

By John William Howard
Sports Editor

Soccer is an odd sport. It's a game in which a close contest can end up in a 4-0 blowout and when a certain win can end in a 3-3 tie. You can never be comfortable, no matter how large your lead and you're never out of the game, until it's over. All that matters is the end result that goes into the record book.

Fortunately for the Clackamas Cougars (4-3-0, 12 points Southern Region), three whistles sounded last Wednesday with the women holding a 1-0 lead over the Penguins of Clark College (2-6-0, 6 points, Southern Region) after 90 minutes at Pioneer Stadium in lower Oregon City.

As soon as the teams kicked off, it became clear that they were two very different squads on two very different levels. From body language, to skill, to the way they talked to one another, Clackamas looked far more confident and unified. First year Head Coach Janine Szpara taught as much as she coached, showing trust in her ability to instruct off the field. The Cougars responded quickly, waiting patiently for an opportunity to open and feeding the ball forward on the attack.

In the 31st minute, their hard work and diligence paid off. Sophomore forward Jasmin Garcia boomed a shot from 30 yards out, arcing the ball across the pitch and into the far corner of the net past Clark goalkeeper Marissa Tyler to put the Cougars up 1-0.

While the sparse fanbase and elated Clackamas players cheered, the scattered and aimless Penguins grumbled. Ever since kick-off, Clark Head Coach Stan Rodrigues had been screaming at his players, telling them exactly where not to stand, where not to run, and how they'd been doing it wrong all along.

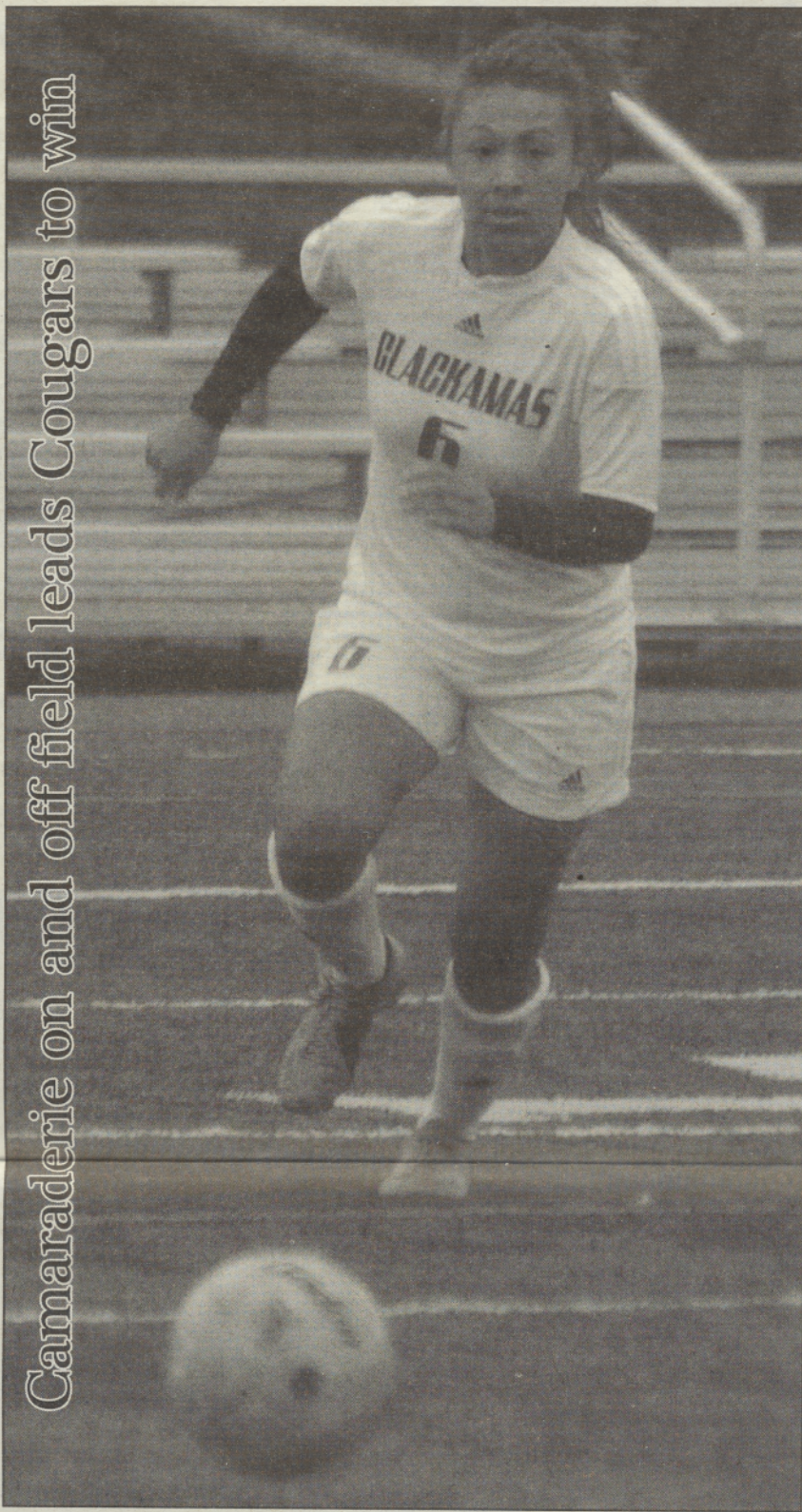
At one point, Rodrigues pulled sophomore midfielder Samantha Peppers from the game after shouting an earful of colorful instructions at her from the nearby sideline. Once she was off the field, Rodrigues grilled her so badly about not playing soccer the way he wanted it done that she was reduced to tears behind the opposing bench.

After the goal by Garcia, Clark played with more fervor but eventually fell back into their slower rhythm: decent back line play, but helpless on the attack against the Clackamas defense. The second half ended with two more shots by the Cougars, with freshman Courtney Johnson going high over the goal in the 39th minute, and Tyler tipping a shot from distance in the 42nd minute.

Halftime continued the disparity between the two teams. While Rodrigues and his Penguins stood still and quiet, the home team sat cross-legged in a circle around Szpara, drinking in her knowledge of the sport and enjoying one another's company.

"She knows exactly what to do," said freshman midfielder Sandra Tinoco of Szpara. "She's been coaching for a long time. I just

Camaraderie on and off field leads Cougars to win



Clackamas' Sophomore Forward, Jasmin Garcia, makes a play with the ball during last Wednesday's game against Clark College at Pioneer Stadium.

enjoy it, and I feel like I've been learning way more."

With their spirits high, the second half began with Clackamas playing as loose as ever. The shrill, encouraging cheers from the girls in white drowned out the frustrated yells from the away team as the Cougars pushed closer to their 4th win of the season.

In the 63rd minute, Clark had their first real chance at an equalizer; freshman midfielder Brittany Wilson launched a shot from the left side of the field toward the center of the crossbar, forcing Clackamas goalkeeper Tori Wilkinson to leap into the air after the ball, tipping it straight up and catching it on its way back down.

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Jasmin Garcia
Forward

On the counterattack, the Clackamas offense lead the Penguin keeper in a scramble play away from the center of the goal, leaving forward Sadie Tegtmeier wide open for a shot on the far side. However, her shot missed high, keeping the lead at just one goal for the Cougars.

Tegtmeier's mishap was one of many for the home team, with many shots going wide or high, and countless crosses and feeds from the midfielders being lost to the defense, leading Szpara to point to shooting and composure inside the 18 yard box as a weak spot in their game.

"I think we could be a little bit more posed around the goal," said Szpara. "[We need to] get our bodies organized earlier so that when the ball comes in, it's just a little bit easier to redirect it and [score]."

Szpara's criticisms were few. She mentioned that the team was improving as a whole every time they played, adding new techniques and ideas to their collective game.

"I think we're developing, and in the process we're learning how to work together harder," said Garcia, who played in the championship game with Clackamas a year ago. "We're really pushing each other to be a better team and striving for that goal which is to get the W."



Amanda Coulimore and Jasmin Garcia exchange a low five while lining up before the game.

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