

Merrill's abilities keep Cougars hopeful

by Mark A. Borrelli
Sports Editor

If the Clackamas Cougars men's basketball team is to be successful this season they will have to rely on leadership and scoring from their returning players. One person that will be relied on to carry a big leadership role is sophomore guard Troy Merrill.

Merrill, a guard from Canby High School, will be the Cougar's biggest offensive threat this year. Last year in limited action Merrill turned in some solid performances. His coach and his teammates alike are hoping that Merrill can turn in a solid year and help them make the play-offs.

"We've got a very good team this year. We haven't put everything together yet, but when we finally mesh together we will be that much better. We're improving everyday," said Merrill.

Last year's early loss to Lane in league play-offs left a sour taste in Merrill's mouth. This year he hopes to help guide his team to the regional championships in Bellevue.

"We're going to make the play-offs and get to Bellevue," stated a very confident Merrill. "I want to bring this team leadership and

toughness—whatever it takes to win."

The weakest part of this season's Cougar team is its size. Clackamas could have problems battling the boards with some of the league's bigger teams.

"We're a small team, but we're scrappy. We have a lot of talent. We need to maintain our intensity, play solid defense, and hit the boards hard," said Merrill.

Coaching also has a lot to do with the success of a team, and Merrill feels that the Cougars are fortunate to have a great one.

"Coach Kiser is a great coach. He always gets the most out of a player; he never lets anyone lay down. He's helped my game a lot. He gives you a lot of freedom to work, but at the same time he keeps your structure," said Merrill.

Merrill began his basketball career at an early age under the tutelage of his father, and hopes to carry on to OSU next year where he hopes to study physical therapy. In his free time he enjoys playing basketball, studying, and being with friends.

Becoming a good student as well as a quality athlete at the college level is a transition that Merrill had to make coming out

of high school. Obviously the classes are harder, but the transition from high school basketball to college ball was the hardest of all.

"The college game is just a dramatic change from high school. It's a lot harder than high school. A lot of people who come to Clackamas were the starters of their high school basketball team and everything centered around

"Fan support is something that we always got in high school, but never get at Clackamas. The fans don't know what they're missing, because college ball is the best game around."

them. In college, you're just an equal and treated the same as everyone else," said Merrill.

Another change that Merrill has noted since leaving Canby is the lack of fan support.

"Fan support is something we always had in high school and never have at Clackamas."



Photo by Mark A. Borrelli
Clackamas Sophomore guard Troy Merrill hopes to do anything possible to help get his team to Bellevue, and a regional Championship.

Cougars disappointing at tournament

by Mark A. Borrelli
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The Clackamas men's basketball team has gotten off to a slow start. The Cougars dropped 2 of 3 games in a pre-season tournament at Lower Columbia.

Clackamas got a great start as they got the tournament rolling by cruising to an easy 102-80 victory over Yakima Valley. The Cougars jumped out of the gates early and grabbed a 56-35 half-time advantage. It was all downhill from there, as the Cougars eased to the 22 point win. Troy Merrill led Clackamas with 26 points. Todd Spencer scored 13, while Jason Taylor and Brett Neisland each added 12 points.

"In the first half we played really well. In the second half we didn't play very well, we didn't play very good defense," said Coach Royce Kiser.

The play of Merrill, and the tenacious board play of the Cougars according to Kiser were keys to the game.

"Troy played really well, and we really hit the boards offensive boards well."

Clackamas 85, Clark 91.
The Cougars dropped their first game of the tournament with tough loss to the Clark College Penguins, 85-91. The contest was close throughout as Clark led by only 4 (40-36) at the half-time break. Clackamas rallied in the second half, but could never quite overcome the Penguins.

Todd Spencer was the big gun

for the Cougars as he tossed in 33 points. Jason Taylor added 17 in the losing effort. Clackamas committed only 10 turnovers in the game, but were out rebounded 40-34 and that proved to be the difference.

"We didn't hit the boards very well, but we used this tournament as chance for everyone to play. We used 10 guys in the Clark game, and 11 people scored in the Yakima game. We want to get a look at everyone right now," said Kiser.

Kiser's mood was less than genial, as the Cougars lost a game they should have won in their tournament finale. A three point bomb by Shoreline with 9 seconds to play lifted the Samurai's to a 96-93 victory.

Coach Kiser was less than

pleased with his team's performance against the Samurais.

"That's a poor team that just beat us. Points mean nothing if you let the opponents score more than you. Unless we play smarter, unless we learn how to play basketball, we're in for a long season," said Kiser. Kiser was fumed by the performance of his squad in the tournament.

"We fast break well, but we have no judgment what-so-ever when it comes to setting it up. We don't execute our offense well at all. We don't go to the defensive boards well, we're too worried about going down to score. Until we learn how to do these things, we're not going to be a very good basketball team," steamed Kiser.

The Cougars will be in action tonight when they host Willamette's JV team.



Photo by Mark A. Borrelli
Back at practice, the men's basketball team is hard at work getting ready for their league opener in January.

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