



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Debbie Simmers, center, came to Clark College after fellow Alaskan and current teammate Chelsea Dyson said it would be a perfect fit.

A Penguin from Alaska

Simmers comes to Clark College from Anchorage

By GREG JAYNE
Columbian Sports editor

If the Clark College women don't make it to the final of the NWAAC basketball tournament, Debbie Simmers might not know what to do with herself.

Simmers, after all, played in four consecutive Class 3A state championship games at Anchorage Christian School in Alaska, winning two of them.

She led her volleyball team to back-to-back state championships, competing in Alaska's second-

highest classification.

She won a state title in the long jump while helping her school win the state track and field meet.

Yes, the point-guard-by-default is accustomed to success. So don't be surprised if she helps Clark stick around for a while in the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges championship, a 16-team tournament that begins Saturday and runs through Tuesday.

Clark (13-11, 11-5) qualified for the tournament as the No. 3 seed from the West Division, and Simmers is a big reason for that. She leads the team with 13.8 points a game, and is second in assists and rebounds.

"She's a shooter. She's a pure

shooter," coach Nancy Boone said of Simmers. "And she's very quick."

Most important, she's also a ball-handler.

"Really, she's playing out of position because she's a 3 (small forward)," Boone said of the 5-foot-8 freshman. "But we lost both of our point guards."

The role is a new one for Simmers.

"I try not to be selfish," she said. "I look to pass most of the time. I've heard I do it to a fault. I've learned to see the court more, to anticipate where my teammates are."

It's part of a steep learning

NWAAC Tournament

■ **When:** Saturday through Tuesday.

■ **Where:** Toyota Center, Kennewick.

■ **Clark women:** First-round game vs. Lane of Eugene, 10 a.m. Saturday.

■ **Clark men:** First-round game vs. Clackamas, 6 p.m. Saturday.



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Deborah Simmers jumped out at Clark coach Nancy Boone when Boone was reviewing film in high school of Chelsea Dyson.

Clark:

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curve for Simmers, who ended up at Clark in large part thanks to teammate Chelsea Dyson, who was one year ahead of her at Anchorage Christian.

"I got some DVDs of Chelsea," Boone said, "and I saw Debbiey in those. I said, 'Who is this kid?'"

Simmers wasn't easily sold. "Whenever I heard 'Vancouver,' I thought of Canada," she said. "I heard it was wet and

rainy."

But with Dyson already at Clark, and Simmers considering a Division III school but unwilling to make a commitment to a four-year school, Vancouver became a logical stop.

"I told Debbiey the truth — it's a good place to play, a good atmosphere," Dyson said. "She'd be a great fit for the team."

That has worked out exactly as Dyson imagined.

"She's wonderful," Boone said of Simmers. "She has a coachable spirit."

And she has a long history of success.