

# Co-Champion Cougars show a little grit

JOHN THORBURN  
Sports Editor

The Clackamas softball team returned to top form this past week—winning 10 of 11 games.

After being swept by Mt. Hood at home two weeks ago, the Cougars [8-2, 14-7] went on a tear that culminated in a co-championship with Spokane at the league's crossover tournament this past weekend.

The 10-game win streak began after the Cougars avenged their two league losses to Mt. Hood to sweep the Saints in a double-header at Delta Park last Tuesday.

In the first game, Summer Conroy, went four for five at the plate, driving in two runs to lead the Cougars to a 9-2 pounding of the host Saints. Melanie Warthen [8-4] took the victory.

In the second game, Clackamas saw a 3-2 lead turn into a 3-5 deficit in the sixth inning before the Cougars scored six runs on six hits in the seventh inning to earn a 9-5 win. After relieving Cortney DuPree in the sixth, Warthen got the win on the mound.

Cecily Burton and Kirsten Richards each went three for four with their bats and recorded an RBI. Burton's three hits were all doubles.

"This team is very resilient," said Assistant Coach Denise Nasuta. "Last year, I would get worried when we were down a few runs late in the game. This year, we can score in any inning."

On Thursday, the Lakers of Southwestern Oregon Community College [SWOCC] made a five hour drive for a double-header with the Cougars. They

returned home with two losses.

In the first game, Jessica Farnsworth stole home on a wild throw to third base in the bottom of the eighth inning to give Clackamas a 7-6 victory. DuPree [5-3] earned the win.

Katie Brewster went 3-4 with two doubles and two RBI's.

In the second game, dusk threatened as DuPree recorded her second win of the day, after three Cougars scored in the bottom of the fifth inning to make the score 8-4. The game was called on a lack of daylight.

Marji Van Bramer went two for three with a run scored.

On Saturday, Clackamas joined 13 other teams from around the conference in the annual Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges [NWAACC] Crossover Tournament—a two-day-long event which acts as a precursor to the NWAACC Championship Tournament held in May.

Clackamas opened with a 7-1 win over Walla Walla from Northeastern Division behind a two-for-four hitting display by Burton. The sophomore from Beaverton had two doubles and four RBI's.

DuPree allowed four hits and struck out four in the win.

The Cougars faced Northeastern Division powerhouse Edmonds in a scoreless battle through six innings. In the top of the seventh, Conroy and Jessica Rowley scored to pull ahead. In the second half of the final frame, the Tritons scored one run and threatened to tie the game before Conroy made a diving stop at second base for the third out and a 2-1 win.

"Summer made an awesome play that ended the game for us," noted Nasuta. "If she didn't get to the ball, they would have scored. The real story was the pitching, though. Mel pitched one of the best performances of any pitcher this year."

Warthen threw seven strikeouts, allowed four hits and no walks.

In the third game of the day, Clackamas went head to head with a familiar foe in the Spokane Sasquatch. The Sasquatch, the defending NWAACC champions, have traded first place trophies from the crossover tournament with the Cougars for most of the past decade. In 1996 and 1997, Clackamas defeated Spokane for the NWAACC championship.

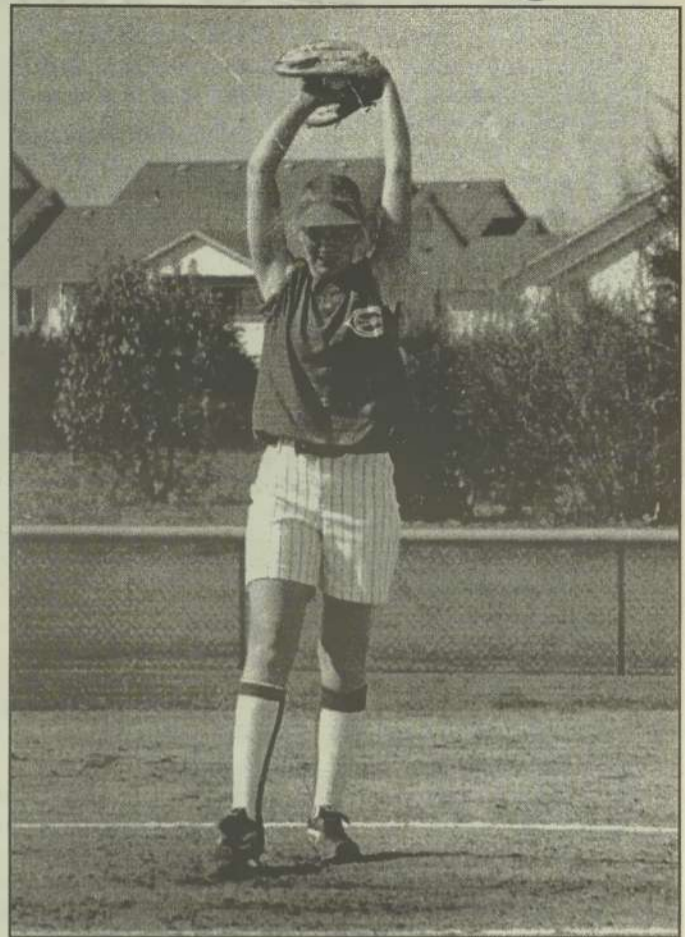
"Spokane and Clackamas have pretty much been the top dogs in the Northwest throughout the 1990's," said Nasuta.

On Saturday, Spokane wasn't up to the task as the Cougars ignited the Northeastern Division leaders for seven runs in a 7-2 win.

Darby Needham saw her first action of the spring—pitching three innings and giving up three hits and one earned run before Warthen replaced her in the fourth due to lack of endurance.

"Darby pitched very well for her first time out," noted Nasuta, "she just doesn't have the strength yet."

On Sunday, the Cougars faced Mt. Hood for the fifth time this season and pulled out a 5-4 win in eight innings. With the score knotted at 4-4, Farnsworth, a usual slap ball hitter, hit a shot to left field over a pulled-in outfielder to drive in Conroy for the winning run.



JOHN THORBURN / Clackamas Print

Freshman pitcher Melanie Warthen picked up four wins at the NWAACC Crossover Tournament as the Cougars were declared co-champions along with Spokane at the 14-team event.

Warthen got the win.

The victory sent the Cougars into a rematch with Spokane later that afternoon. A win against the Sasquatch brought home the trophy to Clackamas. A loss meant the two teams would face each other again to declare a champion, as both teams would only have one tournament loss.

Head Coach Paul Fiskum threw DuPree, Needham and Warthen against a tired Spokane squad but wound up on the losing end

of a 12-9 score after 11 innings.

As the game ended, it was 7:15 p.m. and the Sasquatch had to catch a flight to return home for morning classes on Monday. As a result, the championship game was called off and co-champions were declared.

"It was just an exhausting weekend," added Nasuta. "We played some great softball and we showed the league that we're still the team to beat around the Northwest."

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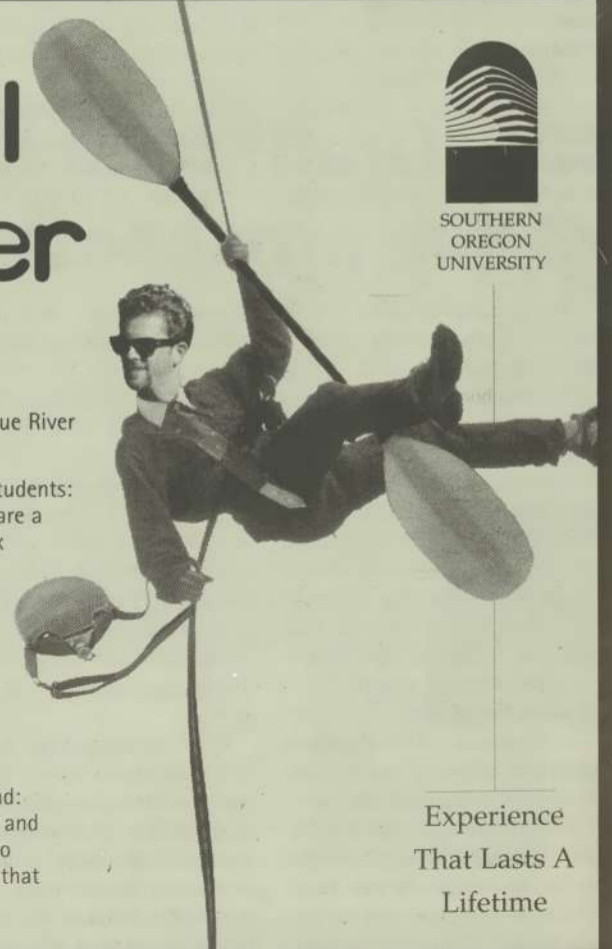
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