

# League drops ball with Coaches vs. Cancer



By John William Howard  
Sports Editor

It's always great to see a team reach out to help those less fortunate. You see athletes from the junior high level all the way up to the professional leagues that give their time to others around them. One cause that is particularly close to home is Coaches vs. Cancer, something that the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges participated in this last week.

It's touching, really. In some ways a show of humility, in others a glaring example, it reminds us that we're all in this together, no matter whom we are. It's also a huge opportunity to spread the word about a certain cause. Athletic programs draw a large number of eyes, making them a perfect source of attention for concerns such as child abuse, homelessness, poverty and cancer.

It would make sense that events staged to raise awareness for cancer, much like the NWAACC's games over the last week, would be staged to get maximum attention. At least at Clackamas, there are a few things that they've done right. Number one is the bright pink tie-dye shirts that both the volleyball team and the women's basketball team have worn on game night. Also, the basketball coaches wear white sneakers with their suits, Men's coach Clif Wegner sporting his customary white converse all-stars.

On top of that, proceeds from the game along with donations go to help fight cancer, which seems noble, right?

Wrong. The problem is that the stands are completely empty, and that's not right. There are several reasons for the stands being empty and that blame falls on several different heads.

The first reason is plain and simple. People won't come out to see what they know will be

an absolute drubbing, which is exactly what happened last Wednesday against Portland Community College. PCC came into last week's Jan. 25 matchups a combined 4-27 record between the men's and women's teams. All four of those wins were by the women, and two of the four were forfeits. The result of that was a less than spotty crowd that not even the boisterous cross country and volleyball teams could cover up.

So much for raising awareness.

The situation was much the same in the fall, when the volleyball team took on a pitiful Multnomah team with only nine players on their roster. That game ended up just as bad, with the girls in pink flattening the visiting girls in dark blue so badly that there wasn't hardly any time to notice that the crowd was non-existent.

The second reason is also obvious. Unless you had your ear tuned toward the athletic department or knew the patterns of the stars, you wouldn't have known that it wasn't anything but a regular season game until you walked in and saw the smattering of pink around the gym. The blame for that falls on the athletic department. If they really want to make a statement about their solidarity against cancer and their support for those who fight it, they need to advertise themselves and fill up their gym.

The blame for the scheduling is a little harder to tack down. The 'sneakers with suits' tradition isn't specific to the NWAACC, and it's not simply done at the school or athletic league's choosing. It's a national occurrence at all different levels of basketball. That, however, means that everybody who is anybody knows exactly when it's happening long in advance, far ahead enough to plan something more exciting than PCC coming to town.

I'm not saying that PCC should have sat idle last week while the big boys (and girls) fought it out, but you'd think that the people planning out the schedule could have chosen something a little more interesting. Why not schedule Clackamas and Mt. Hood to clash on the same night as Coaches vs. Cancer? The stands are packed full of students, community members, families and all manner of fans any time that Clackamas and Mt. Hood meet, making it a much better choice when trying to raise awareness.

Yes, Clackamas did donate around \$500 to fight cancer but the NWAACC dropped the ball on this one. If the NFL can schedule Detroit to play on Thanksgiving every year, then the NWAACC can choose the games for the Coaches vs. Cancer week better.



John William Howard The Clackamas Print

Cougar Head Coach Clif Wegner dons white sneakers for Coaches vs. Cancer Week last season in the Randall Hall gymnasium. The "sneakers with suits" tradition is known within the NWAACC league and local colleges, as well as at the national level. This year's event at CGC was sparsely attended, but the event still raised around \$500.



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- Survey will be available by email and on MyClackamas beginning Monday, Feb 27th through Monday, Mar 5th 2012.
- \*Prizes will be defined in the survey.