

Cougars lose to improved Japanese team

ALLAN COYLE
Contributing Writer

The Cougars were swept away by a skilled team of Japanese community college all-stars in a double header held in late September.

Every year Japanese community colleges choose an all-star baseball team from Japan and Okinawa. The team travels to the United States to test their mettle against American teams. A difference in school scheduling brings the Japanese to the states at the end of their season while the teams from the states are just beginning school. Every third year the team travels to Oregon.

This year the team from Japan is tough. In the past, American size, speed and power conquered the Japanese. But last month, a much-improved squad visited Oregon, and won both ends of the doubleheader against the Cougars. The Japanese team won the first game 4-1 and finished the sweep with a score of 6-2 in game two. Official scoring is not kept due to North-

west Athletic Association of Community Colleges rules.

"It is always a pleasure to host the Japanese team," Robinson said. "This year they took it to us. Two years ago we beat them twice with less of a team than we have now. That just goes to show you how much they have improved."

Game one starting pitcher, Clackamas sophomore George Sohler, pitched five scoreless innings, giving up only one hit. Sohler gave way to freshman pitchers trying to make the Cougar squad. Walks and hits plagued the Cougars in the final two innings, plating four Japanese runners. Japanese pitchers surrendered only two hits.

Game two saw more of the same from Cougar pitching. Sophomore pitcher Aaron Shanks started and gave up a couple of runs. Shanks pitched well, but an error and timely hitting by the Japanese put them ahead for good. Late in the game, with the Japanese up 3-2, a Japanese pinch-hitter slugged a three-run double to put the game out of

reach. Trying to start a rally in the late innings, freshman hopeful Tyler Hull drove a single to the right-center gap. While making the turn to second base, Hull rolled and broke his ankle on first base. Hull has shown he has the capability to play well at this level and was a contender to be the Cougar's starting center fielder. With rehabilitation and time, Hull should be back for winter practice.

"We really only had one practice before we played a tough Japanese team," Robinson stated. "I am proud of our guys for what they accomplished and the class they showed doing it."

Coach Robinson added that the combination of improved pitching by the Japanese team and many of the Cougar players hitting with wood bats for the first time proved too much for Cougar hitters.

Friendship is always a big part of this international duel between the Cougars and the Japanese ball clubs. Gifts are always exchanged between players, coaches and dignitaries. This year saw players and

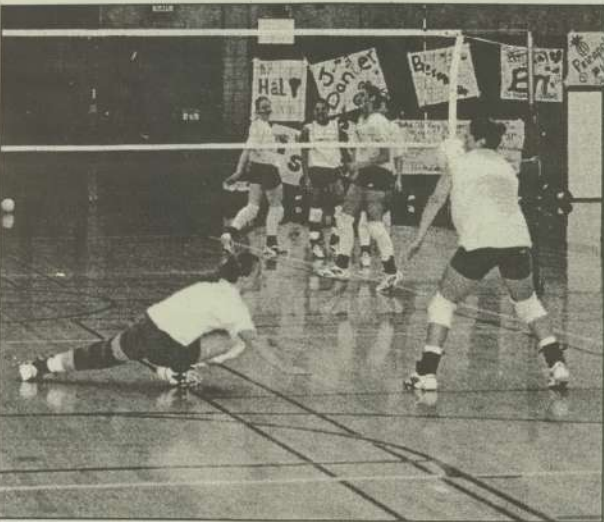


A Japanese player is held in check by the Clackamas first baseman "Jojo" Ordonez

coaches exchanging team gear (hats, bats and helmets) right on the field after the doubleheader. The Japanese have close ties with the coaching staff here at Clackamas. Although the Japanese played Linn-Benton Community College and Concordia University during their four day schedule, they chose to stay in Clackamas during the evening hours with the

Cougar coaching staff. It has also become customary that the coaches from both teams eat dinner at Gustav's and share stories, baseball philosophy and great times. During years that the Japanese travel to other states to play, the dignitaries and coaches always make a stop in Oregon City just to visit the staff at Clackamas.

I am Cougar, hear me roar! Grrrrr...



Cougars practice for a hard Southern Region Division.

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Clackamas was undefeated in league play until losing to Chemeketa last week.

The Cougars are currently in third place for the Southern Region, and are well on their way to competing in the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) Championships. With a league record of five wins and three losses, the Cougars are just one loss behind rival Chemeketa. Clackamas has a record of 12 wins and nine losses over all.

The Cougars lost to Chemeketa Wednesday in five games, with scores of 12-15, 15-5, 15-5, 8-15 and

15-13 a week ago. Friday brought the Cougars to Coos Bay to play against Southwestern CC in which the Cougars lost in five with scores of 4-15, 15-10, 15-17, 15-10 and 15-10. Saturday's game brought no more happiness as the Cougars were swept by Umpqua CC 15-5, 15-6 and 15-10.

The Cougars next game is the Columbia Basin Crossover tournament, this weekend in Pasco, WA.

Woods said the success of the Cougars will be greatly helped by the leadership of the team's captains, sophomores Christina Merrill, Kalei Crisafi and Shelly Brannon.

Help will also come from star players Eryn Wagner and Lisa Free, who have both been named Defensive Player of the Week, with Wagner also receiving the Offensive Player of the Week in the first week of play.

Also returning is sophomore Dasha Wakefield. The leadership that comes from strong sophomores is crucial in a two-year program. They have been around the league and know what to expect. It is up to them to bring themselves and the freshmen up to championship quality. New to the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) volleyball this year are freshmen Haley Howe, Julie Dancer, Meghan Boeckman, Sabrina Arrayan, Amy Klusmann, Sarah Entenman and Misty Bernhardt.

The Cougar volleyball team has enjoyed much success in the past

five years. Four of the last five years the Cougars captured the Southern Region title. Each of the last five years the Cougars appeared and placed in the NWAACC Tournament. In 1996, the team won the NWAACC Tournament.

Woods is in her twentieth year as head volleyball coach. She has earned much respect from her peers. With her winning program, the coach is often invited to speak throughout the northwest on motivation and team unity. It is her motivation and team skills that teach the players to believe in each other and their program.

Head Assistant Coach Casie Ireland is a former player for Woods. Ireland continued her playing career at Southern Oregon University while earning her bachelor's degree in Computer Information Systems. She is in her third year as assistant coach and returned to be a part of the Cougar tradition.

Curtis Arrayan is an assistant who attended Clackamas in 1992-94 and has also returned to be a part of this outstanding program.

Cougar players put in "three-a-day" practices for a full month before fall term began. Off the court, the Cougars have spent time doing beach clean-ups, visiting rest homes, and helping with various functions around school.

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