A VICTORY FOR PERSEVERANCE AT CLARK

Three players are rewarded after enduring 0-30 year

By SOMER BREEZE
Columbian staff writer

Most players would give up on a team after a winless season.
And many did when the Clark College softball team finished 0-30 last year. Only three players: Ashleigh Byrne, Lori Love and Kellie Preheim, returned for their sophomore season. Coach Kasey Powers also came back for his second season in the three-year-old program.

“It was really hard to want to come back,” said Love, an Evergreen graduate. “Nobody really knows what it’s like to have a no-win season.”

The players, as well as the coach, all returned because they were optimistic. Even after suffering loss after loss, they knew the wins would come — eventually.

And this year Clark got its first win in two years on March 21, and then continued to pick up nine more wins. Clark is 10-34 overall, 2-24 in the Northwest Association of Community Colleges, with four games left.
The Penguins’ season finale is Saturday at home against Clackamas.

While the number in the loss column overshadows the wins, it is a step in a positive direction.

“It could only go up from last year,” Love said. “It really couldn’t get worse. We wanted to try and make the best of it for the second year. We just kept a positive attitude and came back to see what we

CLARK, Page B6

Evergreen graduate Lori Love said it was really hard to want to return to the Clark College softball team this season.
Clark:

From Page B1

could do.

"We've done amazing this
year."

Powers was an assistant
coach at Skyview for three
years and also coached a
summer league team prior to
taking over the Clark
program last spring. In those
three years combined, Pow-
ers said he did not have 30
losses.

Powers took over the
second-year Penguins right
before the season began,
and missed out on recruiting
local star players needed to
establish a program. The
team was also in danger of
folding because of lack of
players.

"It was hard to get up and
get to practice because even
though I enjoyed the kids, I
hated losing," Powers said.
"I hated coming out here
knowing we didn't have a
chance last year. The only
thing that saved me was the
fact that the kids were such
great kids."

Love and Byrne both said
one of the reasons they came
back for their second season
was because of the players
that came in this year.

While the Penguins first
win against Green River
was important for the entire
team, it meant a lot more for
the returning trio, as well as
their coach.

"I don't think we all
realized it at first," Love said.
"Then the three returners all
kind of looked at each other
and were like, 'Oh my gosh,
we just won our first college
game!' Then we started
jumping up and down."

Clark has not won a game
since April 20, when the
Penguins defeated Yakima
Valley 4-1.

"It's not so much the
winning and losing (that's
frustrating)," said Byrne, a
Mountain View grad. "It's
the fact that we're capable
of winning. We're just not
performing as well as we
could be."

To put a positive spin on
the losses, Clark lost 10 of its
games by five or less runs.
The Penguins have also
lowered their earned run
average by nine runs to 7.49.
They have cut down on their
errors and are consistently
turning double plays — an
improvement from last year
when they were just trying to
get an out, Powers said.

"This year we come out
every game and I know we
have a chance," Powers said.
"If we play how we're capable
of we have a chance of
winning."

But the long season has
started to wear down Clark's
roster which shrank from
16 players to 12. Powers has
started the Penguins on a
weight training program, in
hopes to prevent injuries in
future seasons. For some, it
was their first time having to
lift weights.

"We don't try to change
how they play," Powers said.
"I'm going to tweak things
here and there when we need
to, but the thing I can change
is their work ethic in the
weight room."

Since the top four teams
out of the six team south re-
region advance to the champi-
onships, Clark's season ends
this weekend. But Powers
and assistant Sara Ross are
already looking ahead to
next year and the year after.

Local players who want to
stay closer to home are call-
ing Powers. Current players
are texting their former high
school teammates to join the
Penguins. Eight players have
given verbal commitments
and two have signed.

"They'll keep building and
they'll keep getting better," Love said. "They'll be a team
to watch out for in the future."

Love has come to terms
that her softball career will
conclude after this season
since she plans to attend
WSU Vancouver for nursing
school. But Byrne doesn't
want to end after only enjoy-
ing 10 wins in two seasons.

"It's not really how I
pictured it," Byrne said. "I
would love to (continue play-
ing), especially going out like
this."