

Cougar glory fades after two losses

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Business Manager

All Clackamas' men's basketball team had to do was win two games and they could call themselves Southern Division champs. But the Cougar men fell to Chemeketa on Feb. 13 then lost on Feb. 16 to Southwestern Oregon, leaving the team's hopes of repeating as league champions up to chance.

With Chemeketa holding a 4-5 league record coming into their match with Clackamas, the Storm didn't appear to have a chance against the first-place Cougars. The Cougars had beaten them on Jan. 23, but the second time around was a different story.

Chemeketa emerged as the better team, if just for one night, defeating Clackamas 99-88.

Matt Tabisz was Clackamas' leading scorer in the game, with 25 points. Michael Kuebler tossed in 17 and grabbed seven rebounds, and Marvin Noble scored 14. In the

end, though, it was the Storm's determination to upset the league leaders that doomed Clackamas.

Despite their loss at Chemeketa, Clackamas still had an opportunity to tie Southwestern for first place with a victory. Instead, the Cougars were drowned in the Lakers' hype, losing 90-81.

Kuebler, who is averaging 26 points per game this season, finished with another spectacular athletic performance, scoring 33 points and snagging nine rebounds. Noble chipped in eight points and ended with eight rebounds in the Cougar loss.

The Cougars are in the midst of a slump, albeit a short one, dropping three of their last four games.

"On both Wednesday and Saturday we played two teams who played harder than we did, and that is unacceptable. No matter what else, we play harder than other people. We always have, and we've always prided ourselves on that, and we didn't do that," said Clackamas Coach Clif Wegner when asked for reasons behind his team's uncharacteristic losing streak.

On Jan. 30, the Cougars sat in the driver's seat of the Southern Division, with a 7-0 league record and were 20-2

on the year. But then Clackamas faced some adversity and, coupled with some of their most difficult matches all season, now find themselves with their backs against the wall.

"We need to keep our focus," said sophomore Mat Tondreau. "We just haven't been doing what got us here."

In looking ahead, the Cougars play three more games before the end of the regular season, two of which are on the road. Clackamas sits in a tie for second place with Lane, the team that handed the Cougars their first league loss of the year. The likelihood of a Clackamas repeat as Southern Division champions does not look promising, but in college basketball the results are never for certain, especially heading into March.

If Southwestern drops either one of their three matches, and the Cougars win all three of theirs, Clackamas will be in a tie for first place for the second time this season. Neither Wegner nor his team will be holding their breaths for that to happen

though.

"There is a very unlikely chance that that will happen (winning the Southern Division), but there is still a chance," panned Tondreau.

Wegner is not worrying about Southwestern. Instead, he is focusing on preparing his team for the remainder of the year.

"We're just trying to focus on improving, game by game, and getting ready for NWAACC's. The league champion never wins the NWAACC.

"I believe on any night we can beat anybody. I think nobody in the NWAACC wants to play us, because if we come out shooting well, we'll beat you," said Wegner when asked if his team still had a shot at winning the NWAACC Championships in early March.

"I think we'd just be scary for people to play (in the NWAACC Championships); we're kind of like the Gonzaga of the NWAACC."

That is the path that Clackamas has fallen into in just two weeks: from dominant contender to underdog challengers.

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MAGGIE JIRASEK / Clackamas Print

Mat Tondreau of Clackamas attempts a free throw in the Cougars' game against Southwestern Oregon on Feb. 16. Clackamas, who fell to the Lakers 90-81, never came within two points of their opponent.

NWAACC

SOUTHERN DIVISION

SW Oregon
Clackamas
Lane
Chemeketa
Linn-Benton
Mt. Hood
Portland
Umpqua

LEAGUE

10-1
8-3
8-3
6-5
5-6
5-6
2-9
0-11

SEASON

20-5
21-5
15-10
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