

Cougar men straighten out Big Bend, win fifth-place NWAACC hardware

Frank Jordan
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

The Clackamas Cougar men completed another outstanding season on Monday as they defeated the Big Bend CC Vikings 81-73 to capture the fifth-place trophy at the NWAACC Basketball Championships.

"A great effort by all of our kids. They played hard all season and it is nice to see them rewarded for their hard work," said Head Coach Clif Wegner. "They played really hard today, they had great control and poise at the end of a tight ball game and that paid off for them."

Alex Swerzbin got the Cougars off to a quick start, scoring CCC's first seven points. Brandon Gill hit a jumper and a fall-back three-pointer and Steve Lemma made a show-and-go layup and a three to help the Cougars to an early 25-17 lead.

Big Bend slowly started working their way back and when Viking guard Brian Kast hit a three with 4:34 left in the opening half, Big Bend had their first lead at 28-27.

The two teams went back and forth the rest of the half, as Ammon Bemis made two baskets down low, then Swerzbin made a jumper at the halftime buzzer, drawing the Cougars to within one at the break, 36-35.

Bemis wasn't around much for the Cougars in the second half as he picked up his fourth and fifth fouls in

the first two minutes, sitting him down for the rest of the game.

Freshmen Ervin Sims and Josh Spirlin came in and picked up the slack made by Bemis' departure and made key contributions in the second half.

Big Bend used an 8-0 run to grab a 55-48 lead, but the Cougars fought back behind the inside play of Sims and the outside play of Swerzbin and Gill. CCC got the lead back at 63-61 after two foul shots by Gill, then Gill was fouled on a three-point try. He hit all three at the line to give Clackamas a lead at 67-64. It was back and forth for the next three minutes until Gill hit a three out from the wing to give CCC the lead for good at 76-73. Free throws by Sims, Lemma and Gill closed out the Vikings and gave the Cougars their trophy.

"Spirlin and Sims simply took over the game in the second half. Their play was very inspirational to the whole team and carried us to a huge win," said Wegner. "Not to mention the play of our three sophomore guards: Gill, Lemma and Swerzbin. They were as good as they have been the whole season. Everyone did a real nice job today and the whole weekend."

Gill capped an outstanding tournament with 24 points to lead CCC, while Swerzbin contributed 22. Sims had 14 points and six rebounds, and Lemma chipped in 11 points, grabbed a game-high eight rebounds and dished out a team-high five



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Clackamas players and coaches pose with the fifth-place trophy earned at the NWAACC championship tournament on Monday in Kennewick, Wash. (Left to right) Garrett Johnson, Coach Clif Wegner, James Couture, Wes Jensen, Alex Swerzbin, Brannon Kishpaugh, Brandon Gill, Steve Lemma, Cole Kieling, Ammon Bemis, Josh Spirlin, Asst. Coach Jim Worden, Ervin Sims, Brent Kahle and Maycol Rivera.

assists. Clackamas shot 45 percent from the floor and was 16-22 from the line for the game. Both teams got 42 rebounds, but the Cougars forced Big Bend into 23 turnovers to help in the win.

Guard Daniel McFaul led the Vikings with 19 points, Leigh Castillo had 16 and Travis Ohrn chipped in 12. Big Bend was harassed into just 40 percent shooting and missed some big free throws late that may have turned the tide in their favor.

The fifth-place finish ended Clackamas' 11th appearance at the NWAACC tournament with their

tenth trophy. This year's placing improved upon the seventh place that the team garnered last season. The Cougars last won the NWAACC championship in 1994.

"This tournament is really hard for the players. Just think about it, you have to play four games in four days, under some real pressure," said Wegner. "Not only for the players, but for the coaches as well. Our kids played great and deserve all of the credit. Most of these tournaments come down to adrenaline and guts. Our kids displayed some guts this weekend and for that, we walk out of here with a trophy. Enough said."

- All-Tournament Teams**
MOST VALUABLE PLAYER-Chris Bannish, LCC.
FIRST TEAM-Gregg Barlow, MHCC; Bryan Freshwater, LCC; Trevor Hutton, MHCC; Brandon Lord, PeC; Steven Trotter, LCC.
SECOND TEAM-Travis Fridrich, EdCC; **Brandon Gill**, CICC; Daniel McFaul, BBCC; Robert Pankowski, WWCC; Marcus Whittaker, TCC.
MOST INSPIRATIONAL PLAYER-Ben Perry, MHCC.

CHAMPS: Alldrin named MVP

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in Clackamas' favor, resulting in an Umpqua bucket and a tie game.

Umpqua turned the ball over a number of times thereafter and the Cougars pulled away for the 83-75 victory.

In a quarterfinal game Saturday, the Cougars defeated Shoreline CC 68-54. Shoreline jumped out to an early lead but the Cougars held on and once again dominated the second half.

Shoreline's Ebonee Newson scored 19 first-half points, but fouled out early in the second half.

Martineau was pleased with the job the Cougar post players did on Newson.

"Oh, the big girl, she's tough," Martineau said. "It didn't look like she could play, but she's an excellent player; I thought we did a good job

on her. She's leading the NWAACC in scoring and rebounds. She fouled out; we did a job on her."

Alldrin led the Lady Cougars with 21 points; she also grabbed seven rebounds. Cadotte scored 11 points and pulled down 10 rebounds.

In their tournament opener on Friday, Clackamas defeated Wenatchee Valley CC 76-59.

Alldrin poured in 21 points; Calmettes and Somer Erickson each added 16 points. Cadotte scored 13 and hauled in eight rebounds.

* Tournament All-Stars included: Caddote and Erickson, who were voted to the first team. Alldrin was voted tournament MVP.

Martineau knows this was a special team and season.

"Oh man, these girls are frickin' good. They're nine people who don't care about who scores and who plays; as a group they are the best

I've seen by far.

Clackamas Athletic Director Jim Jackson is very pleased with the success of both men's and women's basketball this season.

"The women have worked so hard for us," Jackson said. "It shows the type of coaches that we have. I was impressed with how well-conditioned our teams were compared to the others in the tournament. I'm biased, but I think we have the best coaches in the Northwest."

"We're pleased all the way around. Anytime you can have both teams there it's pretty impressive, it says a lot. The kids have just been great."

Next year, only two women, Kasie Elliott and Lindsey Boeckman, will return from this season's NWAACC championship team.

- All-Tournament Teams**
MOST VALUABLE PLAYER-Cindy Alldrin CICC.
FIRST TEAM-Courtney Bothum, ChCC; Ashley Cadotte, CICC; Somer Erickson, CICC; Julie Melcher, ChCC; Micaela Williams, UCC.
SECOND TEAM-Angela Cornejo, SVC; LeeAnn Genovese, Lane; Brianna Hilliard, YVCC; Nikki Johnson, CenC; Laura Sprague, WWCC.
MOST INSPIRATIONAL PLAYER-Annie Hartle, ChCC.



Clackamas sophomore wing Ashley Storms (14) lets a three fly in the NWAACC title game against Chemeketa.

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Clackamas' Cindy Alldrin (32) drives baseline past a Chemeketa defender during the Cougars' 55-36 win to take the NWAACC championship Monday night.



Cougars' Somer Erickson (10) watches Ashley Cadotte (33) work the boards for CCC.