

Suns out, gloves out

CLACKAMAS' BASEBALL TEAM BREAKS OUT THE LEATHER AND STARTS NEW SEASON

STORY BY JACOB THOMPSON
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After a disappointing 14-27 overall record and 7-17 last place finish in the South Region in 2017, Clackamas Community College's baseball team is ready for a fresh start in 2018 and several players believe they have what it takes to make the NWAC playoffs.

On the field last year, the Cougars struggled offensively, finishing 17th in the NWAC for hits and 12th in runs as well as defensively finishing 26th in strikeouts and committing 58 errors, but it's the off-field chemistry of this year's baseball team that has the players excited, believing this is the year the Cougars will break through.

"Some of the guys we had here last year were here for the wrong reasons," head coach Jim Hoppel said. "There were a few groups that didn't combine as one. These guys this year have no issues like they said, they're all one big family. This group is one of the best I've been around and I've been coaching for 25 years."

The Cougars return 10 players from last year's squad, which include last year's top three home run hitters in outfielder Tyler Parker (6 HRs), 3rd baseman/pitcher Renner Stecki (3 HRs) and 2nd baseman/pitcher Berry Hunt (2 HRs). Clackamas also returns their two

winningest pitchers Stecki (5 wins, 4.22 earned run average) and Cody Anderson (4 wins, 2.72 ERA). The Cougars are going to need their pitching staff to come through for them this season and Anderson believes the culture the Cougars are building is going to make the biggest difference.

"This is group is one of the best I've been around and I've been coaching for 25 years."

— Jim Hoppel

"We all have heard the saying there is no 'I' in team," Anderson said. "We had a lot of individuals on last year's team and this year we have a lot of team guys. Guys that can pass the ball on to the next guy and trust that he's going to do the right thing."

So far, the season has been going pretty well for the

Cougars with two wins over Linfield's JV (8-0, 7-0) on Feb. 24. The Cougars had Parker, Hunt, and outfielder Grant Horwitz homer of the weekend and are hoping to stay aggressive according to Hoppel.

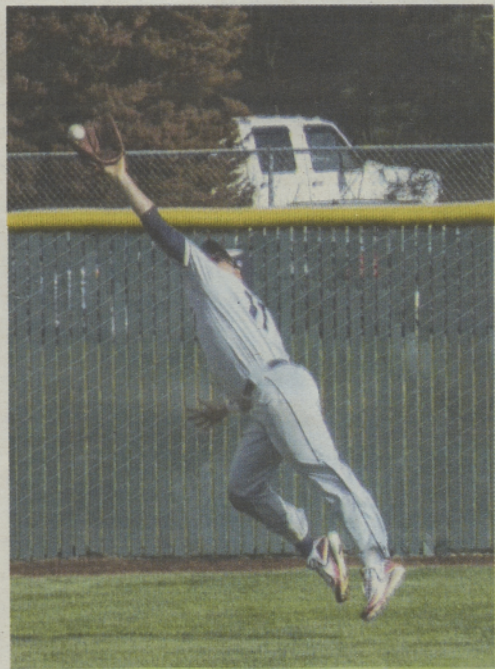
"I've told guys I want them to swing it as hard as they can," Hoppel said. "Be smart at the plate and on the bases. Defense is going to be good and we're going to be aggressive. We want to make the other team play really hard to beat us."

Hoppel is excited about the returning group, but equally excited about the incoming players. Horwitz is a transfer from San Diego State and although he just arrived on campus, he is excited to be at CCC and feels like he's fitting in well.

"I wanted the chance to just get out on the field, play and have fun," Horwitz said. "I wanted to come out here and form a bond with my teammates and win some ball games."

The Cougars haven't made the playoffs since 2009, but maybe a little team chemistry can be the factor that makes a big difference as the Cougars work towards their goal of a NWAC playoff appearance.

photos by Sam Weston



Above: Tyler Parker makes an amazing catch against Spokane Valley on March 3.

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
MARCH 8	GEORGE FOX JV	4PM
MARCH 16	TREASURE VALLEY	NOON/3PM
MARCH 17	TREASURE VALLEY	NOON/3PM
MARCH 23	PACIFIC JV	4PM/6PM
MARCH 27	SWOCC	2PM
MARCH 30	@SWOCC	NOON/3PM
MARCH 31	@SWOCC	11AM/2PM
APRIL 3	CLARK	4PM
APRIL 6	@CLARK	1PM/4PM
APRIL 7	CLARK	1PM/4PM
APRIL 10	MT. HOOD	4PM
APRIL 13	@MT. HOOD	1PM/4PM
APRIL 14	MT. HOOD	1PM/4PM
APRIL 17	@LINN BENTON	4PM
APRIL 20	LINN BENTON	1PM/4PM
APRIL 21	@LINN BENTON	1PM/4PM
APRIL 24	LANE	4PM
APRIL 27	@LANE	1PM/4PM
APRIL 28	LANE	1PM/4PM
MAY 8	@CHEMEKETA	4PM
MAY 11	CHEMEKETA	1PM/PM
MAY 12	@CHEMEKETA	1PM/4PM

Right: Clackamas Community's Baseball schedule.