

Malunat is First CC Women's Soccer Coach

UNDER WAY: Centralia College to Field First Soccer Team in Fall of 2016

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By Brandon Hansen bhansen@chronline.com | 0 comments



Centralia College needs someone to build its brand-new women's soccer program.

That's why newly-minted Lady Blazer head coach Horst Malunat is bringing his hard hat.

"I'll tell the kids that they get to write the history," Malunat said. "There is no uniform yet. There is no field yet. The players can make their mark on the first season and make it their own."

The college, after talking about starting a women's soccer program for the past decade and working on this goal for

the previous three years, is now moving forward and will begin NWAC play in 2016.

"It's a process," CC Athletic Director Bob Peters said. "There are a lot of pieces that had to come together and we're taking baby steps to get there."

One of those first big steps is the hiring of Malunat as head coach. As the boys and girls soccer coach in Toledo (and, sometimes, Winlock) for the past 13 years, he knows the Lewis County football scene — which was a big selling point for the college.

"I'm glad he applied because he has a lot of local ties," Peters said. "You talk about a good fit and he just stood out with his coaching experience and knowing the local scene."

Malunat is fresh off leading the Toledo-Winlock combined boys soccer team, United, to the State 1A playoffs, and he's also no stranger to the NWAC. Malunat, much like he's doing in the Hub City, started the Clark College women's soccer program back in 2000. Malunat also helped start the Skyview High School girls soccer program, also down in Vancouver.

"One of the challenges is just making the option known for the athletes," Malunat said. "When I was at Clark it was a different time in terms of technology. I was working with a landline to recruit people. I think now it's a bit easier to let people know we're available as an option."

Centralia College was recently ranked second in the state by CNN for community colleges, using Collegemeasures.org's success rate — which factors in graduation rates, college costs, financial aid, savings and student loans.

"Soccer has been on the uprise for a long time," Peters said. "More and more schools are adding it. We fill a nice void as Vancouver has a nice thing going on in terms of soccer, and the same is going on up north, but there is really nothing going on in between."

The timeline of the move Malunat gives him plenty of time to put a team together before the Blazers' season starts in the fall of 2016. Malunat said he had just six months to put a team together for Clark College in 2000, so his current situation is a nice changeup.

"I think that having that year will help a lot," he said.

Peters added that when Clark began their soccer program, there were only two NWAC soccer programs in the area. That number has since increased to 28, which means the travel costs won't be as expensive for CC. Malunat witnessed the soccer culture in the area change firsthand. He first came into a Toledo girls soccer program that had won just five games in six years and was in danger of folding, and which then qualified for the state tournament six times. It eventually turned into a joint Toledo-Winlock program, which split upon the creation of a local 2B girls soccer league, and the Centralia and W.F. West girls teams have consistently produced good, quality players.

"Obviously you got to go back to the success that the Women's World Cup had," Malunat said. "That brings a lot of excitement and momentum to the sport, which is already here in Lewis County."

Centralia College, Malunat added, will also be able to provide local athletes a chance to continue their soccer careers and stay close to home while doing so.

"You have to build a culture and people have to start to believe," Malunat said, adding the big difference in the step up to the college level is that now he has to go out and recruit players.

But if there's someone that can sell the program, it's Malunat.

"He wants to be successful," Peters said. "He's very playoff-driven and he is very enthusiastic."

Centralia College currently has plans of a soccer field facility on Long Road, not far from campus, near the Mellen Street exit. This would give the Lady Blazers a home to call their own.

Malunat has said that the support and energy from the administration at CC has been great, and he hopes to have his team recruited and formed by Christmas.

Peters said that any interested soccer players can contact the CC Athletics Department at bpeters@centralia.edu and (360) 736-9391, ext 307.