

Women's hoops heads to postseason

STORY AND PHOTO BY JACOB THOMPSON
SPORTS EDITOR @SPORTSEDTHOMPS

It didn't look good for Clackamas Community College's women's basketball team at the halfway point. The team sat at 4-4 in league play, and Head Coach Jim Martineau knew his team would have to rack up wins the second round of league play to have a chance of making the NWAC playoffs.

"If we would've got this one I would've felt pretty good about our chances for playoffs," Martineau said after Clackamas lost to Mt. Hood on Jan. 30. "We're probably a game out right now, and we're probably going to have to go 6-2 the last stretch."

The Cougars outperformed the 6-2 mark Martineau set and with a 74-73 win over Mt. Hood on February 27 the Cougars finished 7-1 in the second round of league and clinched third place in the South Region.

The contest was a back and forth affair with the Cougars and Saints trading buckets. Mt. Hood led by nine with one minute remaining in the first quarter, but two quick baskets by Clackamas brought the Saints lead down to 5, 24-19.

Clackamas tied the score 28-28 on a jump shot by Savannah Duarte with 4:44 left to play in the first half and 30 seconds later Duarte hit another jumper to give the Cougars a 30-28 lead.

Duarte led Clackamas in scoring, putting up eight points on 4-5 shooting in the second quarter and the Cougars took a 34-29 lead into the locker room after holding Mt. Hood to just five points in the second quarter.

Clackamas maintained their lead for the entirety of the third quarter and headed for the final quarter with a 56-50 advantage.

The Saints mounted a ferocious comeback late in the game, tightening the score at 71-72 with 12 seconds left to play. Mt. Hood fouled immediately and sent freshman guard Paige Downer to the charity stripe where she drilled two free throws to give Clackamas a three point lead 74-71. Mt. Hood scored to make it 74-73, but weren't able to foul again before time expired.

Sophomore guard CJ Buckley continued her offensive

dominance finishing with 29 points on 8-15 shooting.

"In the offensive column we can pretty much pencil in 20 [points] every night for [Buckley] and that's huge. In high school, little kid basketball or the NBA if you can pencil in 20 points that's huge." Assistant Coach Kurt Guelsdorf said.

Buckley wasn't a big offensive threat her first year with the Cougars, but this year she has averaged 21.2 points per game.

"Last year, just coming on as a walk-on freshman I didn't know how it was going to play out," Buckley said. "But definitely this year I like having the role of a leader and I don't really fold under pressure so when we get in those tough situations I think my team relies on me and we've done a good job keeping each other up when we need to."

The Cougars will play Wenatchee Valley (24-5, 13-3) on March 9 for the first round of the NWAC playoffs. The game tips at 10 p.m.

Cougars clinch playoff berth

STORY AND PHOTO BY LEXIS SHULL
STAFF WRITER

Clackamas Community College's men's basketball team picked up a crucial win on Feb. 27 against Mt. Hood Community College 96-86.

The win ended up being the deciding factor in the South Region playoff race, giving Clackamas the final South Region playoff spot.

Clackamas jumped out to a quick lead over Mt. Hood, led by the shooting of freshman swingman Clay Sullivan, who scored eight points in the first six minutes of the game.

The Cougars came into the game knowing it wasn't going to be an easy game.

Adam Gehrig, the only sophomore starter on the team, said, "We knew it was a big win, a big night especially for Mt. Hood with their coach retiring. We knew we had to come out with energy."

The Cougars had a mid-season dip in their play after losing three games in a row against Umpqua, Linn-Benton and Chemeketa.

Head coach Clif Wegner said, "We got our heads handed to us at Umpqua and that was a tremendous slap in the face with our confidence. I feel like we kinda staggered out of that one, and we didn't just get beat, we got our butts kicked, and I think we lost some confidence. With a roster of 10 freshman, there's gonna be a growing up process. I feel like we've matured and I think these guys can't think of themselves

as freshman anymore."

Freshman Devon Banks said the season had its ups and downs.

"The coach does a good job of making sure we all stay together, because we went down a couple of times," said Banks. "We just gotta stay focused and know what we wanna do. We already know how good we are we just gotta take it one by one."

That's exactly what the Cougars did in their game against Mt. Hood, as they took the lead for good with less than eight minutes to spare.

Freshman guard Robert Ford hit a clutch three to put the game out of reach for the Saints.

"It was actually during a play called spread," Ford said. "We were spreading the floor. Once I got the ball, I kinda just stepped back and I saw his man go with him, so I just shot." Wegner said, "Our kids really stepped up in the second half. We did a tremendous job managing the free throw situation and that's an important game goal. [Mt. Hood] is the best free throw shooting team in the NWACC. They shoot the highest percentage at 78 percent. I don't think we have one guy shooting 78 percent."

Clackamas will play North Idaho (27-2, 16-0) in the first round of the NWAC playoffs on March 7 at 10 a.m.



Freshman post Matt O'Brien throws down a dunk over Mt. Hood on Feb. 27