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The Bulldogs tied the game at 50 and could be seen celebrating with one another after a timeout was called. Shortly after this display of jubilation, Clackamas quickly dispelled any hope the Bulldogs had as Ross hit a key three-pointer, while Cernin and Freeman contributed with huge clutch baskets of their own.

The last couple of minutes dragged on forever as Bellevue refused to concede the victory and insisted on fouling. Clackamas sunk their free-throws and won the NWAACC title by a final score of 67-56.

Freeman finished with yet another double-double, quietly registering 18 points and 10 rebounds. Cernin hit three more treys and ended up with 17. Floor leader Ross grabbed six boards and dished out seven assists. Vaughan had 11 points and came away with second-team all-tourney honors. Defrees added eight points and four boards off the Cougar bench.

After the final horn sounded, the scene was priceless. The players and coaches could be seen embracing one another on the court as the fans showed their appreciation for the team's success and work ethic in getting there.

"It seems surreal. I've never had a better feeling in my life. We started off 8-4, but then we turned it around and won 21 games in a row. There's no better group of guys who could have done this," tournament MVP Freeman said.

Cernin, the silent assassin and first-team all-tourney player, also reiterated the sentiments of his teammate:

"It really means a lot. All the guys, we're so close. Our team chemistry is great. We knew we could come in here and make some noise ... It really hasn't hit me yet."

Whether it was overcoming an injury, missed free-throws, adverse playing conditions, shot clock malfunctions or foul trouble, this Clackamas team stuck together and never gave up. They stood by one another and truly played like champions and exhibited the class of true gentleman in the process.

The game was won on the court, but great coaching doesn't hurt either. Clackamas' coach Clif Wegner is one of the best, and it doesn't take the team's school record of 29 wins in a season to see that.

"I'm really proud of my kids," Wegner said. "I can't even explain how much courage and heart I saw during this tournament and all season long. They took every challenge that was thrown at them. A lot of people questioned if we were the best team.

"We won 21 in a row. We beat the East champ. We beat the West champ. We beat the North champ. We beat everyone in Oregon. We are the champions, and it was well-earned."

** Editor's note: Avoid Kennewick, Wash. at all costs. I assure you there is nothing there for you. It is a terribly heinous city that might be better described as hell, just not as hot and a lot more flat.*

All photos by Sam Krause Clackamas Print



TOP LEFT: Big man Brian Freeman maneuvers inside as he goes up for two.

TOP RIGHT: David Cernin levitates above all as he shows off his sweet stroke.

FAR LEFT: Steven Vaughan drives to the basket with determination as the bench brigade celebrates in the background.

LEFT: JR Morgan dribbles down low as he evades a host of defenders. Morgan's ball-handling skills, hustle and charisma were all key factors in the Cougars' victories.