

Softball prepares for 2001 season opener

DAISY BAIN
Business Manager

The Cougar Women's Softball team will play a preseason game here at Clackamas on March 18, against Columbia Basin College at noon.

"We have been practicing long enough," said Coach Fiskum. "The girls have been practicing hard and are ready to play. We have had a good winter of conditioning."

However, they are suffering with some injuries, including one of their leading pitchers, sophomore Darby Needham. Needham has tendonitis in her throwing hand. According to Fiskum, it doesn't look like it is going to get better before the season starts.

Not to worry however, "If anybody can get well, it's Darby," said Fiskum.

The team has three other pitchers prepared to step up to the pitcher's mound. They are: Freshman Casey Lapp, Forest Grove; Freshman Vanessa Holm, Willamina; and Sophomore Melissa Borde, West Albany.

"Vanessa and Casey are both looking good," said Fiskum. "Borde is also starting to come around," he said. "She may start throwing in about two weeks."

Fiskum said he feels the team is strong in all aspects of the playing field. The Cougars are deep with quality catchers. Sophomore Julia Driggers was catcher half of last year's season and Sophomore Darcy Hertel, who transferred from Willamette University, was an all conference player as a freshman.

The Lady Cougars also like to go at least two deep in all infield positions.

"It looks like we are solid all over," said Fiskum.

He also feels confident on the offensive side.

"At least half a dozen of our girls are hitting the ball real well," he said.

The Cougar team has also added three more members to their staff. Kim Ostlund is the new pitching coach. She played in 1992 with Fiskum and was the starting pitcher for three years at PSU.

"We are really excited at what



FILE PHOTO

The Cougars have added three new members to their coaching staff in preparation for a tough league.

she's bringing to the team," said Fiskum.

New Defensive Coach Charlie Tropp, was the head coach at Canby High School for two years and was an American Softball Association softball coach for 30 years. Hitting Coach Bob Rapp has been around the team for years at different times.

"Bob Rapp is a longtime friend of the college," said Fiskum "We have all been in touch over the years. They all bring a lot of expe-

rience and expertise to the team."

Lower Columbia will be a difficult team to beat this year. They won the championship game last year, however Clackamas was one of only two teams to defeat Columbia. Fiskum believes that Mount Hood and Centralia will also be tough teams to beat.

He believes Centralia will be particularly hard. "They have got a veteran coach who knows what he is doing," he

said. It will be a tough but exciting season ahead for the Lady Cougars.

"There are nine teams in our league and I think seven of them are really good," said Fiskum.

An untimely debate

In a rural North Carolina home, a suitcase waits to be unpacked with care. It's filled with the belongings of Dale Earnhardt.

Last weekend in Las Vegas, Earnhardt's widow Teresa said that she hasn't had time to grieve for her deceased husband, let alone unpack his suitcase from Daytona.

Not only is Mrs. Earnhardt dealing with the loss of her husband and supporting her racing family, but she also finds herself embroiled in a First Amendment controversy.

The Orlando Sentinel has requested to view photographs from Dale Earnhardt's autopsy. The newspaper stated that they want to have the images examined by an independent expert on head trauma to determine the cause of death.

In the days following Dale Earnhardt's fatal crash at the Daytona 500 NASCAR race, a dispute has grown as to what actually caused the death of the sport's most prolific star.

According to the Sentinel, experts say that the medical examiner's determination of Earnhardt's cause of death as a "basal skull fracture" was not consistent with NASCAR's findings that Earnhardt's seatbelt broke, causing him to hit the steering wheel.

Sentinel Editor Tim Franklin said in a statement released last weekend, "We want to have a national expert review these photographs to determine whether the physical evidence is consistent with NASCAR's explanation of Dale Earnhardt's death. We want our expert to examine the failed seatbelt theory."

Teresa Earnhardt has sued Volusia County in Florida to stop the release of the photos. While the images of any autopsy not involved in a criminal investigation are public record in

Florida, Judge Joseph Will said that the photos have no "bona fide newsworthiness" and could cause the family "additional anguish and grief."

Just before her son Dale Jr. strapped himself into his racecar on Sunday, he sat by his mother, Teresa, as she made a public appeal for her family's privacy.

"We can't believe and are saddened that anyone would invade our privacy during this time of grief. I want to let you know that if access to the photos is allowed, others will demand them, too. And make no mistake, sooner or later the photos will end up unprotected and published... and most certainly on the Internet."

The Sentinel has said repeatedly that they have no intention of publishing the photos. Additionally, the newspaper said that it would allow the Earnhardt family to review the photos with them to ensure that they would not be published.

A hearing is set for tomorrow to determine whether or not the photos will remain sealed.

While I'm all for the freedom of the press, I can't help think of how unfortunate it is for the Earnhardt family to have to relive their tragic loss in the media, let alone a courtroom.

According to officials of the newspaper, "the Sentinel has sought access as a way to contribute to the debate on how racecar driving can be made safer. The photos may help resolve a conflict over how Earnhardt died."

In a society where we've grown accustomed to being suspicious, I'm wondering if it's the job of The Orlando Sentinel, or any news organization for that matter, to question the findings of medical professionals?

One can only hope that question is answered soon and Mrs. Earnhardt is able to go about unpacking that suitcase, on her own terms.



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