

Clark hopes to continue hot streak

Penguins have won three consecutive games after 0-3 start

By GREG JAYNE

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The winter weather and a two-week layoff might be enough to cool the Clark College men's basketball team, but nothing else has lately.

After starting the season with three straight losses, the Penguins put together a trio of wins that evened their record.

Now, after going 14 days without playing, they are scheduled to travel to a Whatcom Community College in Bellingham for a tournament starting today. They hope their hot streak survives the trip.

"We should be 5-1," coach Mike Arnold said. "We're 3-3. Against this schedule, we're feeling pretty good about that."

And along the way, Clark has developed into the kind of team Arnold likes to have.

"We're quick," he said. "We get up and down the floor and have balanced scoring. We've got smart kids; they know how to read the defense."

Brandon Jones, a 6-foot sophomore out of Grant High School in Portland, has been the most adept at that. He ranks second in the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges with more than 22 points a game.

Derek Thurston, a 6-5 redshirt freshman out of Columbia River, is averaging 17 points and scored 35 in a 116-93 loss to Walla Walla.

"We've got a bunch of guys between 6-3 and 6-6," Arnold said. "Rob Perry was my big man at 6-7, and he got mononucleosis. That was a big hurt."

Perry is planning to redshirt this season, leaving the Penguins to rely on their quickness. It seems to be a strategy that becomes them.

After losses to Columbia Basin, Walla Walla, and Vancouver Island University of British Columbia, Clark began to turn things around. Since then, there have been victories over Vancouver Island, Mt. Hood, and Portland.

In the 68-60 win over Portland, Jones scored 21 points behind 8-of-14 shooting from the floor, including 3 of 4 from 3-point range. Thurston, Grant Ziegler, and Travis Garrison each added nine points.

But that was two weeks ago, and now the Penguins hope the success has survived their layoff.