

Big league fans don't need big league team



A.M. SPORTS

Andrew Millbrooke
Sports Editor

Portland is the largest metro area in the United States without a major league baseball team. And although Portland doesn't have a MLB team or an NFL team, does it really need one?

Many sports pundits say that the lack of those two jewels of professional sports make Portland a second rate sports city. I say that is hogwash.

The fact that Portlanders pack Jeld-Wen field for the Timbers games and support for the Winterhawks and Blazers has not waned in decades proves that Portland is a first rate sports city. You don't need to have major league teams to be interesting.

The one sport that does get major league billing in Oregon is track and field, as Hayward Field in Eugene hosts some of the top meets in the United States each year. The NCAA Championships and Prefontaine Classic are scheduled there this June. Another great thing about sports fans in Oregon is that nowhere else will you see the passion exhibited for track and field like it is at Hayward.

Good baseball in Oregon? Right now the Ducks and Beavers are battling for the Pac-12 championship as both teams are ranked in the top 10 nationally. The Beavers and Ducks also sell out ever growing football stadiums on Saturdays throughout the fall, so you can't tell me that local fans don't support their teams. Portlanders support all sports passionately.

The Thoms women's professional soccer team drew more than 16,000 fans to their first home game. The Timbers routinely sell out Jeld-Wen field's 20,000-plus seats for their MLS games. The Winterhawks played the first two games of the WHL hockey finals in front of sell-out crowds of 10,947 at the Rose Garden.

The Trail Blazers averaged 19,829 fans which was good for fourth in the NBA according to ESPN.com. From 1977 to 1995 the Blazers sold out 814 consecutive games, a record for major American professional sports leagues that stood for 16 years. The Class A Dayton Dragons minor league baseball team surpassed the Blazers record in 2011.

One thing that local fans have not supported the same way in recent seasons is baseball. Maybe it's the fact that Portlanders want to do something when the weather finally gets nice, rather than sit and watch, what many consider to be a slow, boring game.

The Portland Beavers were last in the Pacific Coast League in attendance during their final season in Portland in 2010 with 4,265 fans per game. They averaged between 4,500 and 5,500 since their return in 2000, so there is enough support for baseball to certainly fill up a new stadium in Hillsboro.

The Beavers Triple-A baseball team last played in 2010, as PGE Park was renovated into a football-soccer only facility for the Timbers in 2011. The Yakima Bears, a single A team in the Northwest League is supposed to relocate to Hillsboro, as the Hops, with a 3,534 seat stadium with room for up to 1,300 to sit or stand on the berm in left field. Supporting a major league baseball team would take 25,000-30,000 fans per night and that seems like quite a stretch for Portland fans.

So, does Portland really need a big league baseball team or NFL franchise to really make it as a sports city? I think we are doing just fine with everything we have.

Softball team sweeps doubleheader, prepares for NWAACC Championships



All photos by Andrew Millbrooke/The Clackamas Print

Above: Rachel Ray, a freshman from Medford, makes contact on her way to four hits in the second game on Saturday. Ray led off the game by running over the first baseman on her way around the bases to score the game's first run. In the 9-8 victory, she scored three runs. Below: Alyson Boytz, a freshman from Elmira, Ore., was the winning pitcher in both games during the doubleheader sweep over Lower Columbia on Saturday, pushing her record to 11-3 on the season.

David Beasley
General Associate Editor

The ladies of Clackamas Community College softball eagerly secured an early victory in the first game of a doubleheader against Lower Columbia Red Devils on Saturday at home. Showing their will for victory, Clackamas scored a run in the first inning and two in the second, laying the foundation for the 3-1 win.

The Cougars are playing good ball right now, but head coach Jessica Buel is always looking for improvement.

"It's just about getting better every game and every at bat to prepare for NWAACCs," said Buel. Buel has also been impressed with the multitude of players that have been stepping up lately for the Cougars.

"I don't know if I could single one person out, actually it's probably been someone different every day and everyone's been contributing so that's been huge," said Buel.

The team confidence was evident from the moment the team cheered a rally cry of "CCC!" to begin the game. The momentum and power of the Clackamas team was comparable to the crashing gusts of wind blowing through the home field. The sun was beating down, increasing the intensity of the atmosphere. Loud booming music between plays, constant team cheers and chants set a soundtrack for the event.

The Cougars defended the first inning and no runs were scored by Red Devils. Clackamas' first batter of the day was freshman Rachel Ray. With a running start, she hit the ball to left field low and with amazing momentum, barreled through Lower Columbia infielder Jessica McDonald at first base, then kept going to score Clackamas' first run. The

crowd cheered. "I wanna' see that again," said one fan.

In the second inning, Clackamas freshman Taylor Gould hit the ball on the ground to center. It was thrown to first by a Red Devil but first base missed the ball so Gould was safe. She then stole second during a bunt attempt, before scoring the Cougars second run on freshman Kiara Vasquez' hit. Vasquez made it to third base and then home during another Ray hit. At the end of the second inning Clackamas led 3-0.

The next three innings were very defensive and some solid plays were made by both teams. In the sixth inning, Red Devils freshman Haley Hibbs hit the ball straight at Cougar pitcher Alyson Boytz, who almost caught the ball, but it hit so hard it knocked her glove off. Hibbs made it safely to first. Clackamas sophomore Lucy Baldovino replaced Boytz as pitcher. Still no runs were scored by Lower Columbia in the sixth inning.

Like two weather systems crashing together, the seventh inning was a powerful struggle. Red Devils freshman Bethany Burch hit the ball all the way to the fence and eventually scored Lower Columbia's first run during Ashley Wells' hit. The last batter of game one was Red Devils sophomore Mackenzie Martin who hit it high to centerfield where Clackamas' outfielder made a nice home for it in her glove. Game one was over as the Cougars defeated the Red Devils 3-1.

The Cougars rallied in the second game, scoring four runs in the fifth and one in the seventh to pull out a 9-8 victory. Leadoff batter Ray had four hits and three runs scored to lead the Cougars. Rashaun Sells added three hits, including a home run, while driving in three runs. Kayla Stevens added three hits and Gould homered in the win. Boytz pitched the final three innings to get her second win of

the day, pushing her record to 11-3 on the season.

Buel was excited to get the doubleheader sweep over Lower Columbia.

"I'm very proud of our team," said Buel. "We had to fight back and we came back in that second game and we played our game and did what we needed to do to win the game and that's what matters."

Clackamas (12-4 in S. Region, 25-13 overall) is guaranteed to finish in the top three of the region standings for a 15th consecutive season and is currently in second place, trail-

ing Mt. Hood by one-half game. Mt. Hood has won 11 straight games overall and seven in a row in league to get back into the race. The Cougars hosted the Saints in a very important doubleheader on Tuesday at 3 p.m., but results were not available at press time.

The Cougars stay home for their last games of the regular season, hosting a doubleheader against Clark CC on Saturday beginning at noon. The Cougars are eyeing the NWAACC Championships from May 17-20 at Delta Park in Portland for a season ending flourish.



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