

# Clark men rally for trip to NWAACC tourney

*From staff and wire reports*

The Clark College men's basketball team made an attitude change during halftime, and powered themselves to a place in the Northwest Association of Community Colleges postseason tournament.

The Penguins shut down South Puget Sound during the second half for a 90-74 NWAACC West Region victory Wednesday at the O'Connell Center.

"In the first half, we were not playing our characteristic passionate defense, and they came out and just lit us up like a Christmas tree," Clark coach Mike Arnold added.

He said the Penguins have been "struggling to make sure we're putting together two halves of defense."

Clark (15-9, 9-5 NWAACC West) is assured of either the region's third or fourth seed for the tournament, March 5-8 in Kennewick. SPS fell to 9-15, 3-10. Green River's 81-75 loss Wednesday to Highline clinched Clark's trip to the Tri-Cities.

"Everybody wants to go to the tournament," Arnold said. "That was our goal tonight. We wanted to make sure that happened. We wanted to punch our ticket to go east."

Arnold said the Penguins had "a lot of guys have good nights," but particularly Arman Kalan and Derek Thurston.

Kalan "came out and had a monster game on the boards," Arnold said. "He blocked shots. He's starting to play with so much more confidence. ... He's really starting to play well."

Thurston "came out in the second half and took on a leadership role," Arnold said.

Also, Arnold said, Brandon Jones made 9 of 20 shots, while Garrick Ashenfelter "hit three deep 3s and some timely buckets in the second half. We got really patient on the offense, and it reverses over to him and he hit some long balls."

Clark does not play until Feb. 25 at home against Lower Columbia that may decide which team is the West Region's No. 3 and No. 4 seed to the tournament. Either way, Arnold notes, the road will be tough.

"No. 3 or 4, you've got to go through No. 1 seeds to get where you want to be," he said.

## Clark women stay in hunt

Mandy Wall scored 16 points and Michelle Marthini and Yordanos Kasahun each had double-doubles as the shorthanded Clark College women's basketball team remained in the hunt for a postseason berth with a 68-52 win over South Puget Sound.

"Denny Huston, our interim athletic director, said to me, 'You've got these girls believing in themselves.' And they are." Clark coach Nancy Boone said. "They are playing like a team and they're listening."

## Around the Horn

Clark played with just seven available players because two players were out sick and a third had a family emergency.

"And Michelle Marthini was getting sick during the game," Boone said. "She was turning white, so I sat her down for a while. I'm going to give them tomorrow off."

Marthini had 14 points and 13 rebounds, while Kasahun had 13 points and 14 rebounds. Clark doesn't play until next Wednesday when the Penguins meet Lower Columbia Community College.