

Clackamas eyes top 16 finish in NWAC

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After a 1-3 finish in a round-robin tournament versus Treasure Valley College and North Idaho College, Clackamas Community College's softball team moves to 13-15 overall and 7-7 in the South Region.

Despite the rough weekend, the Cougars are currently ranked No. 15 in the rating percentage index, which would qualify them for the NWAC playoffs.

"I think we're coming along better as a team," said freshman pitcher Baylee Eaton. "As our games go by we've become a better team and I think we're going to pull through."

The Cougars have had a lot of success offensively, with a team batting average of .361, hitting 25 home runs and 184 runs batted in, although they have seen a slight decrease in offensive productivity when playing league opponents. Seventeen of the Cougars 25 HRs have come outside of league play and the team batting average has dropped from .394 to .330 when playing conference foes.

"We started off pretty hot and we went to some places where the elevation was a lot higher," said Head Coach Jessica Buel. "We've hit a couple bumps in the

road along the way, but hopefully now we're getting back in the swing of things."

Freshman catcher Natalie Munson is leading the way for the Cougars at the plate, with a batting average of .382, 15 HRs and 35 RBIs. With 14 games remaining, Munson needs two more HRs to break the school record.

"I'm not used to hitting this many home runs," Munson said. "I'd had a few back in high school. It feels really good and hopefully I get good hits and get what it takes."

Clackamas has leaned on Eaton to do most of the pitching so far this season, pitching 76 of the 152 innings the Cougars have played. Appearing in 20 of the Cougars' 28 games, Eaton has a 5-8 record, has recorded 58 strikeouts, and has an earned run average of 7.09.

"I've just tried to focus on the batter and not what the situation is," said Eaton. "I know my teammates have my back out there."

Freshman pitcher Miranda Jensen has been another key part of Clackamas' pitching staff, starting in eight games for the Cougars. Jensen is 4-1, with 10 strikeouts, and an ERA of 6.92, she has thrown 30.1 innings. Jensen usually starts the second game of any doubleheaders

Clackamas plays and it's a roll she's comfortable in.

"I know [Eaton] is going to get the first game done," said Jensen. "If we don't play well in the first game we might be a little frazzled, but I know we're going to get it done one out at a time."

The Cougars have been right around a winning total percentage of .500 the entire season, but sophomore outfielder Aisha Ensley said she feels like Clackamas is primed to get into the postseason and turn some heads at the NWAC tournament.

"We want to get to [the tournament] and show everybody who we really are," said Ensley. "And not what they've seen so far. Now's the time to do what we've been working for all season"

Sitting .008 percent ahead of Spokane Community College in the RPI, Clackamas will face Chemeketa Community College (2-18, 1-7) on Saturday.

photos by Jonathan Villagomez



Top left: Natalie Munson at bat.
Top right: Tori Harper throws to first base.
Bottom: Brittany Hays catches a pitch.