

Softball brings it

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News Editor

The Clackamas softball team capped a great weekend of play at the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) Softball Championships with a second place trophy, winning three of five games over the weekend.

"The girls had a great weekend of play; we played our tails off, on every pitch, on every play," said Head Coach Paul Fiskum. "This team is as good as we have ever had here at Clackamas, as good or even better than some of the NWAACC championship teams of years past. We just ran into a literal buzz saw of a team from Lower Columbia College, this year's champs."

After a first-round bye, CCC opened tournament play against Edmonds Community College Friday afternoon. A scoreless game through four innings quickly turned into a rout. In the fifth, doubles by Lindsay VanBramer and Kelsey Bisbing opened the scoring. Then Brooke Comstock lined a single to left field, but Bisbing was called out at the plate by a questionable call from the home plate umpire.

In the sixth, the Cougars broke the game open. Nikki Staley singled, Morgan Huffstetter singled up the middle, Lindsey Burke singled to drive in Staley, Erin Murphy singled to drive in Huffstetter and VanBramer singled to center to knock in Burke and Murphy to put the Cougars up 5-0.

Miranda Gillaspie took a perfect game into the fifth and a no-hitter into the seventh, before Edmonds made it interesting. A string of two-out base hits brought Vanessa Holm into the game to replace Gillaspie. Holm pitched out of a bases-loaded, two-out jam, with the tying run on third base, by striking out the final batter of the game in the Cougars' 5-4 victory.

After the win, the Cougars faced Spokane Community College. Gillaspie tossed a gem of a game, striking out four hitters, allowing only two hits, while walking only two.

VanBramer doubled in a run in the first, and Murphy continued her torrid hitting as of late, hitting a long home run in the second, helping CCC to a 4-0 lead, enroute to a 6-0 win over Spokane.

Staley was 2-3, Huffstetter was 2-4 with 2 runs batted in and Murphy was 2-4 on the game.

Sunday morning, the Cougars took on the steamroller that is Lower Columbia College. Lower Columbia had just had the scare of the entire NWAACC season, rallying from two runs down in the top of the seventh inning to

defeat Mt. Hood Community College, when the LCC infielder hit a two-run homer to put her team ahead, then K'sandra Sims, the outstanding sophomore and tournament Most Valuable Pitcher, shut down MHCC in the bottom of the seventh to hold on to the 4-3 win.

Against Clackamas, LCC scored a gift run in the bottom of the first, aided by two walks given up by Gillaspie. Staley tied the game up in the top of the fourth with the first home run of her collegiate career. Lower Columbia broke open the game in the fifth, scoring four runs on three hits and two errors by the Cougar defense enroute to the 5-1 victory.

"We played Lower Columbia very tough, but that Sims in one helluva pitcher," said Fiskum. "Our girls fought hard and played them tough, but we didn't have enough, just one of those things."

The Sunday afternoon semifinal between Clackamas and Spokane was a one-sided affair. The Cougars started slow, only getting three hits through the first five innings.

In the sixth, Staley singled to get on base, then Carla Lillis laid down a sacrifice bunt to move Staley to second, but the third baseman threw wild to first, allowing Lillis to move to second and Staley to third. Huffstetter laid down another bunt, allowing Staley to make a hook slide at home to score the game's first run. Murphy followed that play with a single up the middle, driving in Lillis to put the Cougars up 2-0.

The Cougars added another run in the seventh on a Bisbing single, a Bisbing steal of second and a Lillis single to give Clackamas their final tally in a 3-0 victory.

"Casey Lapp probably threw the best game of her career in the Sunday Spokane game," Fiskum said. "We had not called upon her to pitch either Friday or Saturday, so to get off the bench and throw a two-hit shutout against one of the top hitting teams in the whole conference was just outstanding. I am so very proud of Casey and her effort, not only this game, but the whole season."

The NWAACC championship game Sunday afternoon between Lower Columbia and Clackamas started ugly for the Cougars, falling behind 3-0 after three innings, but the Cougars put on a rally in the fourth. Huffstetter walked and Murphy singled, placing runners at second and third with only one out. VanBramer laid down a perfect squeeze bunt, scoring Huffstetter and moving Murphy to third. But the Cougars could not score again in the fourth and trailed at that point of the contest, 3-1. Lower Columbia added to their

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Clackamas' Kelsey Bisbing reacts to the umpire after she is tagged out at home plate during the fifth inning of the Cougars' opening game with Edmonds CC at the NWAACC softball tournament last weekend at Delta Park in Portland. The Cougars softball team ended the weekend with the second place trophy, losing to Lower Columbia in the final.