

SOFTBALL: Clackamas falls short in NWAACC championship game

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The fourth inning was huge for Mt. Hood. Unfazed by Clackamas' quick start, Mt. Hood answered back on defense with their own three straight outs. Then it was their offense's turn to answer. An error and a single put runners on first and second base, and a homerun erased Clackamas' lead and put Mt. Hood up 3-2. Clackamas got the next two batters out before Mt. Hood could add to the lead but homerun proved to be too much to overcome for Clackamas.

Clackamas was unable to do anything offensively in the fifth inning, and Mt. Hood stretched their lead to 4-2 after an RBI single. Coach Jessica Buel decided to switch pitchers, replacing Alyson Boytz with Morrison, who already pitched earlier that day. Morrison didn't appear sore or tired as she shut out Mt. Hood in the sixth. Clackamas didn't score either, so it came down to the seventh inning.

The Clackamas rally caps were on and outfielder Rachel Ray got on base to start the inning. Infielder Rashaun Sells flew out to center field for the first out and Vasquez came up next. Vasquez hit a short pop-up that was caught for out number two but Mt. Hood also beat Ray back to first to complete the double play and win the game.

"It just wasn't our day," Buel said. "We could've maybe executed a little better, but we played a great game, we fought hard and we did what we needed to do."

Clackamas finished second place overall after a great season, but it was clear the team was upset with the finish and wanted more. From the coaching staff to the players, there were a lot of emotions and tears.

"It's a rough way to go out, but we had a very good season," outfielder Samantha Owirka said. "I'm just really happy to have the group of girls we did."

Assistant coach Dustin Bare admitted it "hurt," but was optimistic about next season.

Players cried and hugged family and teammates, but they were also able to laugh and joke around afterward. They even attempted a team dogpile. After the initial sting wore off, the team looked back and appreciated what they accomplished on the field and off.

"All the team work and just coming together as one was probably the best thing," Morrison said. "We worked together more this year and we got things done."

Buel agreed with that sentiment and added, "it's a great group of girls. They're determined, they work hard every day, they went for their goals, they surpassed a lot of them."

Owirka, a sophomore, took the loss particularly hard but reflected on her career with great admiration and pride. "When I came to Clackamas I was told 'once you're a Cougar, you're always a Cougar,'" she said. "I honestly didn't know if it'd be true, but it really is. You never stop being a Cougar. It's great."



Pitcher Alyson Boytz winds up for a pitch against Treasure Valley during Clackamas' 11-1 win.

Photos by Liz Gomes

NWAACC CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT RECAP
DAY - OPPONENT - RESULT - SCORE
 FRIDAY - EVERETT - W - 6-2
 FRIDAY - TREASURE VALLEY - W - 11-1
 SATURDAY - WENATCHEE VALLEY - W - 3-2
 SATURDAY - MT. HOOD - L - 1-2
 MONDAY - TREASURE VALLEY - W - 8-3
 MONDAY - MT. HOOD - L - 2-4



Cougars Catcher Kandace Furlong attempts to throw a runner out.



Cougars softball team poses with second-place trophy.

Blake Thomason



Cougars softball team huddles up pre-game.