

NWAACC transfers may be one hit wonders



By John William Howard
Sports Editor

Every year around this time, the sports world is in pandemonium. With the Super Bowl finished, the NBA season in full swing, and March Madness getting closer, there is one day that all the focus is on the high schools. That day is February first, the day that athletes can sign a national letter of intent. It's something that grabs the attention of everyone. Fans all over the country watch to see who goes where, as often one big name can not only turn a program around, but can also bolster a fan base.

The NWAACC is a little different. Because it's a two-year league, the turnover rate is high enough that it can be difficult to get 'diehard' fans. Teams can lose more than half of their lineup from year to year, meaning that fans can't follow a player for long before they move on to a different school.

Adding to that system is the fact that there are a high number of players that transfer into the league from a four-year university. Many of the NWAACC's players have come from other schools after playing for one year. For example, Clackamas' own Taylor Dunn and Brett Ball transferred to Clackamas as sophomores. Dunn played a season at Central Washington University, while Ball transferred from Eastern Arizona University. The list continues, highlighting some of the league's top players including Peninsulas J.T. Terrell (Wake Forest), Tacoma's Mark McLaughlin (Seattle University), and Yakima Valley's Brandi Henton (Long Beach).

And it's not like those players are sitting at the end of the bench. Terrell went from being a scoring machine at Wake Forest to being a scoring machine at Peninsula, and is second in the NWAACC in scoring. Brandi Henton led the women in scoring before an injury ended her season, and Henton was widely believed to be Long Beach State's best player.

McLaughlin's freshman year is downright confusing. According to the Seattle Times, McLaughlin "initially committed to Washington State in 2007, during the summer before his senior season at Inglemoor [High School]. But he changed his mind, then signed with Nevada." McLaughlin then decided to play his freshman season at Seattle University before transferring to Tacoma Community College, where he leads the NWAACC in scoring by a growing margin.

These athletes' big names and fantastic athletic ability help to give the league a face. Similar to the way that Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods and Dale Earnhardt brought fans to their sports because of how they stuck out, the elite give people something to talk about. Their names are easier to remember because of how they dominate those around them, and they can create a buzz in the stands, as well as around the league.

Also, the transfers often happen to go to a select group of schools, and usually ones that have a history of big recruits and big success in the tournament. Schools like Tacoma, Clackamas and Peninsula command the attention of athletes looking to transfer in because of their history of championships and dominance of their regions. It's no surprise that Terrell, McLaughlin, and Dunn chose the schools that they did.

Here's the problem: Those athletes only have this season left to play. This is when the high turnover rate comes back to bite teams. They don't get to build a team around their star player; they just have to button down and make do with what they've got. It's difficult to build a dynasty when your best player is only a flash in the pan as far as you're concerned. Yes, the success can lead to better attention from possible recruits, but that's as much as it does. That usually doesn't translate to more wins the next season. That's why, even with more eyes on the NWAACC, back to back championships are so rare. Teams often get only one year with their star player. Either they will sign with a Division I school after their freshman year, or they will transfer in as a sophomore and only have one year to play.

The NWAACC is stuck with that problem, and they have yet to come up with a creative solution. Yes, funds are tight, but maybe we need to see a billboard in Time Square with Terrell's face. That might do the trick.

Anderson leads Clackamas charge



All photos by John William Howard The Clackamas Print

Ashleigh Anderson (22), Sam McCloud (10) and Jenny Johnson (3) have been instrumental in the success so far this season. Anderson showed her continued improvement in Saturday's game, putting up a game high 25 points.

By John William Howard
Sports Editor

Taking the court on Saturday night, freshman guard Ashleigh Anderson wasn't feeling all that confident. Warm ups hadn't gone well at all, her shot was feeling off, and she told her teammates that she was "broke." Nevertheless, her name was called, her shoes were laced, and she and her fellow starters squared off against the Lakers of SW Oregon in front of a small, but rowdy crowd in Randall Hall.

Clackamas won the tip and moved into a familiar play, swinging the ball around the three point line and looking for open shots. When the ball came to Anderson's hands, she trusted her instincts and training, and let it fly. Swoosh, and Clackamas is up 3-0.

On the very next possession, after a fumbled play by SW Oregon, the ball again found its way to Anderson at the top of the three point line, and again she let loose, this time with a hand in her face. The second shot went the same as the first, not even hitting the rim. Just like that, Clackamas found themselves up six-nothing in less than two minutes.

A minute later, sophomore guard MaKasha Bizon found her stroke, hitting her first three pointer and putting the Cougars up 11-4. Anderson would go on to score the next five points before getting a rest, heading to the bench with 11 points, a steal and a rebound in just the first five minutes.

The half continued how it began for Anderson, who finished the first 20 minutes with 19 points on 7-10 shooting.

"In warm ups I kept saying that I was broke I couldn't make a shot," said Anderson, who again played in front of many members of her high school team. "All my teammates were like 'don't think about it you're fine, you're a natural shooter.' I was just striking myself out and then after we started going, I was like 'alright, let's do this.'"

Over thinking in the second half, Anderson scored only five points, but the damage was done. Up 51-35 at halftime, Clackamas (18-2, 7-1 South) cruised to a 93-72 victory over SW Oregon (8-12, 2-6 South) for their third consecutive victory and

their seventh in the last eight games.

The win was something that co-head coach Jim Martineau had been waiting for since November: a complete win on both sides of the ball, and in both halves.

"I thought, with the tempo of the game, we did a good job the entire night defending. Our [full court] press got to them quite a bit," said Martineau. "Offensively, we weren't quite as sharp the second half, but shot well enough to score 42 ... I would say that this one was pretty close [to a complete game]."

Martineau contributed part of the success to the stellar shooting, and part of it to the fact that teams often stubbornly play zone defense against Clackamas, something that allows three point shooters more room to work with. Because of team's insistence on playing zone far longer than they should be, Martineau and co-head coach Kayla Steen are able to take advantage by leaning on a style of offense that they both prefer.

"We have some decent size, but we're not post-oriented where we're gonna pound it inside. That's kinda the style we're going to play, especially if they zone us," said Martineau. "Our philosophy is to either shoot threes or layups, we're not a fan of shooting 15 foot jump shots."

Bizon, who has been shooting better as of late, finished with 16 points on 6-13 shooting, more than ten percent better than her average. Bizon attributes much of that to a shift in her role, as she now focuses on being a more rounded player, rather than being a pure shooter.

Part of the change is filling in for players that graduated, and part of it is filling in for players that have gone down with an injury. Anderson and freshman forward Jasmine Gibbs-Brown have returned to the court and sophomore Lindsay Kanalz may return before the tournament, but Martineau confirmed that guard Alex Howe would miss the remainder of the season with the injury to her knee.

As it is, Clackamas hasn't stumbled much. As long as Anderson keeps drinking the same water, the Cougars will be just fine.



Jim Jackson (center) takes stats at a volleyball game during fall term. Jackson worked as Clackamas' Athletic Director for years and continued to volunteer before falling ill in December.

Former Athletic Director hospitalized

Several sources inside the athletic department have confirmed that former Athletic Director Jim Jackson has been in and out of the hospital suffering with pneumonia. Jackson was keeping stats at the women's basketball NWAACC Crossover tournament on Dec. 16 when he grew too sick to continue working and was hospitalized. Jackson was released and readmitted Jan. 24, and according to reports is feeling much better. Jackson will not return to the sideline this season, but has again been released from the hospital.

Wrestling wins big over Pacific University

In the final meet before regionals, Clackamas picked up four pins, two major decisions and a forfeit en route to a 44-5 crushing of Pacific University. The Cougars lost only one match on the evening, and led 25-0 before Pacific scored their first and only points. Clackamas finished the season 12-2, their best record since the 1989 season. The Region 18 championships will be held in Yakima, Wash. on Feb. 11.