

COUGARS SLAY AT CHEMEKETA

STORY BY JACOB THOMPSON
SPORTS EDITOR

photos by Jonathan Sanchez

Clackamas Community College's Women's basketball team improved to 14-3 overall, led by sophomore guard Kennedy Nofziger and freshman guard Alia Parsons with 16 points a piece. The cougars are now 5-0 in league play with their 77-66 win over Chemeketa Community College on Jan. 20.

With sophomore guard Brittany McCormick out with an ankle injury, the Cougars turned to Nofziger to help keep the offense rolling. Starting alongside sophomore guards Ricki Mock and Nicole Hermosillo-Wright, freshman guard CJ Buckley, and sophomore forward Kayce Mock, the Cougars took a 7-0 lead right out of the gate. But after the hot start, it was all Chemeketa the first quarter, outscoring Clackamas 22-15.

"People watch us warm-up, and we're never super high emotionally," said Head Coach Jim Martineau. "We're not a rah-rah team, and they kind of just go out and do their jobs, and I really like it. It's the same when we get down, they don't really panic, they just battle back. 'Okay we're down seven, let's get a couple stops.' It's really nice to coach this group."

In the second quarter the Cougars dug in defensively, and looked to Alia Parsons offensively. Parsons hit a 3-pointer that cut the lead to four early in the second quarter making a free throw just a few seconds later to close the gap to three. Chemeketa made a lay-up to push the lead to five, but Buckley answered with a 3-pointer for the Cougars to again close the gap to three. Clackamas shot 6-12 putting up 17 points, and held Chemeketa to 10 points on 3-18 shooting (16.7 percent). The lockdown defense allowed Clackamas to tie the game 32-32 going into halftime.

"Our defense does a great job," said Hermosillo-Wright. "We make them feel uncomfortable, and not allow them to do what they are used to doing."

The third quarter saw both Chemeketa and Clackamas shoot extremely well, with Clackamas shooting 47.4 percent from the field and Chemeketa shooting 50 percent from the field. The game was back and forth throughout the third quarter, but Clackamas took the lead 52-50 with 11 seconds left on a Hermosillo-Wright layup. Nofziger and Parsons each had six points and helped the Cougars outscore the Storm 20-18.

"We keep working hard and we don't give up," said Ricki Mock "We just trust each other and have a little faith in ourselves that no matter what we're going to push down and grind and try to get the win."

With 3:53 remaining in the game, Clackamas trailed 60-61, but once again the Cougars dug in on defense, and allowed the offense to change the momentum of the game. With Buckley's layup at 3:42, the Cougars went on a 12-0 run that put the game on ice. Parsons again lead the way with six points, Clackamas outscored Chemeketa 25-16 in the final frame, and captured their seventh straight



Alia Parsons attempts a layup against Chemeketa on Jan. 20. Parsons finished with 16 points.

victory.

"We've been in a couple of these situations in the preseason," said Martineau. "We climbed back in them. We had a chance to beat North Idaho before overtime (85-82 loss in overtime), Umpqua we lost after cutting it to one (72-67 loss) so we haven't ever quit. Start of the fourth quarter we're up two, so we're still winning. You can't go into games expecting to win every game by 25. I think their fine with that. They know it's a grind, and defensively we had to work a little bit."

So far this season the Cougars have been averaging 76.5 points per game, but during Clackamas' seven-game winning streak the Cougars have averaged 81.4 points per game. The Cougars have the 12th ranked scorer in the Northwest Athletic Conference in Hermosillo-Wright who is averaging 17.3 ppg, along with the 40th ranked scorer in Kayce Mock who is averaging 13.6 ppg.

"[Kayce Mock] has played great for us in the middle, and she can step out and shoot threes," said Martineau. "Nicole Hermosillo-Wright didn't play last year, but is the leading scorer. Brittany McCormick has done a great job leading us. [Ricki Mock], a transfer kid, sat out last year, she doesn't score a lot, but she's just so solid for us. We've got several kids that have played well, and we've got lots of help off the bench. It's a great group."

Since the break the Cougars have also been working Parsons into the rotation more. Parsons transferred to Clackamas after one year at Grand Canyon University, and through nine games with the Cougars has averaged 12.7 ppg.

On the defensive side of the court, Clackamas has allowed 59.1 ppg, but during the streak have only allowed 45.9 ppg. Kayce Mock has been a huge asset for Clackamas on defense, with her NWAC-leading with 14.4 rebounds per game, and 55 blocked shots, Kayce Mock has been the defensive stopper the undersized Cougars need.

"I believe rebounding is all about out-hustling people," said Mock. "It's knowing where to go, and where to be, so playing smart helps that a little bit."

The Cougars play at home on Jan. 24 vs Clark Community College (1-15 overall, 1-4 league), and again at home vs Umpqua Community College (18-0, 5-0) on Jan. 27.



Nicole Hermosillo-Wright brings the ball up for the Cougars' offense.