

Westbrooks provides spark for Clark hoops

Prairie grad gets a feel for college game

By **BRIAN T. SMITH**
Columbian staff writer

The last time we checked in on Orlando Westbrooks, he'd been named The Columbian's 2005-06 All-Region boys basketball player of the year, after leading the Prairie Falcons to the second round of the Class 4A state tournament.

Since then, Westbrooks has taken up the reins for the Clark College Penguins men's basketball team.

Following a 1-4 start for Clark that saw Westbrooks struggling to find consistency in his shot, the 6-foot-2 freshman point guard has caught fire, and the Penguins have followed his lead.

Clark has rolled off six consecutive wins, improving to 7-4.

Westbrooks was named the MVP of the Clackamas Crossover Tournament after a 30-point outburst in the Penguins' 92-80 overtime victory over Skagit Valley on Dec. 17.

Westbrooks tallied 80 points total in Clark's three games during the tournament.

"It's all about me feeling comfortable on the court," Westbrooks said. "Early in the season, I think I was just too excited. They were the first starts of my college career,

Talbitzer Homes Invitational

At O'Connell Sports Complex,
Clark College

Today's first-round games

Chemeketa (6-4) vs. Grays Harbor (4-5), 2 p.m.

Portland (2-7) vs. Treasure Valley (5-7), 4 p.m.

Clark alumni vs. Linfield JV, 6 p.m.

Clark (7-4) vs. Lane (6-6), 8 p.m.

and I think I got too wrapped up in the emotion. Now I'm just relaxing and letting the game come to me. I'm taking what teams give me."

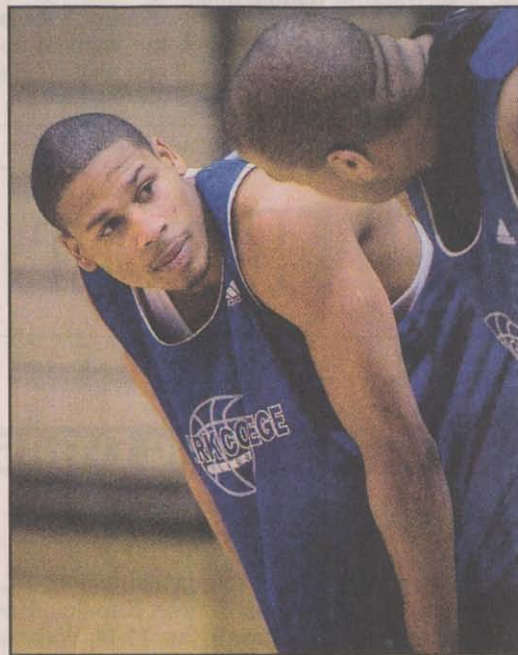
Lately, Westbrooks has been taking a lot.

With his confidence brimming, the 19-year-old Alabama native has quickly pushed himself into the top tier of players in the Northwest Athletic Association

of Community Colleges.

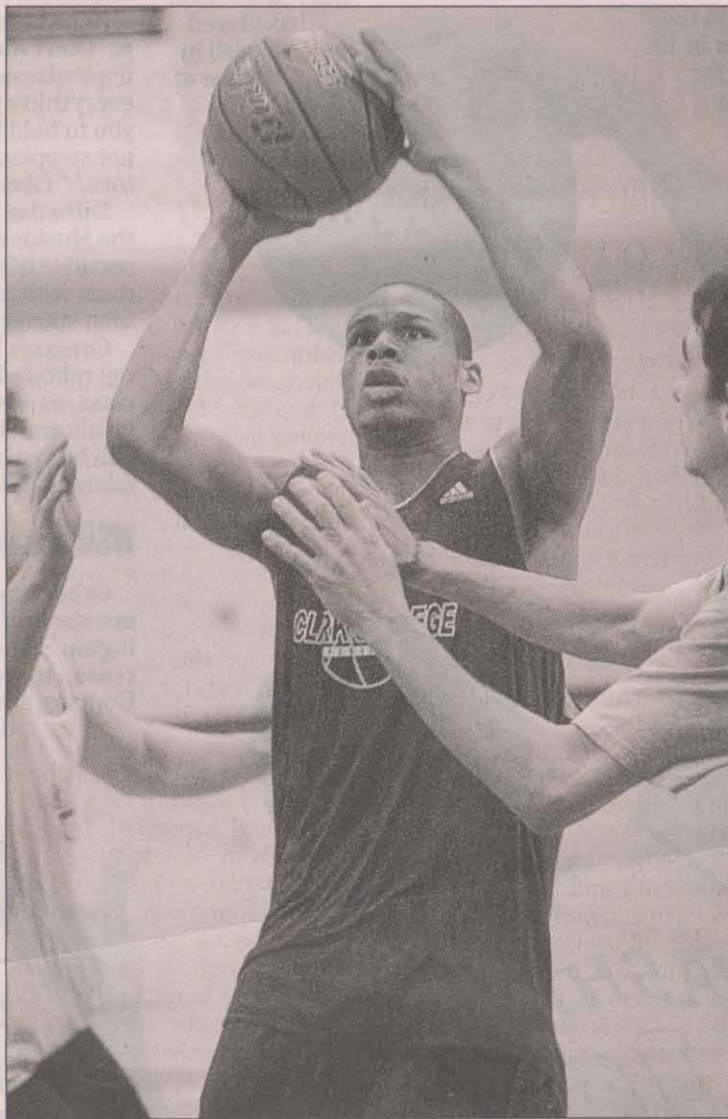
"O's a complete player," Penguins coach Mike Arnold said. "He's a leader

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STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Clark College's Orlando Westbrooks, a Prairie High grad, was the MVP of the Clackamas Crossover Tournament.



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Freshman Orlando Westbrook can be effective at any of the three guard positions for Clark coach Mike Arnold.

Clark Penguins (7-4, 0-0 NWAACC)

No.	Name	YR	Height	Pos.	High School
34	Tommy Allen	FR	6-2	G	Evergreen
42	Drew Bergerson	SO	6-6	F	Washougal
20	Drew Bleth	SO	6-1	G	Ridgefield
12	Markeith Brown	FR	6-1	G	Cleveland (Portland)
52	Jamal Glover	FR	6-8	F	Cleveland (Portland)
22	Alex Mitchell	SO	6-3	G	Grant (Portland)
30	Ike Mitchell	SO	6-1	PG	Jefferson (Portland)
50	Mike Rush	FR	6-6	F	Skyview
3	Marshall Schaefer	FR	5-10	PG	Prairie
32	Geo Vallentine	FR	6-2	G	Don Antonio Lugo
14	Orlandor Westbrook	FR	6-2	PG	Prairie
44	Demetrick White	FR	6-8	C	Columbia River

Westbrooks:

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on the court and an outstanding young gentleman. In a year, he's going to be exactly the type of player that Division I teams want on their roster."

For now, though, Westbrooks is at the helm of a Clark resurgence.

Last year was an all-together miserable one for the Penguins. Injuries, bad luck and worse chemistry resulted in a 3-24 record that Arnold still can't think about.

"We were 3-and-something," said Arnold, laughing it off. "It was bad."

But the addition of eight freshmen — seven of them played high school ball within a 30-mile radius — has brought new talent and a fresh outlook.

"We were really able to start over this year," sophomore forward and Washougal graduate Drew Bergerson said.

"Last year, it was all me-first. Now, we're all playing together and everything is flowing like it should."

Directing the flow is Westbrooks.

With a smooth floor game, the former Falcon has given Arnold the option of using him at the 1, 2, or 3 guard positions.

Equally adept at running plays, distributing the ball to big men near the basket, hitting from the outside, or slashing and scoring, Westbrooks is a multi-faceted weapon that Arnold is eager to use.

"O does so much for us," Arnold said. "He just sets the whole offense up."

In fact, Westbrooks proved to be so devoted to running the offense early in the year that Arnold had to remind him to take shots.

"We did have to pull him aside a couple of times," Arnold said. "He's selfless. He doesn't think about himself on the court. He just lets the

Did you know?

■ Clark has a six-game winning streak and has not lost since Nov. 26.

■ The Penguins have seven Southwest Washington products on their roster.

Remaining schedule

The Clark College men's basketball team is hosting the Talbitzer Homes Invitational today through Friday. The Penguins' schedule for the rest of the season:

Jan. 3 at Lower Columbia
 Jan. 6 vs. Green River
 Jan. 10 at Pierce
 Jan. 13 at Tacoma
 Jan. 17 vs. Grays Harbor
 Jan. 20 vs. Centralia
 Jan. 22 at Highline
 Jan. 27 vs. South Puget Sound
 Jan. 31 vs. Lower Columbia
 Feb. 3 at Green River
 Feb. 7 vs. Pierce
 Feb. 10 vs. Tacoma
 Feb. 12 at Grays Harbor
 Feb. 14 at Centralia
 Feb. 17 vs. Highline
 Feb. 24 at South Puget Sound

game come to him and he reacts."

And while compliments seem to fall consistently whenever Westbrooks' name is mentioned, the freshman guard just shrugs it off.

"I'm just a team-oriented player," he said. "Numbers and all that stuff don't matter to me. You can ask the coach or anyone. I prefer to give the ball up and find the open man. I'm all about winning."

Humility.

It's a trait that is the biggest key to Westbrooks' success.

And he knows it. "I'm just modest," Westbrooks said. "I've always been like that. Seriously. I must have learned it when I was growing up. I like to help out people around me."