

Cougars reach .500 despite inconsistent play

JOHN THORBURN
Sports Editor

Consistency.

It has been the trademark of the softball program for nearly the last decade.

For a team with five sophomores, the Cougars are struggling to be a steady force that so many Clackamas teams have enjoyed in the past.

Last Wednesday, the team traveled to Erv Lind Stadium to take on the Mt. Hood Saints. The last time the Cougars [6-6, 13-8] stepped onto that field, they captured their third straight Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges [NWAACC] title.

On a rain-filled night, the two teams played near midnight.

In the opening game, freshman Courtney DuPree [4-2] started on the mound and quickly allowed runners on first and second base. The game was then delayed for nearly 20 minutes as the rain began to fall.

"We were lucky that the field now has a tarp," noted Clackamas Head Coach Denise Nasuta. "Otherwise, the field just would have been drenched."

"The break didn't help us out much. I think Courtney might have gotten a little cold waiting."

When the game resumed, the Saints scored three runs in the first inning on only one hit. DuPree walked one and hit two batters in a row.

Mt. Hood scored runs in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh innings despite Coach Nasuta's move of putting freshman Megan Smythe into the game to replace DuPree in the fourth.

The Cougars managed to score two runs in the fifth inning and began to rally in the bottom of the seventh scoring three runs before falling to the Saints 7-5.

Freshman Billie Williams [4-23] went 2-4 with two runs batted in while sophomore Stacey Peacock went 2-2 with a double.

In the second game, Clackamas stepped up and played an outstanding game behind the pitching of sophomore right hander Kelley Comstock [5-2].

"Kelley pitched very well," noted Nasuta. "We hit the ball well and we played good defense behind her."

The Cougars jumped on the Saints early scoring five runs in the

first three innings.

In the third, freshman Marissa Smith continued to crush the ball this spring with a solo home run.

"It went over the fence," said Nasuta. "That field is pretty big. I think we figured it to be about 225 feet. That's pretty impressive."

Mt. Hood then scored two runs in the fourth before Clackamas added another run in the bottom half of that inning.

The Cougars nailed the 6-2 victory behind the hitting of Smith who went 3-4 with two runs scored and one run batted in. Freshman Erin Stapish also went 2-3 for the game.

On Thursday, Pierce College visited the Cougars for a doubleheader.

In the opening game, the Clackamas hitters were hot scoring four runs in the first inning.

The Cougars then scored two in the second, one in the fifth and one in the sixth before the game was called on the league's eight run rule.

With the opening 8-0 victory, the Cougars won their first, first game of a doubleheader all season.

"It's been something that's been frustrating all year," said Nasuta. "[The coaches] never know who is going to show up. It always seems that we need that first game to get us into our rhythm. It was nice to win that first one."

Smythe started on the mound against the Raiders and allowed only five hits in the shutout.

In the second game, Pierce hitters jumped all over starting pitcher Comstock early with a three-run homerun and another run in the second.

"That first inning really shook Kelley up," noted Nasuta. "She looked pretty out of it for a minute but she collected herself and pitched a great game."

Comstock recovered to strike out eight Pierce batters and didn't allow a run to score past the second inning in the team's 7-4 win.

Smith hit her fifth homerun of the year and is on pace to beat the school record as she was 2-3 at the plate with two runs batted and double. Williams was also 2-3 and scored twice.

Shortly after the Cougars completed the two-game sweep of Pierce, they traveled to Spokane for the NWAACC Crossover Tournament.

The tournament features teams from both the Southwestern and Northeastern Divisions — schools which rarely face each other until the NWAACC tournament.

Against Wenatchee Valley, the Cougars once again faltered in the opening game and committed seven errors.

"Any time you commit seven errors," said Nasuta, "you had better score seven runs and we didn't."

Comstock and the Cougars took the 4-2 loss despite a triple by Smith.

Against Green River, DuPree only allowed three hits and the Cougars put 10 runs on the scoreboard for the 10-1 victory.

Smith was 2-3 with two runs batted in and a triple, freshman Cecily Burton was 2-3 with two runs batted in and two runs scored and Comstock, playing in the field, was 2-3 with three runs batted in.

Against Bellevue, the Helmswomen 0-15 going into the game, tagged Smythe for 13 hits while the Cougars could only produce three hits in the 3-2 loss.

"Bellevue is a better team than their record shows," said Nasuta. "They were tied with Spokane 9-9 on Saturday in the seventh inning before losing."

Clackamas defeated Spokane in the last year's NWAACC title game.

"We need to show up every game and play with the same intensity every day," said Nasuta. "We haven't done that yet. I just wish we would start playing to our potential. We're inconsistent in our



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Freshman Marissa Smith leads the team with a .464 batting average and is on pace to set a school record in homeruns. She currently has five on the year.

pitching, we're inconsistent in our fielding. Our hitting is doing well.

"We've got so much talent on this team. We just need to have every player show up and play their game, play to their potential."

The Cougars have their toughest week of competition as first place Lower Columbia comes to Clackamas tomorrow. The Red Devils have been the only team to sweep the Cougars this spring.

On Saturday, Centralia visits for a doubleheader.

Both doubleheaders are scheduled to start at 3 p.m.



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Freshman right-hander Megan Smythe is 4-4 in 60 1/3 innings and has a 1.63 earned run average.



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Sophomore Dani Soldani is one of the team leaders in RBI's and is batting .413

Kiser retires as winningest coach in school history

ADAM CRUM
Staff Writer

It's the end of an era for Clackamas Community College basketball.

Royce Kiser retired from coaching last month after 19 seasons with Clackamas. Kiser, who coached at the high school level for 11 years, compiled a record of 325-149 in his 19 years at Clackamas. This record

excludes the 1982-83 and 1983-84 seasons, when Clackamas was part of the National Junior College Athletic Association [NJCAA].

Since Clackamas became part of the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges [NWAACC] in 1984-85, Kiser led the Cougars to a remarkable 297-121 record, a winning percentage of .711.

In the 14 seasons since joining the NWAACC, Kiser led Clackamas to two

NWAACC titles and four Southern Division titles, including three third-place finishes in the NWAACC.

As successful as he was at both levels, Kiser feels the collegiate level is more demanding.

"It's much harder to win titles [at the collegiate level] than in high school," said Kiser. "[In college], you can have a good team and somebody can recruit a better team."

Kiser knew he could get the job done if given a chance and he acknowledges the college for the opportunity.

"More than anything else, the best thing about this school is that I never felt pressure by the administration to win," said Kiser.

With the departure of Kiser, Cliff Wagner has been named the new head coach of the Cougars. Wagner coached Mt. Hood to the Southern Division playoffs this year.

"I never felt pressure by the administration to win."

Royce Kiser