

Softball squad silenced in tournament title game

JOHN THORBURN
Editor-in-Chief

The Clackamas softball team took second place at the annual Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges [NWAACC] Crossover Tournament.

Despite losing the championship game to Lower Columbia College, the Cougars played some of their best games of the year against opponents last weekend. Winning games, however, is something that Clackamas is used to.

"We played twenty innings of error-free softball up until the championship game," said Clackamas Head Coach Paul Fiskum. "It's real disappointing to everybody to have the gloves go south on us at the same time the bats did."

Fiskum's squad was shutout 11-0 in five innings in the tournament championship.

Boasting a transfer pitcher that held a 24-5 record at the Division-I level last year, the LCC Red Devils had little trouble handling the Cougars.

"When the bats go south," noted Fiskum, "that's almost more understandable. You don't see pitching like that [in the NWAACC]. Maybe she's the best

pitcher this league's ever seen. Based on what she's done so far, you'd have to say that she probably is."

In five innings, Clackamas only mustered three hits.

13 Cougars struck out.

Fiskum's squad didn't enter the tournament's final game under normal circumstances, according to Fiskum. Shortly after the Cougars' semifinal win over Walla Walla, Assistant Coach Denise Nasuta was struck in the head by a foul ball. She was then taken to a nearby hospital with Assistant Coach Louie Nasuta for evaluation before returning to the field.

"Denise and Louie were at the hospital while we were warming up to play LCC," noted Fiskum. "That's a distraction from our normal pregame where we have both of them there. Denise is always talking to the pitchers and catchers. Maybe we just weren't in the right frame of mind; obviously we weren't because we didn't compete very well."

In the three wins leading up to the matchup with LCC, however, Fiskum couldn't ask for better play from his players.

The squad opened the tournament with a 2-1 victory over



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Melissa Cedillo checks her swing at in a game at home. The sophomore third baseman is hitting .371 with 22 runs scored for the Cougars this season.

Bellevue Community College in an eight-inning game.

Through six innings, Cougar pitcher Melissa Borde had a shut-out. In the seventh, the first two Bellevue hitters reached bases to threaten with nobody out. Fiskum then pulled Borde out of the game and replaced her with Melanie Warthen. Bellevue went on to score a run in the inning to send the game into the extra frame. Melissa Cedillo scored the winning run.

In its second game of the afternoon, Clackamas scored three runs in the fifth inning to pull out a 3-1 win over Wenatchee Valley. Summer Conroy and Jessica Farnsworth were 3-for-4 and 2-for-4 at the plate, respectively. Julia Driggers was 2-for-3 with the bat as well. Vanessa Applegate, Lori Paradis and Jessica Rowley each picked up RBIs.

On Sunday, Warthen had her best game of the year, according to the sophomore right-handed pitcher.

In the 8-0 win over Walla Walla, she faced 20 batters and struck out five of them. Warthen gave up only five hits.

"I just played with a lot of aggressiveness and intensity in that game," said Warthen. "I wanted it really bad. The devil just popped out. It was an intense game."

According to Fiskum, not only was Warthen pitching one of her best games of the season, but the bats started heating up as well. Six separate batters had multiple-hit games with Warthen's catcher, Driggers, turning in the best performance with three hits and one RBI in four plate appearances. Kirsten Richards hit an in-the-park homerun in the sixth inning to pick up two RBIs.

With the impressive outing against Northeastern division-leading Walla Walla, the Cougars were thrust into the perilous game against the Red Devils.

In the championship game, Laura Casper made her 2000 debut after not pitching since last fall. Casper, who had been nursing a recurring back injury since last season and did not have plans to turn out for this year's team, made the decision to play last week.

According to Fiskum, for not seeing action in half a year, Casper pitched very well. She faced 10 batters striking out three and giving up three hits and three walks while allowing three earned runs.

Last season, Casper was one of the squad's top pitchers.

Clackamas returns to league play with a rescheduled Mt. Hood double-header this afternoon in Gresham.

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