

Women's basketball finds unexpected success

Team jumps to impressive 15-2 season

Cougar post Jordin Feldman looks to swat Hannah Mocaby's (right) basket attempt in last week's home win over Mt. Hood Community College.



By John William Howard
Sports Editor

It's a little odd to describe a season that has gone 15-2 as 'up and down,' but that's exactly how sophomore Tiara Fuller put it last week during a lull in practice, waving her hand up and down while doing her best to keep her eye on the court.

Coming into the season, the expectations for Clackamas Community College Cougars women's basketball team were high but not that high. A lot of sophomore talent moved on, including much of the scoring and even more of the leadership. Perhaps to spite the critics, the Cougars (15-2, 4-1 South) have been impressive so far, leading the league in scoring, assists and steals.

Co-Head Coach Jim Martineau, however, isn't entirely satisfied. Flashing a wry smile after the home win over Mt. Hood Community College last Wednesday, Martineau said that's just how it was being a coach; you can always get better.

One part of the game that the Cougars could stand to improve in is exactly what Fuller referred to: consistency, but not always consistency game to game. Much of their consistency problems are half to half. Either the defense will be on or the offense will be, but not both at the same time. Interestingly enough, both defense and offense play much better when playing in front of their own bench, something that has been a constant point of discussion in practice.

"It is always easier to play in front of your bench because you hear your coaches telling you what needs to be done and helping you see things that you might not see right away," said freshman guard Jenny Johnson. "Also, you hear your teammates talking to you and when you make a good play, they're right there being loud and that's the only thing you hear, which is an awesome feeling."

Because a team can't play both halves in front of their own bench, Martineau has stressed talking on

defense from the beginning of the season, something that came up again after Clackamas gave up 48 points in the second half against Mt. Hood. Much of the next day's practice was spent with Martineau on the court with the team, leading by example and shouting instructions to his teammates, imploring the others to do so as well.

"We have our moments where we are very good at talking to each other on defense, and we have our times where we are silent," said Johnson. "But every day our coaches stress it and every day we work on getting better at it. I believe we are improving on it. I'm not perfect at it and our team isn't but as long as everyone is making an effort at getting better at it, then that's all I can ask for in my teammates."

Martineau's fears of being taken advantage of by a good team have only been realized twice, the first being a 72-53 loss to Yakima Valley Community College. It was a game that featured 32 turnovers by Clackamas and a season low 35 percent shooting. It also featured a dramatic exit by Martineau when he was ejected from the game after his second technical, apparently for the first time in 15 seasons.

Since falling to Yakima Valley in the championship of the Clackamas Crossover tournament on Dec. 18, Clackamas has outscored opponents by an average of 17 points in their four wins, including an 83-50 victory at SW Oregon Community College to open region play on Jan. 7. The Cougars finally fell on Jan. 21 at Lane in a close, 71-68 defeat in one of the NWAACC's toughest gyms.

Adding to the success so far is the return of Ashleigh Anderson, a freshman from Oregon City High School that sat out much of her senior season recovering from several surgeries. Anderson came off the bench in Clackamas' home opening victory over Chemeketa, bringing cheers from the crowd of her former teammates and friends that were in attendance.

"It means the world to me," said Anderson, who has improved each game despite favoring her knee and shaking off a year's worth of rust and nerves. "My whole family was here, all my friends from CCC came [and] it's just really nice to have so much support."

Anderson's return will add further depth to a team that already has been led in scoring by six different players and should boost their already decent three point shooting.

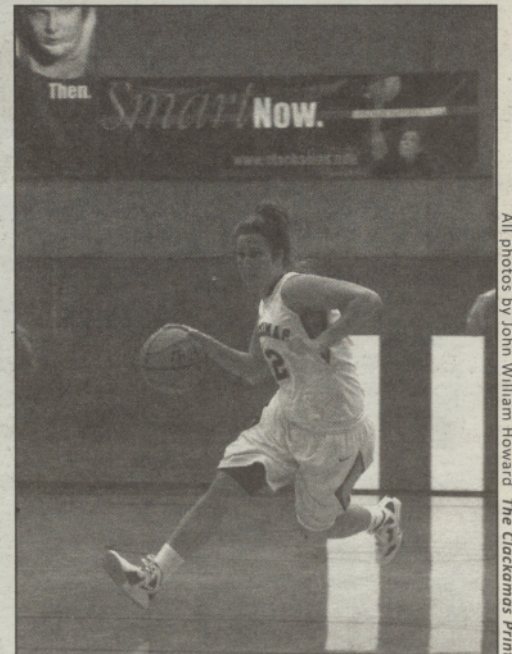
All stats aside, the mental and physical toughness that Martineau pointed out before the season began has continued to show through. Clackamas might not fire on all cylinders offensively and defensively at all times but they always work hard for every loose ball and every rebound. Once their talents all line up the Cougars will be darn near impossible to stop.



Freshman Jenny Johnson looks to score during last week's 82-66 victory over Mt. Hood. Johnson had 10 points in the rivalry victory.



Lindsay Kanalz fights for control of a rebound against Mt. Hood. Kanalz scored an impressive 19 points on 58 percent shooting against Mt. Hood.



Makesha Bizon drives to the hoop during the game against Mt. Hood. Bizon had nine points, all scored from beyond the three point line.

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