



Above: Infielder Kylie Bellis slides into home as catcher Ashley Culp watches during Sunday's semi-final game vs Mt. Hood.

Story and photos by Blake Thomason and Jack Spencer

For the second year in a row the Clackamas Cougars softball team was eliminated by the Mt. Hood Saints in the NWAC Championship tournament.

The Cougars ended the season on a hot streak, winning 10 of their last 11 games, en route to capturing the South Region title. The strong finish and region crown earned the team the No. 2 seed in the tournament, where they had high expectations.

"We have that desire every year, so it's a tradition at Clackamas," said head coach Jessica Buel. "We have won the most championships in the history of the NWAC, so that's our every year, that's what we're planning on."

In the team's first two games, they certainly seemed ready to live up to that tradition.

On the first day of the tournament Clackamas squared off against the No. 15 seed Everett Trojans. Both teams started off slow, until the Cougars erupted for five runs in the fourth-inning lead by a bases-clearing triple from Cassie Cruz. Cougar pitching kept the Trojans in check on their way to a 7-0 victory.

"The first game we had a lot of jitters but after that we were just kind of on a mission," said third baseman Kylie Gonzales.

The mission continued later that day as they were paired up against the No. 10 seed Bellevue Bulldogs. Clackamas jumped out to a big lead thanks to a

combined seven runs in the third and fourth inning. Bellevue rallied late scoring four runs in the seventh, but it wasn't enough to overcome the deficit as Clackamas held on 8-6.

Day two started out similar to day one, with Clackamas controlling their game against Douglas. The Cougar defense, led by pitcher Cassidy Edwards, dominated the game allowing just five hits and zero runs. The Cougar offense had another one-inning eruption with four runs in the third, which proved to be insurmountable in the 6-0 win.

"I mean our pitching staff is killing it, everybody on the field is hitting, there's hardly any errors," said Gonzales. "Everybody's doing their job together and that's what makes us unstoppable."

Edwards shutout each opponent in her first two starts of the tournament, as well as earning a save in the game against Bellevue. Most pitchers have to take days off, but Edwards was ready to go for each game at whatever position.

"I couldn't have done it without my team," said Edwards. "Obviously we played two pretty good teams that I pitched, and the other team that we

played I played center, but I mean everyone's here, it's like a whole different ball game. They come and nobody wants to lose so everybody's giving it all they got. I have to [say] hands down to my defense, couldn't do it without them."

Unfortunately, the roll the team was on ended on the third day of the tournament.

In the semi-finals, Clackamas faced off against the No. 1 seed Spokane Sasquatch. Fielding errors, pitching struggles and poor hitting did the Cougars in. Edwards was subbed out early in the game for pitcher Emily Marchbanks, but the change wasn't enough to spark a

comeback as Spokane won 4-1.

However, the tournament was double-elimination so the Cougars still had a chance to make the championship. They would just have to find a way to get back to their style of play.

"[We have to] just be confident at the plate, get up early in the game and score some, get back in our groove," said Marchbanks.

With elimination staring them in the face, Clackamas would have to go head to head with their archrival, Mt. Hood. The game would be a rematch of last year's championship.

continued on pg. 7



Pitcher Cassidy Edwards

NWAC Tourney Recap:

Friday vs Everett: W 7-0 Friday vs Bellevue: W 8-6
 Saturday vs Douglas: W 6-0 Sunday vs Spokane: L 1-4
 Sunday vs Mt. Hood: L 4-5



Pitcher Cassidy Edwards and catcher Kandace Furlong celebrate after shutting out Douglas in the quarterfinals.