

Christina Pearl Clackamas

Cougars men's basketball Coach Clif Wegner speaks to his team during practice last week. Wegner has been coaching at Clackamas since the 1998-1999 basketball season and has earned three NWAACC championship titles with Clackamas in his coaching career.

Basketball coach expects success

By Christina Pearl
The Clackamas Print

Listen to Clackamas Community College men's basketball Coach Clif Wegner talk about his favorite game and the conversation isn't about winning. Wegner never utters the word "championship" when talking about goals. He doesn't mention his team's Southern Region dominance nor does he refer to their three Northwestern Athletic Association of Community Colleges' League Championships since 2007.

Although he's the most victorious men's basketball coach NWAACC has seen in more than 25 years, Wegner would rather talk about building better people than making champions. His personal lexicon thrives on terms related to character, relationships, academics, personal growth and fun. Success in basketball is simply a byproduct of Wegner's brand of coaching and he makes this clear to his players.

"We always tell them, 'Our most important job is to make you a better person, and

our second most important job is to make you a better basketball player.' We never get confused with that," said Wegner.

Wegner began his coaching career at Oregon City High School, where he built the basketball program into one of the most successful high school programs in the state. He became the full-time coach at CCC when former coach Royce Kiser retired in 1998. The program has thrived under Wegner's direction.

Wegner expects his players to strive for success in all areas. Grade checks and mandatory weekly study halls ensure that academic success comes before play. He stays in constant touch with the team's academic adviser, counselors and instructors.

"Clif is willing to sacrifice something in the immediate right now for a kid's future, such as making a kid skip a game if his studies are lacking," said Assistant Coach Paul Fiskum, who also stressed how much Wegner cares about his players' futures.

"When kids know you care, they will really play hard. They'll know that this is the way we do things. We don't tolerate anything

else. We're going to be respectful at all times, we're going to be gentlemen all the time and we're going to be a class organization," he said.

Jonny Brainard is a former Cougar basketball player who now assists with coaching while striving to enter Clackamas' nursing program. "He's really adamant about getting all of his players to the next level and on to another school," said Brainard of Wegner. "He loves basketball, but his passion is to get kids onto a better life. That's really what his main goal is."

Wegner's systematic development of his players' academic accomplishment is duplicated on the court, where he fine-tunes their basketball skills. The focus is on fundamentals. According to Wegner, every movement on the court is broken down so that each pivot, step and shot is perfected independently. Movements are reassembled and broken down repeatedly until play is seamless.

"We think that skills are just as important as athleticism in basketball," said Wegner. "We're always analyzing to make sure that the way we do things are the most effi-

cient way possible ... and our kids really improve."

Wegner also noted that the team's losses are analyzed in the same way until they understand what caused it and how they can fix it.

"I hate to lose, but there's a difference between people who love to win and people who hate to lose," said Wegner. "To me, everybody loves to win, but I want to have 12 kids who hate to lose. That's what drives you to be the best and that's what drives you to work hard — that feeling of defeat that you don't want to feel. We've had some luck with our teams where they get to the point where they realize they didn't ever have to feel that way. Then they're hard to beat."

The men's basketball team begins a two-week pre-season this Friday, Dec. 3 at the Spokane North Idaho Tournament in Spokane, Wash. Their first game begins at 5:30 p.m. against Green River. The team last competed in Green River at the NWAACC tournament last year and won. The Cougar's entire pre-season schedule includes some of the best teams in the NWAACC.

All-American hopes for undefeated wrestling season

By Katherine Suydam
The Clackamas Print

People say that there is no "I" in team, but there is for Tarrence Williams. Williams is a member of the Clackamas Community College wrestling team, a team of individuals.

"I like wrestling because it's a one-on-one sport. You don't have to rely on a team, you do as good as you train," said Williams.

Williams, a sophomore at CCC and All-American wrestler, has been wrestling since he was five years old. Wrestling is a tradition in his family; he was introduced to the wrestling clubs by his grandfather, and was quick to take up the sport.

In high school, Williams played for Jefferson, though he attended Central Catholic, placing high in state, bringing home first place in his junior year and going undefeated until his state finals match his senior year. Williams is ranked second in the nation and has high hopes for this year.

"My goal is to not lose a match this season and (to) become a national champion," said Williams.

This season, however, Williams will not be wrestling on the same level. He has decided not to cut weight this season, staying in the 174 weight class so he will not have to go through a week of intense exercise and meager meals before each match like he did in the past. The downside is that Williams will be facing wrestlers who are cutting weight from upwards to 190 pounds, meaning his opponents will be larger than those he wrestled in the past.

"He's such a good athlete that it's probably going to be better for him in the long run. He's a really quick, fast-paced kid. He made some of the bigger gains on our team as far as weightlifting and gaining weight so we figured that we would reward him with not having to cut weight, which is something that he kind of doesn't like anyway," said Josh Rhoden, head coach of Cougars wrestling.

This new method is working in favor of Williams so far this season. He has a 10-0 record and plans to go undefeated this year.

"I is always gonna be the person who pushes himself and always strives to be the best. He's always looking to break records; he always wants to be that guy who's the best and

that's what pushes him," said Tyrell Fortune, a sophomore on the Cougars wrestling team.

All of this glory is not just falling into Williams' lap. Rhoden estimates that Williams puts up to 40 hours of work into his wrestling every week, and his hard work is being recognized. Williams was awarded a full-ride scholarship by Oregon State University, a division one school, for the 2010-2011 school year.

Williams is undecided about his future career plans, although he is interested in both nursing and coaching. His coach thinks he would do well in the latter.

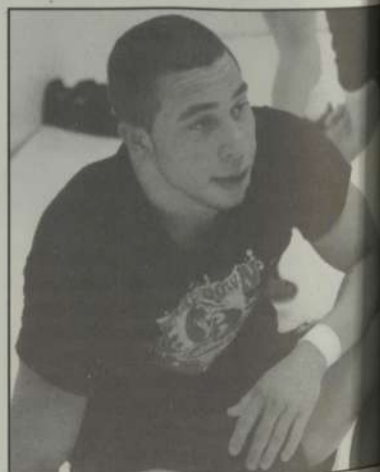
"If he does (become a coach), I'm sure that he will do very good. He's got a younger brother that he works with all the time and kind of mentors. He's always working out at clubs and giving back to clubs in the Portland area, the clubs he grew up training in," said Rhoden.

Regardless of what he is doing, Williams gives it his all, whether it is in wrestling, in school or in hunting, which is where you can find him whenever he isn't practicing.

"Tarrence, academically, is a great student. He's the prototypical student athlete, he's the kid that you don't have to worry about (wheth-

er or not he's) passing his classes, it's just given with him," said Rhoden.

Williams will be wrestling at the meet against Highline Community College held at CCC on Dec. 3 at 5 p.m.



WILLIAMS