

# Nate Monson:

Diggers' center may have been small,  
But gave a big effort in every game

By Bruce Smith  
MatchupUT.com

**Nate Monson** felt he and his Jordan basketball teammates had a load of potential.

On the first day of practice, he noticed it. The Beetdiggers had a passionate coach, a senior-laden team, one of the best home-court advantages around and ...

"A lot of the guys thought we could win the state championship," Monson said. "We had a lot of key players in our lineup."

Monson was the post player. At 6-foot-4, he might have been the smallest big man of any team in Region 4, which was viewed as the most powerful of any league in the state. Every game, he was battling bigger players who would go on to sign college scholarships, including 6-10 Will Whitt of Judge Memorial, three players at Alta who were 6-7 or better and 6-8 Ben Clifford of Bingham.

The list goes on.

"I never had any doubt about playing the big guys," Monson said. "I found the key to post defense is to push them out of position. If you push them far enough, they can't do anything with the ball."

Monson may have lost the opening tipoff in most games, but that was about all. He and his teammates spent the rest of the game trying to prove to everyone else they could challenge for the title – and it worked.

"We played best when he had a chip on our shoulder," he said. "We acted like we had something to prove."

Monson was among the most consistent of Jordan's players, and he had to be. He averaged 9.5 points per game and 6.8 rebounds, all while battling a severe case of knee tendonitis and forced him to sit out of several practices.



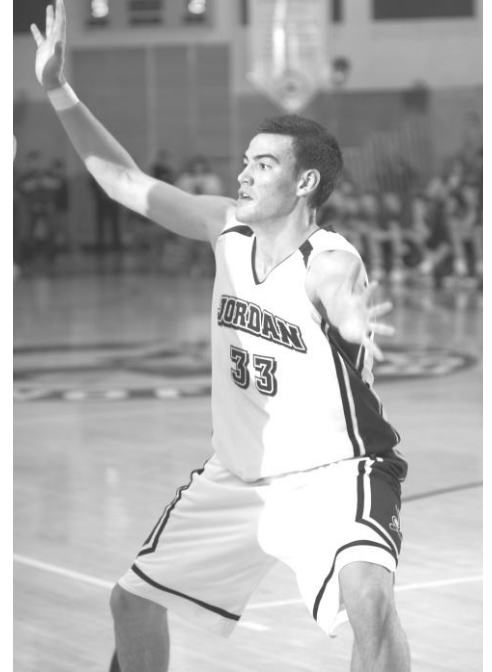
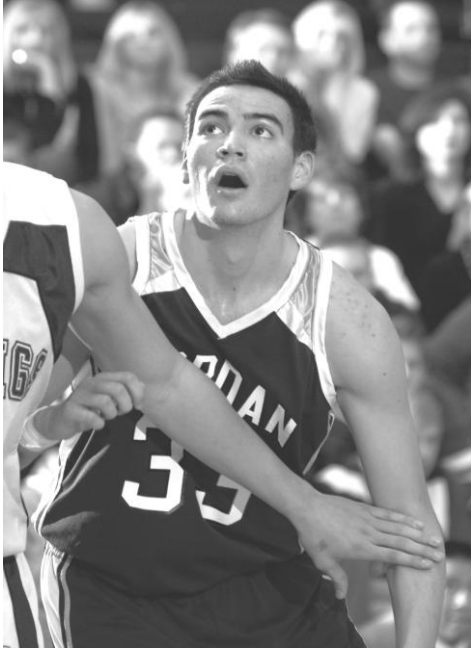
**Nate Monson played a key role for Jordan, helping develop competitive advantage of always trying to prove themselves.**

He didn't show it in games, though. He poured in a season-high 18 points in an easy victory over Taylorsville. Against Judge, he easily outdueled Whitt, scoring 14 points and pulled down 13 rebounds in a 61-57 win.

Monson said his favorite games were against Brighton. His junior year, Monson played in every game, but scored just 14 points all season.

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The highlight was easily Jordan's 74-72 home win over Brighton, when he was on the court at the end of the game and nailed the winning shot.

"I couldn't believe coach (**Rob Geertsen**) called a play for me," he said, smiling.

This year, he started every game, and was a thorn to Brighton once again. He was the team's top scorer when the Diggers there, and had an 11-point, seven rebound performance at home, where the Beetdiggers rolled to a 22-5 first-quarter lead and hung on.

"In that first half, we handled the ball pretty well," Monson said.

Passing was the team's strong point, and Monson was often in the middle of it. While Steve Morgan got most of the credit, Monson helped distributed the ball to teammates like Morgan, **Kevin Goldsmith** and **Joe Mero**. Everyone looked for the open man and, when they delivered, the Diggers seemed to score at will.

It was those kinds of spurts that eventually moved Jordan to a No. 3 ranking in the *Deseret News*. The Diggers surprised a lot of people when they emerged from their non-region schedule with a 7-2 mark, then opened region with wins over Brighton and

a 71-64 overtime victory over perennial power Lone Peak.

Monson was the game's best big man that night, scoring 10 points and hauling in a game-high 10 rebounds as Lone Peak lost at home for the first time in over two years.

All of that created a stir on the Jordan campus, where student involvement at games added to the atmosphere. Jordan's success helped develop more interest. Home games were often filled to near capacity, and students also traveled well when the Diggers played on the road.

"They were very supportive. They were the best fans I saw anywhere," said Monson. "It was great to have them there and everyone noticed it."

They endured the four-game losing streak at the end of the regular season, but kept trying to inspire the team in the state tournament. Monson had 11 points and seven rebounds in a 52-49 win at Cottonwood, but the season ended after that.

"I'll remember all the fun we had (this year). We had our chances," Monson said. "It was a good season, but not what we had hoped for."

For Monson, it was still a big year for the team's big man, and one that won't be forgotten.