

Cougars win most games since 2011;

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JACOB THOMPSON
SPORTS EDITOR

"Boom Boom Pow" by the Black Eyed Peas was the No. 1 song on the radio in May of 2009 and Clackamas Community College's baseball team had just broke a 13-year streak of missing the Northwest Athletic Conference (NWAC) playoffs. Since that 2009 season, where the Cougars finished 25-23 overall and 16-14 in league, Clackamas has failed to return to the NWAC playoffs, failing to win at least nine league games in the past six seasons. This season the Cougars did manage to win 11 league games, but missed the playoffs for the ninth straight season.

Finishing with an overall record of 16-26 overall, the Cougars' season was full of ups and downs, but none changed the direction of the season more drastically than the final 10 games of the season.

After completing a sweep of Mt. Hood Community College on April 23, Clackamas improved to 10-9 in league

play and sat in fourth place in the Southern Region, but the celebration of sweeping Mt. Hood was short lived as Clackamas found themselves being swept by Linn-Benton Community College and Lane Community College. The Cougars found themselves on a six-game losing streak that would have Clackamas on the verge of missing the playoffs for a ninth straight year.

"As a team we just need to play fundamental baseball," freshman third baseman Nathan Loranger said after Clackamas' 8-4 and 13-2 losses to Lane on April 30. "Catch the ball, throw the ball, hit the ball. Pitchers need to hit their spots, defenders need to help the pitchers out and we need good at-bats."

A five-game series versus Chemeketa Community College would be the Cougars last chance to straighten the ship and advance to NWAC Cross Regional play.

"We need to get our energy up in the dugout," sophomore outfielder Tyler Oscarson said on April 30. "We need to dig deeper and grab something from our hearts, because we're fighting for a playoff spot right now."

In game one of the series, the Cougars held a commanding 9-1 lead through four innings of play, but Chemeketa came storming back, scoring 10 runs in the bottom of the fifth inning to take the lead 11-9. Clackamas went scoreless in the sixth and seventh innings, while the Storm scored six more runs to extend their lead to 17-9. Clackamas scored a run in the top of the eighth inning, but gave up three in the bottom of the inning, losing 20-10.

"We didn't play good enough to win," sophomore outfielder Tyler Parker said at practice following the loss. "It was just a bad game all around."

Needing to win the next four games to keep their season alive, the atmosphere at practice the day after the 20-10 loss was tense to say the least.

"For us sophomores these could be some of the last baseball games in our lives. It's literally win or go home for the rest of your life for some of us," sophomore pitcher Cody Anderson said at

Wednesday's practice.

Game two and three of the series were played at Clackamas Community College on Friday. Freshman pitcher Mason Schimmel started game two on the hill for the Cougars. Throwing three innings, Schimmel gave up three runs on three hits and left the game with Clackamas trailing 3-0.

Freshman pitcher Nick White took over for Schimmel and threw the last six innings of the game. White gave up seven hits, five runs and walked three batters.

The Cougars failed to score any runs until the bottom of the seventh inning, when sophomore outfielder Tyler Parker hit a solo home run. The HR was Parker's eighth of the season, but would be the only run the Cougars scored as they fell in game two 8-1.

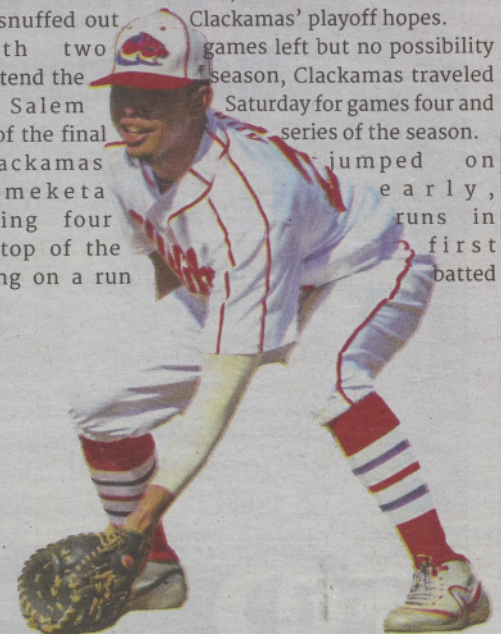
The loss put Clackamas in a tough spot for making the playoffs, sitting in sixth place, two games back of Chemeketa and one game back of Clark. Clackamas would need to win the next three games of their series, while needing Southwestern Oregon Community College to beat Clark Community College three times.

Sophomore shortstop Renner Stecki made his fifth start of the season on the mound for Clackamas in game three. Stecki surrendered six earned runs through five innings and received no run support as the offensive woes continued for the Cougars, recording one hit in five innings.

The Cougars made a late offensive surge in the sixth and seventh innings, putting up five runs on seven hits, but it was too little too late, and Chemeketa won 9-5 and snuffed out Clackamas' playoff hopes.

With two games left but no possibility to extend the season, Clackamas traveled to Salem Saturday for games four and five of the final series of the season.

Clackamas jumped on Chemeketa early, scoring four runs in the top of the first inning on a run batted



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