

Gill pours in 22 second-half points to lead Cougars past Skagit Valley

Frank Jordan
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

The Clackamas men's basketball team stayed alive in the NWAACC tournament Sunday night with an 87-84 victory over the Skagit Valley CC Cardinals in a consolation game.

The two teams went back and forth early, but the Cardinals took advantage of the Cougars' lackadaisical play to forge an early 13-point lead. Clackamas fought back briefly, highlighted by a baseline drive and reverse dunk by Ammon Bemis to cut the Skagit Valley lead to 31-22. The Cardinals maintained that nine-point cushion up until the halftime horn, taking a 39-30 lead into the lockerroom at the break.

"We were not altogether there mentally in the first half," said Head Coach Clif Wegner. "We told the kids at half that they had to get into the game and get after them (Skagit Valley). We did some good things, but more bad than good."

The early part of the second half was more of the same as Skagit Valley opened up a 52-41 lead at the 15-minute mark. A Brandon Gill three-pointer got the Cougars going,

and then Alex Swerzbin faked a Cardinal defender out of his shoes with a sweet crossover and drive to the hole that cut the lead to eight.

Steve Lemma's second of two triples late in the contest gave the Cougars their first lead in a long time at 75-73 with just under five minutes left. Then, Wes Jensen converted a foul-line jumper and a put-back inside to help keep the Cougars ahead.

The biggest play of the game came with 26 seconds to go as Gill hit a huge three-pointer as he was hit by a Cardinal defender. Gill's subsequent free throw completed a four-point play and gave Clackamas some breathing room at 85-82.

However, a questionable call by the officials on a Skagit Valley three-point attempt gave the Cardinal's Landon Lockhard a chance to tie the game at the line. Lockhard hit the first two foul shots, but missed the third and Lemma was fouled as he came up with the loose ball. Lemma's two foul shots with 8.9 seconds left gave the Cougars an 87-84 lead, and then Lemma stole a desperation pass to end the game.

"Lemna was huge for us down

the stretch, he really was great. He made some good decisions and made some big shots," said Wegner. "Gill had a great second half and Alex (Swerzbin) did a great job running the high picks in our offense. A great effort by our trio of guards tonight."

Gill scored 22 of his game-high 28 points in the second half, fueling the Cougar comeback. Lemma followed with 14 points, Bemis had 12, Jensen had 11 and Swerzbin had 10, along with seven rebounds, matching Gill in that department for team-high honors. Clackamas shot 46 percent for the game, including 54 percent in the final half. CCC shot 16-19 from the line during the game, including 15-17 in the second half.

Lockhard and Bobby Turman led Skagit Valley with 21 points apiece, while Turman grabbed a game-high nine rebounds in the losing effort.

"Turman is good, he did a great job for them, we had a heck of time containing him," said Wegner. "In the first half, he had a chance to spin around people for easy looks, but in the second half we pretty much stopped that. Great defense on our part and was a key to the game."



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Cougar guard Alex Swerzbin (22) sinks a lay-in as teammate Ervin Sims (23) fights for rebound position in CCC's 81-73 victory over Big Bend to win fifth place.

Lemna busts out, leads Cougars past Highline in NWAACC consolation play

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Saturday afternoon, the Clackamas men took on Highline CC in a loser-out game in the consolation bracket of the NWAACC tournament and the Cougars got 15 points and five rebounds from Steve Lemma to lead CCC to a 79-69 win over the Thunderbirds in the Tri-Cities Coliseum.

"We did a much better job today than we did last night," said Head Coach Clif Wegner, referring to Friday's loss to Walla Walla in the opening round. "We played with more focus and energy and when you do that, good things happen."

The game was tight through the first ten minutes before Clackamas went on 10-0 run to take an 11-point lead at 27-16. Ammon Bemis played strong both offensively and defensively during the run. Highline

fought back with a 9-0 run of their own to get within two.

After that, the Cougars went to a full-court trap, which seemed to disrupt the T-birds and in the last six minutes of the first half, CCC went on a 16-1 run to take a 43-26 half-time lead.

But in the second half, CCC saw most of the foul calls go against them and combined with some poor shooting, saw their lead shrink to four points with eight minutes left in the game. But led by Lemma and Cole Kieling, along with a couple of hoops from Maycol Rivera and Ervin Sims, kept the Cougars ahead through the stretch run.

The biggest play of the game happened with two minutes left and CCC clinging to a three-point lead. Kellen Williams of Highline attempted a two-handed dunk inside, but missed, which led to a Cougar break that ended in a three-point dagger by Lemma. The Cougars got timely

free throw shooting in the game's final minute to close out the Thunderbirds.

Brandon Gill followed Lemma in the scoring column with 14 points, while Bemis added 11 and Kieling finished with 10 counters. Wes Jensen came off the bench to grab a team-high seven rebounds and Alex Swerzbin dished out five assists. Clackamas shot 25-69 for 36 percent on the game and was 24-32 at the foul line.

Highline forward Tavar Proctor was 10-15 from the field and scored 21 points, while Williams followed with 15 points and a game-high 14 rebounds.

"Kieling and Lemma gave us huge boosts with their play," said Wegner, "and Jensen did some really good things for us off the bench. We had a great first half, but kind of let it get away from us late. But any win is a good win, especially in the tournament."

Poor shooting leads to opening round loss against WWCC

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In the first round of the NWAACC tournament, the Clackamas men's basketball team shot only 33 percent for the game and lost to Walla Walla CC by a score of 89-78.

Walla Walla led by one at the halftime break, and continued to stretch that lead throughout the second half. Clackamas made a run about halfway through the second half with some trapping defense, but poor shot selection and poor free throw shooting eventually did the Cougars in.

Clackamas was led by 21 points and five steals from Brandon Gill, while Alex Swerzbin contributed 18 points and three assists. Steve Lemma added 14 points to the offense, and Cole Kieling and Wes Jensen each grabbed six rebounds to lead the Cougars off the backboards.

The Cougars shot 26-78 from the field for the game, including 3-15 from three-point range. Clackamas also shot only 23-35 from the foul line for the game, including a dismal 10-18 in the second half.

"We forced a lot of shots, our guards tried to do too much," said Head Coach Clif Wegner. "The whole team, including the guards, just did not play very well. We pride ourselves on being a good passing team, but we only had six assists as a team for the game. That's terrible."

Walla Walla was led by sophomore post Robert Pankowski with 37 points and 16 rebounds. Pankowski shot 15-18 from the floor for the game. Justin Fraser backed up Pankowski with 15 points.

"Their big guy was just awesome," said Kieling. "He just killed us inside, what was he, 15-18 from the floor. Simply awesome."

A weekend to remember at the 2004 NWAACC Basketball Championships

Photos by AMY CASHMAN Clackamas Print



Clackamas post Wes Jensen (left) goes high to the hoop as teammate Cole Kieling goes for the follow vs SVCC.



(Left to right, in white) Cougars Somer Erickson, Cindy Alldrin and Lindsay Calmettes follow the action during Clackamas' 55-36 win over Chemeketa for the NWAACC title.



CCC's Lindsay Calmettes (22) shoots between two Chemeketa defenders, while Sabra Dunn (12) closes in for the rebound during the NWAACC championship game.

Three wrestlers make All-American

The Clackamas wrestling team competed at the National Junior College Athletic Association championships last weekend. The Cougar wrestlers finished in the top 15 as a team at the tourney. Bridger Sacher finished fourth at 197 pounds, Mike Maginn finished eighth at 184 and Chris Kidby finished eighth at 174. Each of these wrestlers' placings earned them All-American honors. Read next week's edition of *The Clackamas Print* for a complete wrap-up on the wrestling season.