

# Clackamas coaches overcome unique recruiting challenges

by **BLAKE THOMASON**  
sports editor

Fierce battles and critical decisions are happening all across the globe, all year round. Potential candidates are studied, poked and prodded in order to find the best of the best. There's nothing quite like college recruiting.

You might not think of two-year schools when you think of recruiting, and that's reasonable. High profile athletes sign with the Oregon Ducks, Washington Huskies or the Cal Bears, not Southeastern Little Prairie Oregon Community College. It's easy to think the big schools are the only ones traveling around and recruiting all year, while community colleges just pick up the leftovers. However, that's not the case at all.

Since athletes here at Clackamas Community College only have two years, coaches are constantly on the trail looking for their next star players — only one year after signing their last star.

"At junior college there's so much turnover," Josh Rhoden, wrestling coach, said. "It's literally every year, every weight class.

I talk to [Division 1] coaches and tell them their jobs are kind of easy because they have guys there for four or five years."

It's not just replacing one star either. Every year, coaches have to replace half of the team, or more. Next year the volleyball team will graduate 10 of their 15 players. As of now, the women's basketball team only has seven players for next season, but the coaches always have several targets.

"We talk to about 75 [players]," PJ Martineau, recruiting coordinator, said. "We're looking for around five to seven players. We usually carry around 11-12 kids."

Perhaps what's more difficult than getting the players, is building the team. It takes more than just gathering athletes to build a successful team; the players have to learn to work together, and they have to do it quickly.

"That's the unique challenge every year," Rhoden said. "How do we get them all on the same page early?" and "how do we get the buy in from them in us?" It makes it hard because you don't get them for that extra year that you could."

While the majority of athletes come from our home state, the recruiting trail does expand past Oregon, past the west coast and even

past the U.S. There are athletes here at CCC from 14 different states, as far as New Hampshire and Alaska, and from different countries.

"[We recruit] the whole United States," Rhoden said. "Shoot, we even have a kid on the team from Australia."

Even though community colleges don't seem to be big time sports schools, there is a lot of work being done to build successful programs here. Coaches travel as far as they can or need to in order to get the best players, and they spend a lot of time doing it.

"It's a never-ending job," Martineau said.

With college coaches all over competing for the same athletes, CCC has to make a good pitch. So how do CCC coaches sell recruits on their program? Each sport has its own features, but one aspect stands out above the others.

"It's a family atmosphere," Rhoden said. "Part of my promotion of our program is this is a family. These guys come over and my wife makes them dinner. We try to have all 30 of the guys to our house at some point through the year."

Martineau echoed Rhoden's selling point.



Illustration by Brandon Chorrum

Clackamas Community College athletes come from all over the United States as well as internationally. Here's how many athletes come from each location in 2013-2014.

## Sports wrap-up

**BASEBALL:** The season struggles continue for the Clackamas Cougars baseball team as they dropped three of four games to the Clark Penguins over the weekend. The Cougars were swept in Friday's doubleheader at Oregon City high school by scores of 14-1 and 9-0. Saturday's doubleheader was played in Vancouver and the Cougars managed to split the doubleheader, losing the first game 11-6 and winning the next 4-1. Their record now stands at 4-15 in league play and 5-18 overall. The Cougars have five games remaining; their next games are Friday, May 2 at home against Chemeketa and Saturday, May 3 at Southwest Oregon CC.

**SOFTBALL:** The Cougars softball team kept their streak rolling as they swept the Penguins on Saturday, 13-0 and 13-3. Then on Monday, the Cougars took on the Mt. Hood Saints in a battle for 1st place in the South Region. The first game took extra innings, but eventually the Saints pulled out the victory 5-4. The Cougars had an easier time in the second game of the doubleheader, winning 5-2. The weekend wins helped improve the Cougars' record to 11-1 in league and 30-2 overall. There are only four games left for the Cougars before the NWAACC Championship Tournament. Their upcoming games are Wednesday, April 30 at home against Chemeketa and Saturday, May 3 at Southwest Oregon CC.

— Compiled by  
**BLAKE THOMASON**

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