

Fight to the playoffs

BY COLE SOWDERS
STAFF WRITER

With the postseason approaching quickly there is little margin for error. That margin is even slimmer for Clackamas Community College's women's basketball team.

After finishing the first round of league play with a record of 4-4, the Cougars found themselves in fifth place behind Chemeketa, who they lost to in double overtime on Jan. 19 101-95. Only the top four teams in each conference advance to the NWAC tournament, meaning the Cougars have ground to make up if they want to play in March.

The Cougars started the second round of league play off right with a beatdown of Portland Community College 95-65. Sophomore guard CJ Buckley led the way for Clackamas with 32 points on 10-14 shooting from the field and a perfect 8-8 from the free throw line. Buckley also added six steals and seven rebounds. Buckley has stepped into a larger role this season according to Head Coach Jim Martineau.

"CJ has been fantastic all year long. I have enjoyed watching her develop from her role last year into how she is playing this season," Martineau said. "Obviously it is very important that she plays well each game for us and she has responded well."

Saturday's win improves Clackamas' league record to 5-4 and their overall record to 9-9. After dropping a game to Mt. Hood Community College on Jan. 30, Martineau was adamant that his squad needed to go 6-2 through the second half of the league schedule to have a chance of making the NWAC tournament.

"Four and four is tough because [we're] probably a game out [of the playoffs] right now," Martineau said on Jan. 30. "Chemeketa has three loss and Mt. Hood has three so [we're] a game behind with losses to both those teams so [we] have to go 6-2 probably the last stretch. If we can get on a little roll and get going and find a little mojo that we just haven't had the last couple games."

Clackamas may have started rolling in the direction Martineau was looking for Saturday. The team collectively shot 33-65 from the field and 11-27 from beyond the arc compared to the team's Jan. 30 loss where they shot 30 percent from the floor and just 8 percent from the 3-point line.

Clackamas dominated PCC from the opening tip and quickly jumped out to a 12-2 lead with 7:24 remaining in the first

quarter. Buckley shot a perfect 4-4 from the field and scored 13 of her 32 points. Clackamas closed the first quarter with a 30-16 lead and the route was on.

Freshman guard Ambreece Gaskins helped CCC tremendously off the bench, scoring 19 of the Cougars' 29 bench points and contributing three steals and a block. Gaskins hopes the team can be more consistent as the season moves forward. "Some games we show up and others we don't."

Freshman guard Paige Downer contributed 19 points on 7-11 shooting, adding two steals and four assists. Although Clackamas has had success on offense this season, averaging 79.6 points per game, Downer looks to improve as a team defensively.

"Everyone knows we are a good offensive scoring team, so we needed to pick up the defensive end because that is where we struggle," Downer said. "We don't rotate quick enough or rebound that well and that's hurt us a little."

Clackamas has often been outrebounded by their opponents and the Feb. 2 contest was no exception as PCC outrebounded the Cougars 50-39, but the offensive explosion made rebounds moot. Clackamas scored 42 of their 95 points on the fastbreak and outscored PCC in three of the four quarters.

The Cougars look to continue the hot shooting as they travel to Coos Bay to take on Southwestern Oregon Community College (7-13, 2-7) on Saturday, Feb. 10 at 2 p.m. This will be the third meeting this season between CCC and SWOCC with both teams winning one game so far.

photos by Jonathan Villagomez



Paige Downer, pictured above, contributed 19 points to CCC's game against Portland Community College.

