This could be it for the Cleveland Cougars. A loss tonight against the Springfield Falcons and there won’t be any more autogrophs to sign this season. Eliminated from the Women’s Major League Lacrose playoff race, they’ll awaken from their three-month-long dream and head back to work.

“Last week, we got beat on groundballs and face-offs,” goalie Karen Murphy said. “That’s the key to the game. Tonight we have to be all over those groundballs.”

Actually, regardles of the outcome of tonight’s regular-season finalle at Lander Stadium, most players will be going to their regular jobs on Monday. The league’s meager salaries do not afford them the luxury of playing lacrosse for a living. But a win would keep the season going for a few more weeks.

For Cleveland defenseman Meredith Woods, a loss would mean returning to her home in Portland. Woods, a four-time All American at the University of Oregon, moved to Cleveland after the draft in December.

Woods had nothing holding her back. The software company she worked for had just folded. Lose tonight and she’ll return to Portland to to test the job market again.

“It all happened so fast,” said Woods, who competed for the US national team while she was in college. “I wasn’t sure if I wanted to move to Cleveland. But I did want to play lacrosse, and I didn’t want to be kicking myself down the road for missing this opportunity.”

To prepare for the season, Woods says she worked harder than ever before got into the best shape of her life. But a week before the first game, she tore her hamstring. She didn’t see action until the fifth week of the season.

In spite of the season’s difficulties, Woods says the sacrifices were worthwhile. She’s enjoyed being a professional athlete.

Cleveland and Springfield hold records of 2-11 and 3-10 respectively. One of them will be eliminated tomorrow night.

That’s the scenario the Cougars think they can avoid. Cleveland has beaten Springfield twice in three previous meetings, although they gave up their last contest to them, 17-14.