Cougars suffer loss, remain positive

Andrew Millbrooke
Sports Editor

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Kiki Stonebraker (center) returns one of many digs put forth from the dominating Mt. Hood Saints. Although the Cougars lost the match Friday, they demonstrated many moments of strong defense against the top seeded team in the southern division.

Mt. Hood showed why they are the class of the NWAACC Southern Region in easily dispatching Clackamas in three games (25-23, 25-18, and 25-11) on Friday night to win its 11th straight match. The Saints are now 10-0 in region play and have already secured the top seed in the NWAACC tournament. The loss came on "Sophomore Night," as the Cougars honored their two-year players with roses in a pre-game ceremony.

"The last game, against a big opponent, and the game means a lot to us," said head coach Kathie Woods of the final home game for many of her players. "It is emotional. These girls have worked hard for two years. It is tough to focus with all of that emotion."

Clackamas came out fired up and almost stole game one, gaining a 23-20 lead, before Mt. Hood rallied to score the last five points to take the game, 25 to 23. "We played really hard and intense and did all the right things that first game," said Woods. "But when it got really tight at the end we kind of buckled."

Mt. Hood had a formidable front line that punished the Cougar defense with hard spikes and created havoc on defense with lots of blocks on Cougar scoring opportunities. Some of the players agreed that they lost focus towards the end of the game, but they gave a lot of credit to the Saints.

"They are a very smart team," said sophomore Brittany Bevens. "They went from swinging away to chipping and they found the holes."

Mt. Hood consistently found the weak spots in the Cougar defense and exploited it with a variety of shots from all angles. "There is a reason they are undefeated in league," said Woods. "They have momentum going for them and they don't make the same errors we do."

Sophomore libero Maeghan Angel also gave praise to the Saints. "Mt. Hood showed up," said Angel. "They progressively warmed up and came at us. They are a good team."

Freshman Kiki Stonebraker led the Cougars with seven kills and sophomore Julia Toscano added six. Sophomores Taylor Copeland and Kaitlyn Douglass both had 11 assists to pace the squad, while Angel led them with 19 digs.

Many of the sophomores were embracing family and friends after the game, as it was the last time they will wear the Cougar uniform in a home match. "It is surreal," said Bevens. "I can't believe that was our last game. It went by so fast. I'm so sad it's over."

Angel got visibly choked up when thinking about the last two years and the team bond that coach Woods has created. "Kathie is a huge impact in my life," said Angel. "She molds us into grown women."

The Cougars (21-24, 3-6) have not qualified for the NWAACC tournament right now. It depends on how the Cougars fare in the final game of the season on Wednesday at Linn-Benton in Albany. The Cougars need a win and a Chemeketa loss to Mt. Hood, to force a tie and a one game playoff. "What would help us is beating Linn-Benton on Wednesday," said Woods. "That is what we're shooting for."

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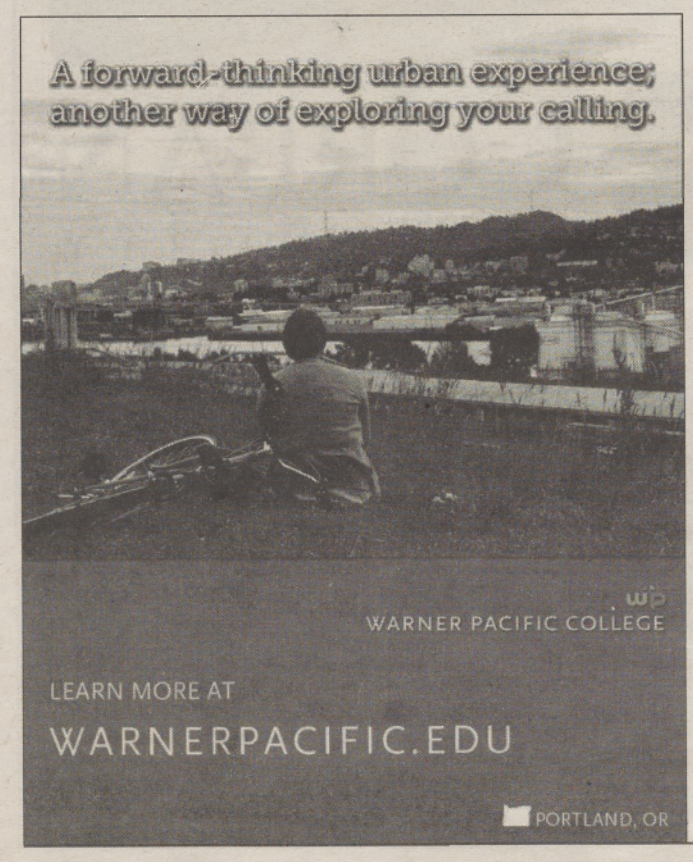
Maeghan Angel goes for one of her team-leading 19 digs in Friday's loss against Mt. Hood.



Cougar fundraiser helps 'dig' away at animal suffering

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Diggin Pink a major success for CCC Volleyball

The Cougar volleyball team announced that they raised more than $2,300 during the "Diggin Pink" promotion last month. The funds raised go to Southgate Animal Clinic to pay for animals suffering from disease or abuse issues. Clackamas head coach Kathie Woods recently lost her canine companion of 11 years, Lucie "Cougie" Woods, to cancer.

"I'm very thrilled what Clackamas volleyball was able to donate to Southgate Animal Clinic in helping animals live full, healthy lives," said Woods.

Freshman outside hitter Annie Cook was named Cougar player of the week by the coaching staff and had a big role in helping raise money for Diggin Pink. "Off the court Annie took on the role of self-nominated project manager in helping me run the 'I'm Diggin Pink' fundraiser," said Woods. "Annie was a great contribution in us exceeding our goal."

Woods has been impressed with Cook's leadership role on the team. "She is a great team player and helps every Cougar be better," said Woods. "Annie is mature and communicates to her teammates what is needed, where and when."

Sophomore setter Samantha Owirka was named Cougar player of the week for the most recent week of the season. "Sam has been working hard all season and her confidence is finally starting to show," said Woods. "She responded well in the Mt. Hood match and I am excited to see her continue to improve."

Julia Toscano named NWAACC offensive player of the week

Toscano became the first Cougar to win an offensive NWAACC award this season. "I'm so proud that Julia got NWAACC offensive player of the week this last week for our offense," said Woods. "She has really been working hard on her swing and timing and it has really paid off."

Sophomore libero Maeghan Angel won the NWAACC defensive player of the week award during week six and setters Taylor Copeland and Kaitlyn Douglass have both won Southern Region setter of the week this season. Copeland has taken home Southern Region setter of the week honors twice this season, in weeks four and eight.

Contributed by Kathie Woods

Kathie Woods (right center with envelope) and the Cougar volleyball team present the check to Southgate Animal Clinic.