

THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

## A field of dreams

# Improved ballclubs could bring home titles

### Baseball

MANDY GOOD  
Sports Editor

The men's Cougar baseball team will start out this season this Saturday playing Lower Columbia CC at Longview Wa.. Then will play Grays Harbor on Sunday at home. The team is hoping for a season that will end in a National title.

"We've got better foot speed this year; I think that we have great hitting and we've had good hitting in the past, we were fourth of fifth in the Nation back in 1995 and I think that, that is the kind of team that we could have," said Head Coach Robbie Robinson.

According to Robinson the tough teams in the league that they will go head-to-head with this season will be Mt Hood, Chemeketa, Lane and Linn Benton.

"We think that it is going to be a good year for the region. We have well balanced teams," Robinson noted.

The team is made up of a mix of freshman and sophomores. In the fall the team was made up of 78 men. In winter training which went through Nov.-Dec. they picked 30 guys out of the bunch of 78. Then by Feb. 1 the team is again cut down to about 25 players, then cut again and there are currently 23 men that will represent the Clackamas baseball.

"We've taken a good group of kids and we've gotten down to what we think are the best 23 kids," explained Robinson. "We do have a couple of freshman pitchers that we think are going to do tremendous, and that is Aaron Shanks who is a left handed pitcher out of Madison, Colin Elliot a right handed pitcher/shortstop out of Seattle, and a kid that we just picked up out of the blue, that I think is going to be just tremendous, who is George Schler out of Forest Grove."

The Cougars have a team equipped with experienced pitchers, stronger depth in the middle field, a strong out-field and more team speed than the prior year. According to Coach Robinson, the team is going out with the tools that will make for a successful season of ball playing.

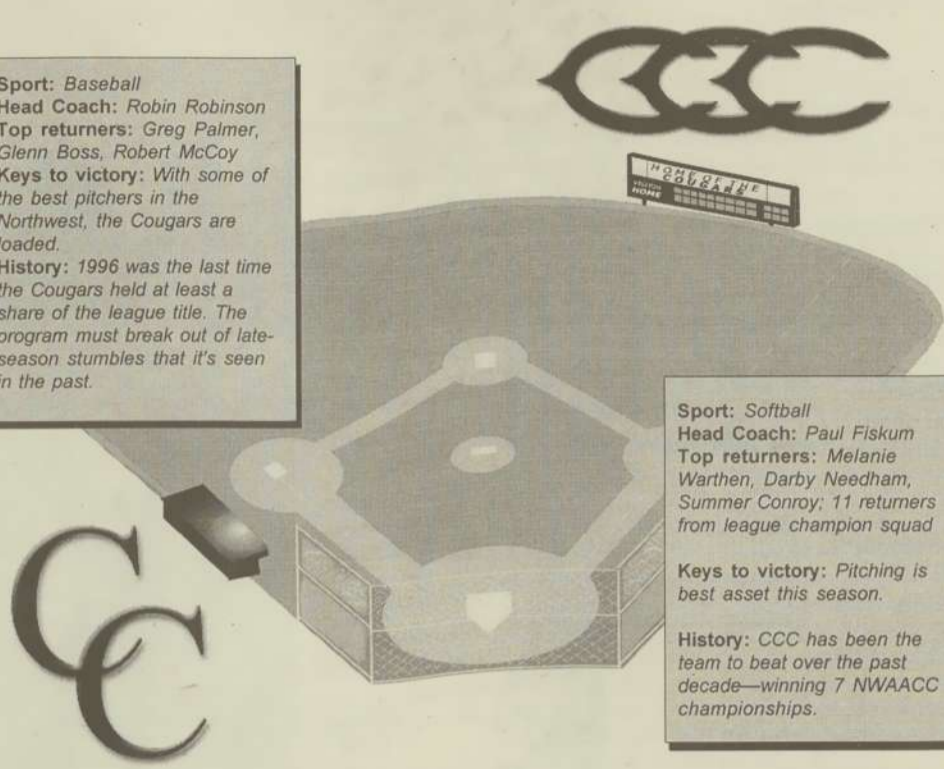
"It looks real good. We're strong pitching-wise. We've got great depth in the middle field, which was our weakness last year. Shortstop and second, we have strength there this year so we are compensating for last year. Our out field is playing really strong and we are going to hit better than we hit last year," explained Robinson. "Top to bottom, 1-6, our team should be very good."

**Sport:** Baseball  
**Head Coach:** Robin Robinson  
**Top returners:** Greg Palmer, Glenn Boss, Robert McCoy  
**Keys to victory:** With some of the best pitchers in the Northwest, the Cougars are loaded.  
**History:** 1996 was the last time the Cougars held at least a share of the league title. The program must break out of late-season stumbles that it's seen in the past.

**Sport:** Softball  
**Head Coach:** Paul Fiskum  
**Top returners:** Melanie Warthen, Darby Needham, Summer Conroy; 11 returners from league champion squad

**Keys to victory:** Pitching is best asset this season.

**History:** CCC has been the team to beat over the past decade—winning 7 NWAACC championships.



The baseball squad practices infield plays in a bunt situation. The Cougars are an improved bunch in every area, according to Head Coach Robin Robinson.

JOHN THORBURN / Clackamas Print

Vanessa Applegate takes hitting practice from Jolene Adams during practice on Monday afternoon. Applegate is one of 11 returners from a team that finished #4 in Washington and Oregon.



JOHN THORBURN / Clackamas Print

The baseball team's first home game is this Sunday against Grays Harbor College at 1 p.m.

The softball team's first home game is March 31 against Chemeketa at 2 p.m.

### Softball

JOHN THORBURN  
Editor-in-Chief

11 members of a squad that finished fourth in the Northwest and captured a share of the league championship last year, return for another run at a conference title.

With only 14 players on the roster this season, Head Coach Paul Fiskum feels that it is his 'most experienced' club to ever wear a Clackamas softball uniform.

Clackamas having won seven of the 12 conference titles since the addition of softball to the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges [NWAACC], Fiskum chooses his words carefully when comparing this year's squad to the champions of the past.

"Talent-wise we stack up with some of the best teams we've ever had," noted the 12-year veteran softball coach. "Our whole starting infield is back and two starters in the outfield are back. Plus an all-league pitcher; we've never had that kind of experience return. But experience isn't what wins: talent wins. This is a very talented group."

While the Cougars boast experience and talent, depth is not an element that Fiskum can brag about this season. Carrying only 14 players when it usually lists 18 on the roster, the sophomore-dominated team doesn't have much room for injury.

"With our depth factor, we just have to hope that we stay injury-free," noted Fiskum. "We've got 14 excellent players but if we get an injury then we'll definitely feel it. If we get an injury in our pitching staff then we're going to be hurting."

This season, the Cougars are carrying the usual three pitchers on their roster. An injury which sidelined Freshman Jolene Adams in recent weeks, however, leaves the squad with only two legitimate threats for the start of the season.

"Right now, it's pretty much on Mel [Warthen] and Darby's [Needham] shoulders," noted Fiskum.

Winning most of the NWAACC titles that have been contested in softball, the Cougars hope to take part in this year's championship tournament in Spokane—a place that has been welcoming to Clackamas softball. Fiskum has won two championships in the Eastern Washington city with the most recent coming in 1996. He feels that 2000 in Spokane will be a good spot for his squad.

"Some schools don't have the right to say that their legitimate achievable goal is to win an NWAACC title every year. We've, for a number of years, have had the right to say that and this team's no exception."