass. It was intercepted and returned for a 70-yard touchdown. Pittsburgh led 7-3. They kicked off to us, and on our second play, Robbie threw a pass that ricocheted off the shoulder of one of our receivers. It was caught by a Pittsburgh defensive back and returned to our 15-yard line. Four plays later, Pittsburgh scored and went ahead 14-3. I thought to myself, "This will be a good chance to see what Robbie is made of." In fact, with the next possession of the ball we drove down the field and scored. And then, with three or four minutes remaining in the game, Robbie moved our team the length of the field and threw the winning touchdown pass to Adam Haysbert. Right then, I knew there was no question that Robbie was going to be a great quarterback.

Now, how do we handle adversity? Adversity is going to be with us in everything that we do, almost in every facet of our lives — in our personal associations, on the football field, in our chosen professions, in our families. When we have adversity we oftentimes tend to look around and think that we're the Lone Ranger. We tend to believe that we're the only one who has problems. And we always look around and see others who are more talented, taller, smarter, handsomer, or faster. I can assure you, brethren, everyone has problems —



All-American Robbie Bosco just finished 3rd for the Heisman Trophy. Not bad for an unknown Junior QB.

ROBBIE BOSCO STATISTICS

1984	Att.	Comp.	Int.	Yds.	TD's	Pct.
Pittsburgh	43	25	2	325	1	.581
Baylor	43	28	0	363	6	.651
Tulsa	33	22	0	314	1	.667
Hawaii	33	18	1	264	1	.545
Colorado St.	21	16	0	246	2	.762
Wyoming	44	29	0	384	5	.659
Air Force	41	28	1	484	4	.683
New Mexico	29	19	0	227	3	.645
UTEP	31	19	1	237	4	.613
San Diego St.	44	24	2	326	2	.545
Utah	44	27	3	367	3	.614
Utah State	52	28	1	338	1	.538

TOTALS 458 283 11 3875 33 .618

1984 Pass Efficiency: 151.83

NCAA RECORDS BROKEN:

1. **Most consecutive games gaining 200 yards or more passing in a season:** 12 — (old record Steve Young, BYU, 1982 & 1983; Todd Dillon, Long Beach State, 1982; Tony Eason, Illinois, 1982; and Jim McMahon, BYU, 1980).

2. **Most games gaining 200 yards or more passing in a season:** 12 — (old record Steve Young, BYU, 1982 & 1983; Todd Dillon, Long Beach State, 1982; Tony Eason, Illinois, 1982; and Jim McMahon, BYU, 1980).

even football coaches. The ability we have to handle this adversity will determine the degree of success that we will have in life. To me, this is where the gospel can be the greatest of help to us. The power of the Holy Ghost is the greatest source of strength and comfort we can have in our lives. The Holy Ghost will not only help us in times of need, but will help us to gain a firm testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, thereby preparing us for life.

I have made progress over the past decades as a coach. But I feel that the progress I have made as a coach, as well as a person, is a direct result of the growth that I have made through my Church callings. I had the opportunity to serve as a bishop on a campus ward while I was still an assistant coach. When I was appointed head football coach in 1972, I decided to approach my role as a coach much the same as I did as a bishop, delegating responsibility to my assistants, putting responsibility on the players for self-improvement in all aspects of their lives, and using personal interviews with players to try to give positive reinforcement and encouragement so that they might do their very best and reach their full potential, both on and off the field.

In my career I have had many wonderful things happen to me, many more than I ever dreamed would ever happen. But I would like for you to know that all that has happened to me in my chosen profession is a mere drop in the bucket compared to the truly important things in my life. The testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ that I have, along with my wife and my family, are my most important possessions.

HOLIDAY BOWL

Five years ago Lavell Edward's BYU Cougars were in the Holiday Bowl with a perfect 11-0 record. BYU was behind by one point with seconds remaining. Brent Johnson had an opportunity to win it for the Cougars with a last second 37 yard field goal. He missed! Devastated, Johnson slowly walked to the sideline. Coach Edwards gently took him by the face mask and made Brent look him in the eye and said, "Brent, don't worry about it. Today's defeat is not your fault."

This kind of coaching and caring will pay dividends. At this year's Holiday Bowl, BYU played Michigan and was ranked #1 in the country. BYU committed 6 turnovers, had a field goal blocked and had many needless penalties. That's a lot of adversities. However, to top that, Robbie Bosco was hit late and suffered a severe ankle sprain, a cracked rib and knee ligament tears. Hopes for a national championship appeared dim indeed, as Bosco was carried off the field. But the challenge of adversity was met time after time as the Cougars refused to yield and then miraculously Bosco reappeared limping and dragging his right leg onto the field in the second quarter. Bosco would end the day completing 30 of 42 passes for 343 yards and throwing a last minute TD pass for a 24-17 Cougar victory. The BYU Cougars amassed nearly 500 yards of total offense, while a courageous defense held the Wolverines of Michigan to just 202 yards. The dream just wouldn't die! Our congratulations to a remarkable BYU team who won their 24th straight game and has a good chance on being crowned national champions this January 2nd after all the bowl games are completed. Finally, our thanks to Coach Lavell Edwards for being such a great example in all aspects of life.