

Women's soccer has arrived

Former University of Portland standout Tracy Nelson takes control of the soccer program that has been added at Clackamas Community College

Elena Boryska
Sports Editor

This year was the kickoff of Clackamas Community College's first season of women's soccer, and the Cougar women have been tearing up the field in an effort to make it to the top of the Northwest Athletic Association of Community College's (NWAACC) Southwestern Division.

In eight games since the season opener on Sept. 13, the Cougars have won five times, tied once and lost twice, leaving them behind division-leading Tacoma and second-place Lower Columbia College.

This early season success has been a little surprising to Head Coach Tracy Nelson, a former University of Portland Pilot soccer star, who is trying her hand at a college coaching job for the first time.

"We're definitely doing well, and coming to a new program and a new team, you never really know what to expect," Nelson said. "It always takes a couple years to really build a program and we were fortunate to get a good group of girls in. It's a good solid group that has really come together as a team and are playing really well."

CCC Athletic Director Jim Jackson was a driving force behind women's soccer coming to Clackamas. The reason that the new program was established has to do with the fact that another women's sport was required to bring Clackamas into gender equity in athletics.

Simply put, approximately 53% of the CCC general population is female, and the athletic opportunities must match up with that percentage. But prior to women's soccer being added, the college was actually much closer to 53% of athletic opportunities belonging to men.

This gender inequity could have warranted a formal investigation by the Office of Civil Rights, had anybody made a major complaint. The athletics system had been out of balance for quite awhile, and Jackson had wanted to bring on a new women's sport since he came on the job in 1992. Only after a personnel shift freed up the necessary money for the program to be established did this finally take place.

When it came time to decide which sport was right for CCC, soccer seemed to be the perfect fit. There weren't too many other sports to consider, and since soccer is such a popular and successful sport in the area, it was an easy choice.

"Obviously one of the prominent sports is women's soccer. Without a doubt," Jackson said. "It became kind of a no-brainer for us in wanting to put that on."

The players that represent Clackamas on the soccer field are all freshmen, but are not caving to the pressure that comes with being a new student.

"All of the players have done a super job and they've all contributed in different ways," Nelson

Defender Tara Wood (right) does her best to keep the ball from a Clark opponent in the Cougars 2-1 home victory on Oct. 2. Forward Megan Moore (below) breaks free from a Clark player in that same Oct. 2 victory. Moore helped her team gain the victory by scoring one of the two goals in that game. The Cougar women are currently in the third place position in the Southwestern Division of the NWAACC behind soccer powerhouse Tacoma and second place Lower Columbia College.

LUKE MAHAN
Clackamas Print



said. "I wouldn't say there's been a player that's been holding the team together, I think it's been a combined effort by everybody."

Prior to the season opener, Nelson, like all people starting a new job, had some feelings of nervousness. She was however, able to quickly turn those nerves into success on the playing field.

"I was a little nervous just because I've never done anything with the college level before. It's a whole new experience," Nelson said. "And there's a lot of other things that...are a factor at the college level besides just coaching. There's a whole other side of it that I've never had to experience before."

The overall play of the soccer team has been going well, but that doesn't mean that they are without

weaknesses. Nelson has spent practice time working with her players on finishing and increasing the speed of play, with the hopes that the team will be able to play better under pressure.

"To be able to compete with the top teams, we need to increase our speed of play. That's the biggest thing right now," Nelson said. "Play a little quicker, a little faster, know where we want to play the ball before we get it, are things that we have to continue to work on."

The Cougars' most recent match at Southwestern Oregon on Oct. 12 resulted in their second loss of the season, falling to SWOCC by a final of 3-1.

"We didn't do so well this past weekend," Nelson said. "We kind of want to forget this weekend and

move on."

Next up for Clackamas are home games on Fri., Oct. 18 and Sat., Oct. 19 against Shoreline and Bellevue, respectively. The last time these teams met, the Cougars were the victors in both games. But that doesn't mean that this weekend is going to be a piece of cake.

"I think (Bellevue) is going to be a lot tougher than it was the first time we played them," Nelson said. "Hopefully, these next few games will build some confidence back up for us and get us back on track and playing how we know we can."

As the season draws closer to the playoffs, the Cougars are hopeful about their chances of postseason survival. They have already played every other team at least once, which has given them a chance to measure themselves against the competition.

So far, Nelson sees the biggest competition coming from division-leading Tacoma, as well as second-place Lower Columbia College. The Cougars haven't fared too well against these teams, losing to Lower Columbia by a score of 3-2, and tying Tacoma 2-2. But Nelson isn't worried about these details.

"With this group, anything's possible. If they get it in their mind that they can do it and want to do it, I think anything's possible," Nelson said. "And anybody can beat anybody on any given day."

Cougar Sports Calendar

s o c c e r

*Friday, October 18 vs. Shoreline @ 4p.m. -HOME

*Saturday, October 19 vs. Bellevue @ 1p.m. -HOME

*Friday, October 25 vs. Green River @ 2 p.m. in Auburn, WA

*Saturday, October 26 vs. Highline @ 12 p.m. in Des Moines, WA

*Wednesday, October 30 vs. Southwestern Oregon @ 3p.m. -HOME

v o l l e y b a l l

*Friday, October 18 vs. Mt. Hood @ 7p.m. -HOME

*Wednesday, October 23 vs. Lane @ 7p.m. -HOME

*Wednesday, October 30 vs. Chemeketa @ 7p.m. -HOME

c r o s s c o u n t r y

*Saturday, October 26 -Southern Region Championships