

Clackamas stumbles, regroup

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Sports Editor

The women's basketball team is feeling the pressure that comes with being the best squad in Oregon.

After bolting into first place in the Southern Division of the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges [NWAACC], the Cougars [5-1, 15-4] were upset by Portland Community College last Wednesday.

Portland [3-3, 6-13], a traditionally weak team in the region, shocked the league with its 63-62 victory over Clackamas.

"Portland's a respectable team," said Head Coach Karen Twain. "I don't think we underestimated them, we just played really poorly and they played really well."

The Cougars, accustomed to getting 40-50 rebounds per game, were held to 32 while the undersized Panthers had 36.

In a game that Clackamas looked lethargic and slow, the Cougars had 24 turnovers and only took 47 shots to Portland's 65 attempts.

"I think we were pretty tired," said Twain. "We had come off four pretty strenuous games so our practices have been a little lighter."

"A lot of people were thinking that we were in the lighter part of our schedule," added Twain. "They put great pressure on us, they played really well and I don't want

to take anything away from that. We just weren't able to handle the pressure.

"All season our bread and butter has been our defense and our rebounding," added Coach Twain, "and against Portland, we played lousy defense and they outrebounded us. Every team has a night like that and when that happens you just hope that you can escape with a win but unfortunately we didn't."

Robbie Nix led Clackamas with 22 points and eight rebounds while Michelle McKinney added 13 points and six rebounds for the Cougars.

On Saturday, Clackamas let out a little frustration against Lane Community College.

The Cougars exploded in the first half on 56% shooting to take a 37-12 halftime lead.

"To come back from the Portland loss and hold Lane to only 12 points at the half," said Twain, "shows that we can do it when we want to do it. That's all we wanted to know. It's reassuring."

Clackamas never faltered in the 72-53 win over the Titans [2-4, 10-9] from Eugene.

The win sent a loud message to the rest of the Southern Division on the talent of this year's squad.

There's talent on this team and a lot of it. Sophomore reserve player Denise Bean came off the bench to lead all scorers with a career high 21 points, seven rebounds and six steals.

"At least right now, said Twain, "we like Bean coming off the bench to the extent that she gives us a big spark. Any time that a sixth man or seventh man can come off the bench and have 21 points, it shows the kind of depth that we have."

"To have somebody like Bean or Michelle [McKinney] that can come off the bench and score a lot it really shows how deep this team really is," added Twain. "I'm not just looking at offensive stats either. They're some people coming off the bench right now, Noelle [Johnson] for example, that is just playing outstanding defense. In almost all of our games, our bench has always outscored the other teams' reserves and sometimes their starting five as well."

Nix also had 20 points, seven rebounds, four blocks and three steals.

With the victory, Clackamas has the inside track to the Southern Division title as Umpqua Community College lost to Chemeketa Community College on Saturday. The Cougars defeated both Umpqua and Chemeketa two weeks ago.

The regular season is far from over, however.

Clackamas plays host to rival Mt. Hood tonight. The Saints [4-2, 9-9] have been on the Cougars' heels all season but with losses to both Umpqua and Chemeketa, they have slipped in the standings.

"Mt. Hood is a very talented team," said Coach Twain. "They may have some of the best talent in the northwest. They have an excellent point guard in Kelli



Freshman Melinda Freeman has been a terror on defense for the Cougars this season causing havoc for opponents around the northwest.

“We have five must-win games and if we get through those undefeated then we should be on our way to NWAACCs.”

Karen Twain
Head Coach

Cougar Sidelines

Hometown athlete honored

Oregon City native and women's basketball star Michelle McKinney was given the Southern Region's Player of the Week award for her performances on Jan. 14 and 17.

McKinney, a sophomore forward, scored eight points and collected 10 rebounds in the Cougars' 83-60 victory over the powerhouse Chemeketa Chiefs.

She then improved on her performance against Linn-Benton, recording 17 points and eight rebounds, in a 76-55 Clackamas win.

McKinney, a member of this year's Southern Region champion volleyball team as well, also had four assists, four steals, and two blocked shots between the two league games.

This award is the second straight week in which a Clackamas player has received the honor.

The Player of the Week award is nominated by the coaches of the Southern Region of the NWAACC.



McKinney

Hedlund and a good posts. They are very athletic and can do a lot of things. They're definitely a team that worries us.

"They match up pretty well against us so we just need to play our game and come out more pumped up than them."

Coach Twain plans to start big against the Saints with 6'1" Robbie Nix, 6' Nichole Hayden, 6' Michelle McKinney, 5'10" Lauren Mohan and 5'5" Melinda Freeman. She realizes, however, that things may change pretty quick.

"We've got a number of players that deserve to start," said Twain. "[Denise] Bean, Jenny [Hansen] and Noelle [Johnson] are some of them but we only have five spots. We're doing the best we can and they all know their roles. The girls know that it's not really important who starts but who's in there at the end of the game."

On Saturday, the Cougars will travel the long journey to Roseburg to take on Umpqua [4-2, 18-2] in a game that could greatly change the standings in the division.

Clackamas holds a one game lead over both Chemeketa and Umpqua.

"The way to beat Umpqua is to shut down Sarah Coleman," noted Twain. "Chemeketa did that on Saturday and they won and that's pretty much what we did as well. They have some other players but if we can keep their star under wraps that will really help. We're going to work pretty hard

to do that.

"It's the same thing with Mt. Hood as well," added Twain. "If we can shut down Hedlund then things should be okay. Those two teams are similar in that sense."

The Cougars have their work cut out for them in the next few weeks.

"We really enter the meat of our schedule now," said Twain. "We've got Mt. Hood, Umpqua, Chemeketa, SWOCC [Southwestern Oregon Community College] and Portland in that order so we've got our work cut out for us."

"In my opinion," added Twain, "we have five must-win games and if we get through those undefeated then we should be on our way to NWAACCs."

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Free advertising for students in the Clackamas Print.

Women's Southern Division Standings

School	League	Season
Clackamas	5-1	15-4
Chemeketa	4-2	15-6
Umpqua	4-2	18-2
Mt. Hood	4-2	9-9
Portland	3-3	6-13
Lane	2-4	10-9
SW Oregon	2-4	11-9
Linn-Benton	0-6	3-14