

The best of the best at Clackamas

I'm Michael McCormack, the sports editor for The Clackamas Print, and I wanted to give my thoughts on the best Cougars' team in the past year, as well as the top Cougar athlete. Let's call these awards 'The Mikeys'

"The Mikey Team of the Year"

Clackamas was fortunate enough to have four NWAACC champions in the 2004-2005 athletic seasons. The women's cross-country, volleyball and softball teams took home first in grand fashion, but one team stood out from the rest, and that would be the women's soccer team.

Not only did the soccer team win the NWAACC's, they made sure that the conference knew they were no fluke. The team finished their season with a record of 20 wins, no losses and two ties. But that record alone doesn't do justice for the squad.

In the regular season the ballers of Clackamas were led by freshman Vicki Rodriguez, who was second in the NWAACC with 28 goals scored. Along with Rodriguez, Emily Ingalls and Amanda Triller both ranked in the top ten in assists. The Cougars flat out dominated opponents scoring 63 goals

in the regular season to their opponents' five.

Six Cougars made first team Southwest Division, led by Rodriguez who was chosen as the Player of the Year; Head Coach Tracy Nelson was also awarded as the Coach of the Year. Megan Diebel, Trisha Little, Tianna Meduri, Jessica Engeman and Triller all joined Rodriguez as all-stars.

In the playoffs the Cougars turned up their game to another level, outscoring opponents 12-0, including a 6-0 shellacking of Tacoma Community College in the finals. Emily Ingalls was chosen as the tournament MVP for the Cougars, scoring three goals and adding two assists in three games.

Overall, the Lady Cougars outscored opponents 75-5, and were never behind once in a contest throughout the season. Other Cougar teams were great, but no team controlled and dominated quite like the soccer team.

"The Mikey Player of the Year"

My player of the year choice was a little more difficult to choose, because there is such a large quantity of great Cougar athletes to select from. As I sat back and pondered on who should get the award, I considered three factors. One, how well did the athlete excel as a player? Two, what kind of leadership skills did the athlete show on the playing field? And three, was this player the driving force for his or her team's successes?

After looking over a list of four players, I finally came to the conclusion that Wes Jensen of the men's basketball team was my pick.

Jensen, a sophomore from Molalla, led his team in scoring with 19.5 point per game, and was second in rebounds, pulling down nine-and-a-half per outing. In the playoffs, Wes turned his game up to the next level, leading a depleted Cougars team to third place in the NWAACC tourney, averaging 25.5 points in four games and earning a spot on the All-Tournament team. In his final game as a Cougar, Jensen played the best game of his collegiate career, scoring 30 points,

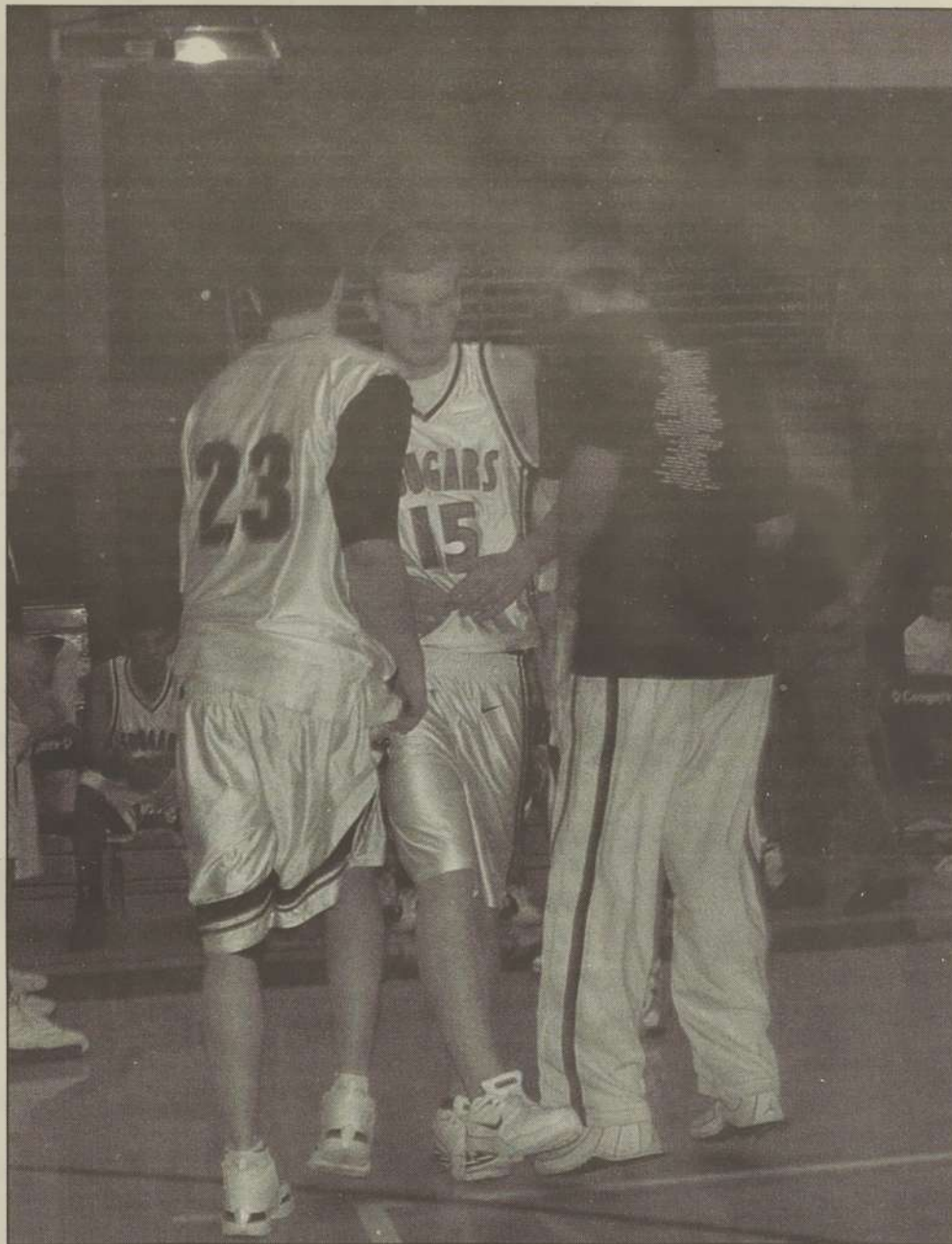
pulling down nine boards, and dishing out four assists, in addition to two blocks and three steals; simply put, Jensen just wanted it more.

But in my opinion, Jensen's play wasn't the best part of his game. Jensen's leadership skills showed an uncanny resemblance to the likes of a Michael Jordan. Going into the post-season Clackamas was the third place team coming out of the south division, and only had eight players suited for the tournament. Jensen would not be denied a trophy for his teammates and him, and through his example of floor instruction and determination he led the Cougs to the semi-finals.

Day in and day out, teammates of Jensen praised him as a player and as a leader, saying if we didn't have Wes, we wouldn't be where we are. A prime example of Wes' leadership came in a semi-final loss to Pierce College. The Cougars were down by 10 or more throughout the contest, but Wes didn't show any quit in his six-foot, six-inch frame; he kept telling his teammates to keep their heads up

and that they were still in the game. The Cougars cut the lead down to one with one minute remaining but were unable to pull it out. And although they had lost the contest, it was a win in their hearts because they had fought so hard to come back. Jensen is a true warrior, who never stops playing for himself or his comrades. In the third place game, Jensen told me before it started that there was no chance that they were going to lose, and sure enough, Wes held true to his word.

Wes was the most integral part of this team, and without him Clackamas may have never even made the playoffs, let alone win three in the postseason. What set apart Wes from my other "Mikey" finalists was his persistence to want to win and not accept losing as an outcome. He would yell and scream at his teammates—not to scold, but to make them better. He led by example in every way of the game and life; his play was never outmatched, his heart was never out-beat, and his head was never outsmarted. Wes Jensen is a true leader.



All photos by Jeff Sorensen Clackamas Print

(ABOVE LEFT) Ashley Webster (6) helped the women's soccer team win the NWAACC's in the fall, and eventually the Mikey award for Team of the Year. (ABOVE RIGHT) The Mikey Player of the Year, Wes Jensen (15), is greeted by fellow teammates Garold Howe (23) and Josh Spirlin before a home game this past season.