LCC fastpitch players came so close, but had time to think about their losses to Clackamas while waiting for their second place NWAACC trophy at Delta Park. From left to right they include Tailer Snow, Madeline Zbaeren, Gatalina Schuster and McKenzie Martin. bill wagner photo. 5-23-2012.
PORTLAND — Lower Columbia College's magical ride through the postseason ended a few runs short of its ultimate destination.

Clackamas Community College claimed its ninth NWAACC softball championship by sweeping the Lady Devils 6-5 and 7-6 in the double-elimination championship round Wednesday at Delta Park.

"We came up a little short," LCC coach Traci Fuller said.

"I commend these players for the way they played throughout the weekend and particularly today. I've never seen them play with so much heart. That's the best thing a coach can ask for is to have your players do it with heart. That can't be taught; it's something that comes from within."

The LCC-Clackamas matchup was the eighth time the two teams have met for the NWAACC title in the tournament's 33-year history. The Lady Devils are 10-3 in championship games, with all three losses coming against Clackamas. The Cougars of Oregon City improved to 9-5, with all five losses to LCC.

Walks and errors were the Lady Devils' ultimate downfall. LCC pitchers issued five leadoff walks, of which four eventually scored. Although they played error-free in the second championship game, two Lady Devil errors led to three Clackamas runs in the opener.

Clackamas led 5-0 after three innings in the nightcap. Undaunted, LCC countered with a four-run fourth inning, highlighted by RBI singles by Courtney Dawson and Brooke Hendrickson, and a two-run base hit by Alexa Wirkkala.

The Cougars added a solo homer in the fifth, but the Devils tied the game at 6-6 on a two-run blast from Madeline Zbaeren in the sixth.

"If I could take back a pitch it would be the home run I gave up to McKenzie Marshall," LCC pitcher Tailer Snow said of the fifth-inning blast. "I was ahead in the count but the pitch laid flat and I didn't get it far enough off the plate. It happens, and one pitch can change the game."

Clackamas scored the tournament-winner in the sixth when Gracie Dempster legged out an infield hit and later scored on a single by Ashley Bacon.

"They gave it their all but we came up short, and it hurts," Fuller said. "It was a magical season, and it was amazing for me to be a part of. It's one of the best experiences I've had in softball, and I've been in softball for awhile."
Clackamas led 4-0 in the first game before LCC rallied. A two-run homer from Mackenzie Southard followed by a solo blast by Dawson cut the Devils' deficit to 4-3 in the fourth.

Snow's solo homer tied the game 4-4 in the top of the fifth, but Clackamas converted a leadoff error into a 5-4 lead in the bottom of the inning. Dawson's second solo homer pushed LCC into a 5-5 deadlock in the sixth, but an RBI single by Clackamas in the bottom of the seventh forced the second championship game.

"I knew if we performed together, knew our roles and had fun, we could get to the championship game," Hendrickson said. "I knew we had the talent, it took us some time to get some momentum."

Dawson was joined on the all-tournament team by Zbaeren, Mackenzie Martin and Madison Gaa. LCC finished its season 21-23.
Clackamas edges Lady Devils twice to claim softball title