

# Athletes face different opponent

## CLACKAMAS ATHLETICS LOOKS TO WIN BATTLE WITH ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

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Freshman volleyball player Madison Landwehr was a standout on the court for Astoria High School. When it came to choosing a college to continue her education and her volleyball career she chose Clackamas Community College, following in her brother's footsteps. When she arrived on campus she realized the competition for playing time would be much tougher.

"Coming from a school of 400 kids, it's the best of the best there, and then you come to [Clackamas] and you're like 'Woah. Everybody's the best of the best.'"

As Landwehr played through the first half of the season, she found herself getting limited minutes and started to feel like she couldn't compete with the more experienced players on her team. Landwehr wanted to leave.

"I made some tearful phone calls to my mom," Landwehr said. "I was like, 'Hey can I move home?' and she was like, 'No you'll instantly regret it, I'm not letting you leave.' That was really good of her because I probably would've."

Landwehr is not the only athlete with sadness and anxiety.

A baseball player, who asked to remain nameless, shared insight of his battle with anxiety and depression as he watched an offseason of training end with failure in his final season.

The baseball player said, "Where it's been tough for me in college is like obviously Clackamas isn't the most winning program, especially this year, so you lose the game by 7, you went 0-4 and you had two errors, how do you find something positive about that? How do you go home and find a way to flush it? You have 10 different negatives in one day ... fuck dude you're just mentally wrecked."

Both Landwehr and the baseball player said that the anxiety they suffered due to not performing well started to impact their lives outside of athletics.

"It definitely did affect me socially, where I didn't want to interact with people," Landwehr said. "I put a lot of my self-worth on my performance as an athlete, so not feeling great as an athlete made me not feel good as a person. [I felt] anything from homesick to not good enough. I didn't feel like I was able to do the job that I was recruited for and that was really tough. The highs of being an athlete are super high, when you do your best you're on top of the world, but the lows, when you're in that slump for weeks and weeks, it can start to feel like depression."

Katie Woods, a counselor at Clackamas, said that athletes suffer from anxiety for a couple of reasons including homesickness, studies and upcoming events.

Woods said bottling up anxiety won't help the situation.

"I think they need someone to talk to because anxiety can be like a runaway train, but it can be stopped and it can be slowed," Woods said. "I strive to work on that right away. A lot of times it's not just their events. Many

of these kids are away from home and they're really missing their families. When they come visit me we start talking right away. You can't ignore anxiety, it's only going to get worse."

Athletic Director Jim Martineau is trying to make sure that there is a culture of openness in sports on campus, one that wasn't there when he was an athlete here.

"Back in the day, especially in athletics, if you were stressed or having a bad day, you didn't talk about it, you just kind of sucked it up and did your stuff," Martineau said. "We've learned over time that's not the best way to approach it as we went through it. There's more awareness and there's more understanding of it's not a healthy way to go about your day."

Martineau is working with the coaching and counseling staff to make it known to the athletes that there are always people they can talk to.

"When we talk to our athletes we want to make sure they speak to their coach and then coaches will provide resources," Martineau said. "We have two counselors that work in a department, Tim Pantages and Katie Woods. Both do mental health and drug and alcohol counseling and we also use the counseling around campus."

Though Landwehr didn't talk to Katie Woods, she told a support group of teammates and volleyball Head Coach Sarah Hoeke how she was feeling. Landwehr eventually got through her anxiety and even saw her minutes increase as the season winded down.

Landwehr said the most valuable thing she learned from her experience was not to value her self-worth based on her athletic performance.

"I feel more confident in myself as a player and I think I've learned to not base my self-worth on myself as an athlete," Landwehr said. "I'm a 4.0 student and I wasn't like that in high school, which is insane now that I'm at college because it's way harder. I feel like I take the good things about myself and I compartmentalize when I have a bad night of volleyball."

Woods works closely with the wrestling program after it suffered a serious blow at the beginning of the school year.

On September 9 incoming freshman and wrestling recruit Kione Gill killed himself.

"I'm not going to lie to you, that was a hard, hard time," Rhoden said. "It's the first time that's ever happened to me as a head coach."

Rhoden had arrived home that night and after putting his little ones to bed, jumped on social media to check on his wrestlers and make sure they were staying out of trouble. Then a post from one of his athletes had Rhoden worrying.

"Clai [Quintanilla] said, 'Tell me it's not true' or something along those lines, sort of cryptic but at the same time led me to search more and I started looking," Rhoden said. "I talked with [Quintanilla] a little bit and he said 'I haven't heard from Kione, no one has, last Layn

heard [Kione] said he loved him' and now I'm starting to think, oh my God. I tried to text one of the guys from [Kione's] high school team that we knew and I didn't hear from him so I called [Kione's] high school coach and he said, 'Yeah, Kione took his life last night.' My son's getting out of the bathtub and I look at Keri and she's like, 'What's wrong?' and I'm like, 'Kione killed himself this weekend.'"

Rhoden didn't want to announce the news to his team via text, so he left for the apartment where most of the wrestlers live.

"We met at the apartments literally in the parking lot and I said, 'I hate to tell you guys this, but I just want you to hear it from me' I think some of them were already suspicious, but just delivering that news and being there with those guys for the next several hours late into the night," said Rhoden. "It was the right thing to do, but it was really hard though because you never want to see people at their weakest moments."

Rhoden couldn't believe the outpouring of support from the community during his program's darkest time.

"Tara Sphere, our dean, was there that next morning, Jim [Martineau] and Kayla [Steen] and the whole outpouring of support from everyone," Rhoden said. "[Tim] Cook's a brand new president, he comes in that afternoon. [Cook] comes in and sees how we're doing. You never hope you have to go through that but just to see the support and how many people care about them."

Rhoden doesn't want to associate Gill's death to some of his other wrestlers entering counseling, but does think it was a factor.

"Some guys got some help that maybe they needed personally, that they maybe wouldn't have gotten otherwise," Rhoden said. "And I don't mean to slight that as 'Kione died for a reason' I don't like to say that, but they wouldn't have gotten help if that didn't happen, like life hit them in the face. To see mortality as a real thing, for some people it's like the thing that help changes their life."

Woods said her advice to athletes struggling with anxiety or depression would be to come see her right away. Woods uses a type of counseling called the Rogerian style.

"I listen, paraphrase and we come to solutions together," Woods said. "My belief is we take each other's hands and let us help one another see things through."

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