

# Clark College prepares for first softball pitch

□ CHS, WHS coaches thrilled with new program

By Dan Trujillo  
Post-Record staff

Camas and Washougal High School softball players can now continue their education and play ball close to home.

On Saturday, the Clark College women's softball team will throw out the first pitch at home in a double-header against Everett Community College. Opening day ceremonies begin at 11 a.m., with the games scheduled to start at noon and 2

p.m., at the Penguin's new softball complex, located on the Hudson's Bay High School campus, 1206 E. Reserve St. in Vancouver.

"It's going to be a good time," Clark athletics director and softball coach Lisa Quednow-Bickler said. "The kids are working hard, they have great attitudes. There's a lot of local talent, and that makes it fun."

The Clark softball program kicks off its inaugural season Wednesday at South Puget Sound Community College. But what the Penguins and Quednow-Bickler are looking forward to is stepping on the home field Saturday and sharing the excitement of the

first season with the local community.

"This is a chance for the kids to stay home, go to a good school and get a great education while they continue to play the sport that they love," Quednow-Bickler said. "To me, that's the most rewarding part."

There are 16 players on the Clark team, including players from Battle Ground, La Center, Longview, Ridgefield, Vancouver and Woodland. Although there are no Camas or Washougal graduates on this year's team, Quednow-Bickler said she hopes that will change by as early as next season.

"Any local talent is what

we're looking at for the future," she said. "I know Camas and Washougal have great softball programs, and we'd love to have their seniors come to us after they graduate. We'll be out there recruiting."

The Camas and Washougal coaches also share the excitement of having a local college with a softball program.

"Clark has a reputation in the state and in the region as being one of the top community colleges to go to," Washougal coach John Carver said. "Our girls are trying to figure out the best place to go to school, and then try and match that with softball. It will be great to have a

local option."

"Clark County is a hot bed for softball," Camas coach Rob Mattson said. "I'm glad to see Clark College getting a program. They could put together some really good teams in a couple of years."

Without having a local a local college softball team, Carver and Mattson said players from Camas and Washougal have gone on to play softball at Mt. Hood Community College, Lower Columbia Community College and Portland State University. Both coaches said the Clark softball program is something they have been

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— Lisa Quednow-Bickler

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anticipating for a long time.

"I know a lot of players from the area who went to Clark and wanted to keep playing softball," Mattson said. "It's because Clark has so many great educational programs. People I know who have gone their say they feel prepared for a four-year school. Now they have the softball team to go with it."

"I hope that Clark can compete with Mt. Hood and Lower Columbia, where a lot of the local players have gone

in the past," Carver said. "And hopefully, they will continue to get a strong local recruitment class. There's plenty of talent to be had around here."

It's these comments from local softball coaches that encouraged Quednow-Bickler to start a program at Clark College.

"We offer a great education, and now we're giving softball players a chance to stay at home and play in the community that's watched them play since they were kids," she said. "It will also help bring

kids who have played together for years into the same program. That dynamic is what will make our program special."

Clark competes in the South Division of the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges. The Penguins are one of 28 teams competing in the NWAAC this season.

For more information, go to [www.clark.edu/athletics](http://www.clark.edu/athletics) or call the Clark College athletic office at 992-2691.