

Sports
CORES

Cougars' catcher finds her focus behind the plate

**Megan Koler
Lisa Sellars**

The Clackamas Print

"Winning" is all in the name for freshman catcher Susan Winningham.

"I'd never change my last name," Winningham laughed. "I'm going to be kind of bummed when I get married and have to change it."

Winningham, who graduated from Crater High School last year, helped her team win its softball title before coming to Clackamas to explore possible career options and continue playing the sport.

With barely a year of college under her belt, she has stood out as one of the

most dedicated and talented athletes in Clackamas athletics.

"Susan is one of the hardest-working around," said Softball Coach Jessica Buel. "She is fun to watch play."

"She has been one of the most consistent players we've ever had," said Assistant Coach Denise Nasuta.

"Her attitude and her determination add a lot to our team," said teammate Brianne Rowley. "She is always trying to be up, and she is always hard on herself."

Winningham wasn't always the most focused, hardworking player — in fact, that's how she became a catcher in the first place.

Catching "is the only position I could be put at because every other position, you don't really have to pay attention a lot, and I was spacey then," she said. "I'd look into other people's dugouts and stuff, so they had to put me there so I'd pay attention."

Since little league, softball has become an integral part of her life.

"If I didn't have softball ... I don't know what I would be doing," she said. "I like just being a part of something, being a part of a team."

Even though she revels in the team atmosphere, joining the lady Cougars this season has had its share of difficulties.

"In high school, we'd been playing together for seven or eight years. You

knew everybody," she said. "It's just a challenge coming up here and getting to know everybody and knowing how they play."

Winningham isn't the only new individual to the group — nearly 90 percent of the 25 softball players at Clackamas are freshman.

Last weekend, at the Northwest Athletic Association of Community College (NWAACC) championships, the Cougars placed fifth out of the 16 community college teams from Oregon and Washington.

The team feels that a lot of its success is due to Winningham's attitude and drive.

Even though she is technically a catcher, she admits that batting is her favorite part of the game.

"Batting's kind of my forte," she said. "It's something I just really enjoy working on and getting better at and just doing."

Her most precious commodity might simply be her unshakable attitude and strong sense of belief in her abilities, which she feels is a necessary attribute for any competitor. As her teammate, freshman Kayla Vedaa, says, "She knows she's good."

"I go through hard times — everyone does," Winningham said. "You have to be confident or you're not going to be successful."

"I'm confident, but not cocky," she added.



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Left: Freshman Susan Winningham gets ready to take a swing. Although she is a catcher, Winningham's self-proclaimed forte is batting.

Track and Field

This week, track athletes will not compete at a meet, instead preparing for the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges Championships.

Head Coach Keoni Hone says that the athletes to watch on the men's side are long-jumper Andria Reese, the women's 100 and 4x400 relay team and Sierra Hess with the discus. Hess was injured for a few weeks due to a twisted ankle.

It is still a little tight, but it didn't seem to affect her last week," McHone said. In the men's competition, both of the men's relays are predicted to do well, and it Tweedy is one to watch in the 400 meter. Joe Gobel will most likely score the most points for the team," Hone said. "He's competed in multiple events and looks to do well."

Cai Ojala is expected to do well in the men's 100 meter jump as well.

The NWAACC Championships will take place May 22 and 23 at Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wash.

Softball

Clackamas' softball team made it to fifth place in the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) championships before being knocked out of the competition Saturday, May 17 by Lower Columbia College in Walla Walla.

These defeats mean this is the first time in six years Clackamas' softball team, made up of mostly freshman players, did not make it to the NWAACC championship.

Softball finishes the season with 26 wins and 23 losses.

Baseball

The Cougars failed to make it into Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges (NWAACC) post-season play.

The team wrapped up the season on a high note with a double victory over Mt. Hood on May 17 with the first game ending in a score of 3-2 and the second, 1-0. The team ended the season with a record of 17 wins and 17 losses.

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