

Cougars ready to hold down the den

STORY BY JACOB THOMPSON
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Last season Clackamas men's basketball saw a 17-year streak come to an end when the Cougars failed to secure a spot in the playoffs, ending the season on a three-game losing streak. The team is returning seven of their nine freshman from last year's squad.

"The end [of last season] was heartbreaking," said Head Coach Clif Wegner. "It came down to the very last second. We literally had a shot to put us in the playoffs, and the last three games were very close and could have gone either way."

Clackamas was unable to get the elusive win that would have given them a berth into the postseason in 2016-17, but the Cougars are ready to do whatever it takes to get back to start a new streak.

"Last year it hurt to not make it," said sophomore guard, Nygil Carr. "This year I'm going to make everyone, including myself, do everything in our will to make it to the playoffs."

Clackamas went 8-8 in conference and 15-13 overall, finishing in fifth in the Southern Region of the NWAC. The Cougars return a strong core group, which includes last year's leading scorer, Carr (18.2 points per game, 4.15 assists per game, and 4.3 rebounds per game), second best rebounder sophomore swingman Isaiah Gentry (13.2ppg, 1.96apg, and 6.0 rpg), and the rejection expert, blocks leader sophomore post, Shawn Carson Jr. (4.63ppg, 4.69rpg, and 1.2 blocks per game).

"If we play together we can beat anyone in the NWAC," said sophomore guard Briggs Young. "We've got the skill with Nygil [Carr] at the point, me at the two, Isaiah [Gentry] can shoot the ball really well, and Shawn [Carson Jr.] and Austin [Rose] are doing great down at the post."

Clackamas also returns Young (6.74ppg, 2.37apg, 1.96rpg), sophomore post Austin Rose (3.58ppg, 2.5rpg) and sophomore guard Freddy Vera (2.15ppg, 1.3rpg). The Cougars add a little national and international flavor to this year's roster with the addition of freshman post Nik Polynice (Los Angeles), Solomon Escalante (Kea'au, Hawaii) and Adam Gehrig (Brisbane, Australia).

The Cougars will be coached by Wegner, who returns for his 20th season at the helm. Wegner has over 380 wins at Clackamas, and has won three NWAC championships (2007, 2009, 2010), and has won the Southern Region seven times (2001, 03, 07, 09, 11, 14, 15). Wegner will be assisted by Associate Head Coach Brian Stamme who has been with Clackamas for six seasons. Wegner is optimistic about the Cougars chance to return to the playoffs.

"We just need to play together," said Wegner. "We have talent, we have experience, we have good people, and we're two deep at every position. We just need to gel, and do it as a team, and if we're focused on getting done as a team, I think we will be very good."

Clackamas hosts the NWAC Jamboree on Sunday, Nov. 5 at 9 a.m., and the hope is it will be the beginning of a championship season.

"We expect to go out and compete every night," said Wegner. "We look at every game on our schedule as a winnable game, we expect to compete for the Southern Region championship, and we expect to get ourselves into the NWAC tournament, and we expect to get to the final four. Those are our expectations and goals, and they're all realistic for this team."

photos by Sam Weston



Austin Rose contests the shot of teammate Solomon Escalante.

design by Jared Preble

**CLACKAMAS COMMUNITY
COLLEGE'S
ATHLETE OF THE MONTH**




XC



COUGARS



Eileen Reyna #9

The Athlete of the Month is chosen based on recommendations from coaches of the current sports season at CCC. The Clackamas Print reached out to coaches of fall sports and asked for nominees based on performance and leadership in the month of October. Freshman forward Eileen Reyna was selected as the October Athlete of the Month.

- Leads team in goals, points and shots on goal (9/13/51).
- Currently a captain in her first season at Clackamas.
- Coach Janine Szpara calls her goals "amazing ... while taking on three or four defenders."