Volleyball clinches playoff spot for first time in a decade with two league wins last week on the road

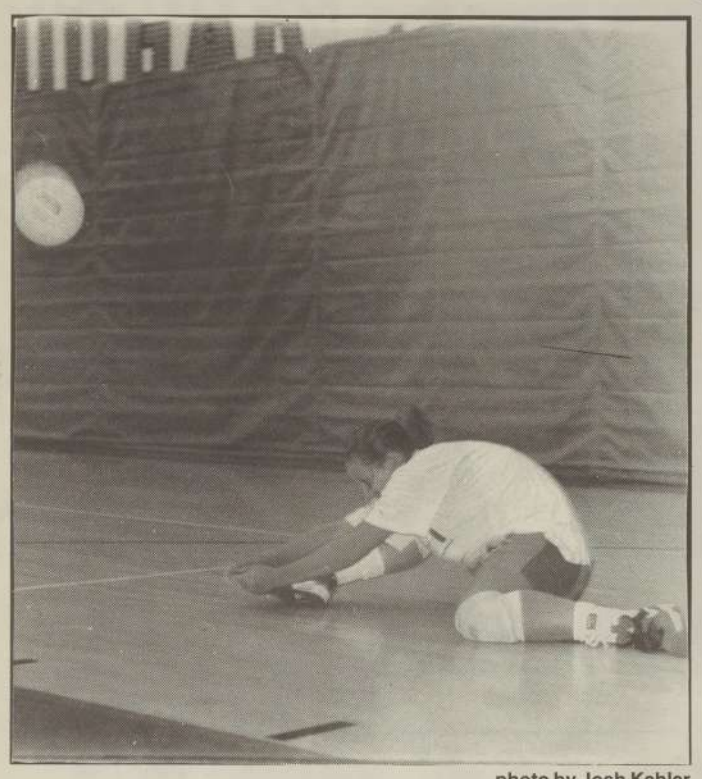

photo by Josh Kehler

Clackamas volleyball players prepare for their next match at Linn-Benton in Albany today.

Andrew S. Beck
Staff Writer

Ten years is a long time to some, but for the Clackamas Community College Cougars Volleyball program it was the last time it reached the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) Southern Region playoffs.

By defeating Lane CC, Umpqua CC and Southwestern Oregon CC (SWOCC) all on the road, the Cougars have secured an automatic birth in the Southern Region playoffs. With a 9-1 league record, and a 37-4 overall record, Clackamas has nailed down first or second place in the Southern Region. Regardless of how the rest of the season goes, the Cougars will be one of the top three teams from the NWAACC Southern Division that earn playoff berths.

"We're ecstatic," Clackamas coach Kathie Woods said about making the playoffs. "Clackamas has always been a competitive program, but people were really pulling for us this year.

The Cougars started off their ground-breaking week by beating Lane CC in Albany in three straight games, 15-12, 15-5 and 15-9.

On Friday, the Cougars had a more difficult challenge in Umpqua CC, when they played without starting setter Misty-Kae Filley. But, freshmen players Misty Murray, Cathy Methvin, and sophomore Denise Haselwood capably filled in at setter for Filley.

"I think we are doing awesome," said Methvin. "I think we played well considering the new lineup."

The Cougars went on to win the match in three straight set, 15-10, 17-15 and 15-13. The kill leaders in the Umpqua match were Melanie Sharp with 28 and Jennifer Walters with 16.

Katie Holdorf lead the team with 52 assists.

"We're playing really well right now, but we still need to improve some," said Cougars Assistant Coach Brad Swayne.

The Cougars last and biggest challenge of the week came Saturday at SWOCC in Coos Bay.

The Cougars won the first two games, 16-14 and 15-9, but SWOCC came back to win the next two, 5-15 and 10-15. The Cougars then narrowly took the last game 15-13.

Sharp and Walters finished the day with 32 and 21 kills, respectively, with each completing thirty percent of their attempted kills.

Sharp, an all-around utility player, led the Cougars in digs with 26.

The Cougars next three games will be at Linn-Benton Community College in Albany today. Clackamas will play in the Mt. Hood Halloween Classic on October 27th and 28th, and at home on November 1st against Chemeketa. Both league matches begin at 7 p.m.

Cross country teams aim for Northwest berths at regionals

Jesse Sowa
Sports Editor

The Clackamas Cross Country teams are ready to accept the challenge that will face them this weekend in the biggest meet so far this year.

The Cougars will be near full strength when they travel to Pier Park in Portland on Saturday to compete in the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) Southern Region Championships hosted by Portland Community College.

Clackamas Cross Country Coach Mike Hodges ran his team hard last week in final preparation for the races that will decide which top two teams will compete in the NWAACC Championships on Nov. 11 at Lane Community College in Eugene.

"We ran really hard and I was pleased with the results," Hodges said of the teams' work ethic over the last few week. "They're definitely getting to where they want to be."

Hodges also mentioned that the athletes are much more fit and competitive than they have been in previous weeks.

The men's team will compete without Travis Armstrong, their previous number one runner, who developed a mild case of mononeucleosis, or mono, before the Pacific Lutheran meet in Tacoma two weeks ago. Armstrong's availability for a possible showing in the NWAACC Championship Meet is unknown.

The men are aiming for the regional title, which Clark College is favored to win. Another team that could be in the running for an NWAACC berth is Mt. Hood, which the Clackamas men have beaten easily every time that Armstrong has competed. With Armstrong out, the gap will close considerably and it could be a close race.

Hodges said that he will not force Armstrong into any race because his runner's long-term health is far more important than the races that will take place or anything else.

The Cougars will also face Lane, a strong team that it has not seen this year. Hodges said that Lane is a team that could challenge for the second berth with a good performance.

The men will see the return of Aaron Kooser, one of their stronger runners earlier in the year who was slowed by injury. Kooser could be in Clackamas' top five at the regional meet.

Without Armstrong, the Clackamas men will have to do a better job of packing themselves together, which it struggled with two weeks ago at the Pacific Lutheran meet.

The women will be aiming for the second berth in the Southern Regionals. The Mt. Hood women should easily win the title with a strong pack of runners. Clark and Lane will challenge the Cougars for the second spot.

"The improvement recently by Scott Bills and Shannon Henley is going to be very important to our success," Hodges said of two runners who have really picked up the pace in the past few weeks.

The regional meet on Saturday begins at 10 a.m.

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