

A basketball legacy that waits to be fulfilled



Jeff Sorensen Clackamas Print

Brian Freeman shows off his 6'9" frame, which has proven to be a key asset for Clackamas this season as they approach the NWAACC post-season

Basketball isn't just a game of skill to this Cougar, it's life

Michael McCormack
Sports Co-Editor

By the time Brian Freeman picked up the game of basketball, he had set a goal for himself that for some is just a dream.

"It's always been my goal to play Division One hoops," Freeman said.

In order for one to play at such a high level, determination and motivation has to be set at a young age, and for Freeman that motivation came from his father, who in his younger days starred for the Oregon State Beavers in hoops.

Freeman was born in Corvallis and at two years old his family made the short move over to Albany, Oregon. In Albany, he learned the game he would grow to love from his dad, a man that he considers his hero.

In the state of Oregon, kids normally don't start playing competitive basketball until they are in the second or third grade, but for Freeman, he couldn't wait to lace up the shoes and hit the hardwood.

"Albany is not a very exciting town, so I had to make my own fun through basketball," Freeman said.

So as a kindergartner his parents signed him up to play with the local second grade team, and ever since, he has not allowed his aspirations of playing at the highest collegiate level be derailed.

As Freeman got older he

wasn't growing as fast as everyone had expected, but his lack of size didn't discourage him to become all that he could be on the ball courts of Albany.

As a freshman at West Albany High School, Freeman's dreams of playing hoops hit a crossroad, in the sense that he was told by coaches he was too short to play. He stood at a modest 5 feet 10 inches, but his short stature didn't discourage him from playing the game he loved.

"I was just a little guy, and I wasn't very good, but they kept me because they thought I would grow because my dad was tall," Freeman said.

His stick-to-itiveness paid off, and by the time Freeman entered his sophomore year he had shot up to 6 feet 5 inches and was swinging between the junior varsity and varsity teams. As a junior he became a full-fledged starter for the varsity squad and by his senior year he had become an All-League performer in the Valley Conference.

After his senior year Freeman had to make a choice of where to continue his playing days. The University of Wyoming showed interest in Freeman, but when they didn't offer anything to him, he decided to head northbound and play for Clif Wegner and the Clackamas Cougars.

During the summer between his junior and senior years of high school, Freeman played for Wegner's exclusive Ice team and saw that Wegner was a winner.

"I wanted to come to a place to win, and I knew that Wegner was a winning coach," Freeman said. "The decision seemed easy enough."

When Freeman showed up here on campus he wasn't quite sure who his teammates would be, but when he did see them he realized that they were going to be pretty good.

Freeman has yet to declare a major for his college years, but in the meantime he is content with taking classes that he is curious about.

"I find that psychology is really interesting," Freeman said. "It probably won't be my major, but I think it is important to understand later on in my life."

In a similar way Freeman's basketball future is as uncertain as his educational goals, but if the D-1 offers start coming in, he will have no other choice than to take them; if not, he is content on finishing his two-year college career as a Cougar.

Basketball runs through Freeman's veins, stemming from his father, who after his OSU playing days played a season in the NBA, but Freeman's high morals come from both parents.

His mom and dad set standards of life for him to follow, which in turn built an everlasting respect for one another; to this day his parents still attend every game he participates in.

"I have a great relationship with my parents," Freeman said. "When I get frustrated with life I always turn to my dad first; he is my go to guy."

Albeit Freeman is very hard on himself, saying that he feels he has underachieved if he doesn't make a Division One program, he needs to know that he is right at home here in Oregon City as he helps the Clackamas Cougars advance to the NWAACC playoffs.

Men hit playoffs; ready to roar

Michael McCormack
Sports Co-Editor

Despite a loss to conference rival Hood CC last Wednesday, the Cougar men clinched third place in the Southern Division of the NWAACC to guarantee them a spot in this year's tournament.

The Mt. Hood contest was described by the Clackamas players as the game of the season for them. Only suiting up eight players due to numerous injuries, the Cougars came out of the locker room in the first half with a determined look on their faces.

Through the first 10 minutes of play, Clackamas backed with the no-franked Saints by way of great perimeter shooting and playing on pure adrenaline.

During a five-minute span, the Cougars hit five consecutive three-pointers, including the straight points by sophomore Wes Jensen, to take a 28-24 lead at the 11:45 mark, but that lead disintegrated as Mt. Hood started to make a run to close out the first half.

"We didn't get back on defense; I see guys just jogging back, and that's no way to win a basketball game," Head Coach Clif Wegner said.

At the half, Mt. Hood had built a lead of 11 points, and with the lack

of team depth and early foul trouble from Cougar post Brian Freeman, the Cougars looked dead in the water.

To start the second half Clackamas came out strong and went on an 8-0 run in a 1:05 span to cut the Saints' lead to three, but the Saints were too strong and once Freeman had picked up his fourth foul with 15 minutes remaining, Mt. Hood had built its lead back to 11.

"We don't have many options on the bench, so we can't afford to get into foul trouble; Brian never was able to get into a groove," Wegner said.

Clackamas shot a dismal 40 percent for the game, while the Saints stayed hot throughout the game, shooting a blazing 56 percent from the field, and in the end, the Cougars had lost their third straight game 101-79.

On Saturday, the Cougars headed south to face the Umpqua CC Timbermen in Roseburg. The game was tight all the way through, but, in the end, Clackamas was able to prevail and come away with a 61-57 victory.

Freeman was able to recover from his forgettable night on Wednesday, scoring 16 points, as well as pulling down 14 rebounds, dishing out five assists and leading the team with four steals. Jensen topped all scorers

with 20 points.

"We were open and the shots we took were good shots; they just didn't fall," Wegner said.

Shooting only 38 percent from the floor, the Cougars found other ways to produce on fast breaks. Clackamas was able to force the Timbermen into 14 turnovers, which

led to 15 Clackamas points, while handing over only 10 turnovers of their own.

The Cougars will travel to Portland Community College tonight to close out their regular season. In the first match-up between these two teams, Clackamas blew away PCC with an impressive 96-65 victory.

The NWAACC playoffs start next Thursday, March 3, in Kennewick, Wash. The Cougars will face the no. 2 seed from the Western Division, which as of today is Pierce College.

Tonight's game with Portland CC is slated for a 7:30 p.m. start time on the PCC-Sylvania campus.

"We were open and the shots we took were good shots; they just didn't fall."

Clif Wegner
Men's basketball
Head Coach

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