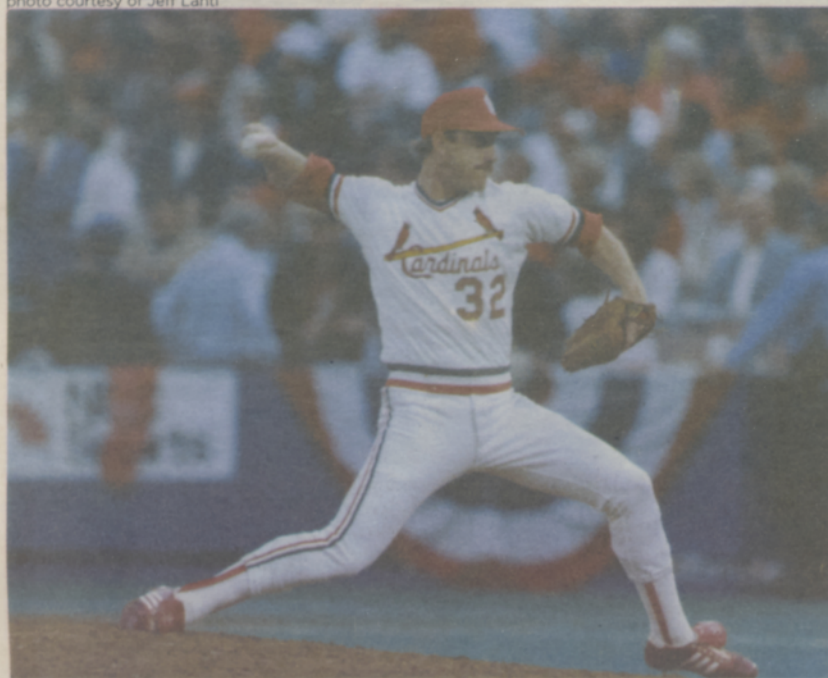


FORMER WORLD SERIES PITCHER COACHES AT CLACKAMAS

photo courtesy of Jeff Lahti



Above: Jeff Lahti pitching during the Playoffs in 1982.
Below: Jeff Lahti before a Cougars Baseball game in 2016.

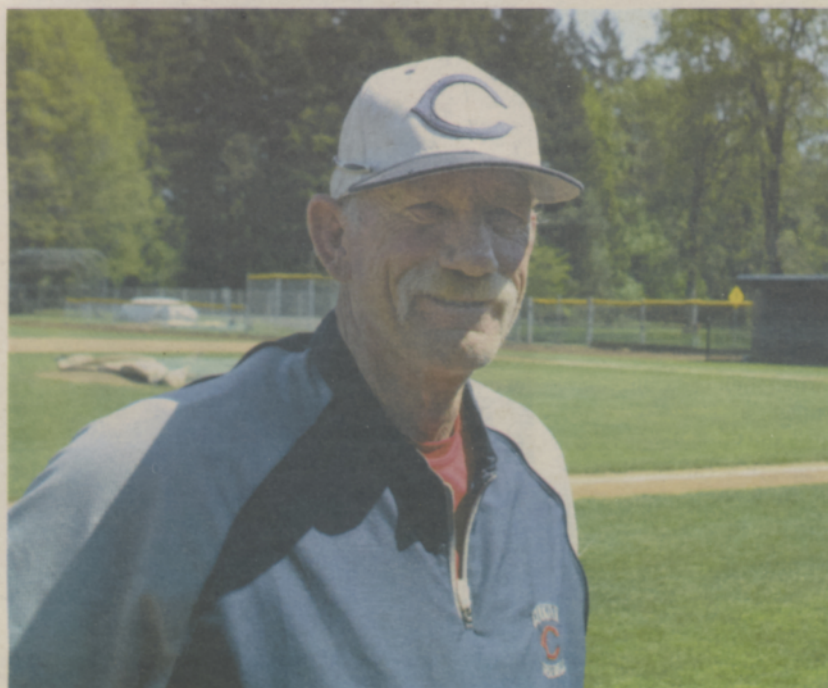


photo by Tom Boggess

BY TOM BOGCESS

Jeff Lahti, a professional baseball pitcher who pitched on the biggest stage, the World Series, has brought his knowledge and his abilities to the CCC Cougars. He was the ace in the bull pen with an amazing 1.84 ERA pitching for the St. Louis Cardinals in 1985. An ace is the best you have on your roster.

The Clackamas Print: Where are you from originally?

Jeff Lahti: I was born in Oregon City in October, 1958. My dad worked for a logging company and he worked in Hood River, so when I was three, I think we moved there. I was raised there and went back after baseball.

TCP: Where did your baseball career begin?

JL: Mine started at Hood River Valley High School, and I graduated from there in 1975. I was actually drafted right out of high school by the Cincinnati Reds, and I told them if they bought me a car I would sign. So then I went on to Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario, Oregon, for two years. My last college year I pitched for Portland State University and that was the end of college ball.

TCP: How did you move on to the professional level?

JL: In 1978 I was drafted in the fifth round by the Cincinnati Reds ball club. I played five years with them; some of it was in the minor leagues, then I got the call. That's where I met my mentor Johnny Bench. I went to four big league camps with Cincinnati in 1979-82.

TCP: What happened when you were done pitching with Cincinnati?

JL: I was traded to the Cardinals organization at the end of spring training on April 26, 1982, and on April 27, 1982, I made my pitching debut for the St. Louis Cardinals. The Cardinals won the World Series that year against the Milwaukee Brewers. I pitched in two of the games. In 1985, I pitched in four of those games against Kansas City Royals.

TCP: Tell me please what is it like for you and how did you feel being called out of the bull pen to save a game in a World Series?

JL: First off, it is a great honor to be given the ball in a World Series game. I took it on as my responsibility to do my job, and I really didn't want to get booed out of the stadium. It's really nerve racking and my knees were shaking, but I was working hard on every pitch.

TCP: If you could go back to that World Series game in 1985 No. 5, could you have done anything different?

JL: I could have watched the films a little better and I might not have given up those two runs, and I could have been Whitey Herzog's choice and then in the whole blown call situation in game 6 wouldn't have happen. I was a fielder and I would have been there sooner.

TCP: When you played, did you have any sort of nickname or not?

JL: They used to call me the Jam Man because whenever Whitey was in a Jam they called for the Jam Man. I had the most saves that year with 19.

TCP: What happened to you after your rotator cuff injury caused you to quit the game you loved?

JL: I went back home to Hood River where I raised a family and owned a big farm and I grew apples and pears for 30 years. I have sold half of it now, but still growing fruit.

TCP: How did you come to be the pitching coach for the CCC Cougars?

JL: Last year I got teamed up with CCC baseball coach Jim Hoppel in a golf tournament and we joined forces to turn this program into a winner and to get back to NWAC and contend. It's been a tough season so far this year but Jim and I are excited to be coaching this team. We are only going to get better and by using our scouting and recruiting, we hope to get some good young players in the future for our team.