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## Saint Mary's Opens Lacrosse with a Loss

By Mikaela Crowles



SMC freshman Juliet Munroe scores one of her three goals against Albany, recording her first SMC career hat-trick Photo Andy Scheck

The Saint Mary's women's lacrosse team dropped their season opener on February 15, losing to the Albany Great Danes, 14-9, in Moraga. The newly painted field included the initials JAM beside the Gaels bench, in memory of freshman teammate Jenny Martinez, who died mid-December in a car crash in Colorado.

On the swampy field in the torrential downpour of the Moraga Hills, the Gaels struggled with pass completion and dropped several balls. The Danes took advantage of Saint Mary's mistakes early and were the first to score, taking a quick lead 2-0 with goals from Kayla Best and Julie Bush.

Before the game, head coach Lauren Uhr said: "I think we're a lot faster this year. We've spent a lot of time in preseason working on stick work and footwork. I think it's really going to pay off."

And it did. The Gaels worked out their early jitters, improving their stick control as senior midfielder P.J. Hainley scored off an assist from Maggie Schwab.

As the first half continued, the Gaels went back and forth with the Danes. Saint Mary's went into the break 5-7, advantage Albany, but still holding on to a chance to win.

Best earned her final goal of the game with 23:12 left, bumping the Albany lead 5-8. Hainley wasn't finished and answered with back-to-back goals cutting the deficit to 8-7 Albany with just 18:53 left on the clock.

In the remaining minutes of the game the Danes kept Hainley's touches to minimum, as she finished the game with four goals and two assists. The rain did not let up, and Saint Mary's execution suffered severely.

"Most of the girls were complaining about their hands being cold," said Coach Uhr. "I definitely think the weather affected us."

Albany continued their attack with four more goals, extending their lead to 12-7. Hainley attributed this turn of play to "a couple critical [Saint Mary's] drops, which changed the whole game's dynamic."

Freshman Juliet Munroe scored with 3:36 left on the clock. Any hope for a Gaels comeback was squashed when Albany's Christine Grueniger scored her second goal of the game with 1:20 to go. Munroe snuck in a final goal for Saint Mary's with just 23 seconds left, giving the Gaels a 5-goal loss.

Coming off last year's 2-16 "building" season, the Gaels have high hopes for the 2009 season. Junior goalkeeper Hilary Gardner said, "We played 30 solid minutes. Now we just have to play 60."

Coach Uhr is confident the Gaels will perform well this season. She said they learned a lot about themselves in the first game, adding: "We really have to focus on defending inside out and taking the shoots we know we can make. Those are the things the will help us win."

The road may have started out rocky for these Lady Gaels, but Coach Uhr believes that Jenny's death has "brought the girls closer together and forced them to realize not to take anything for granted."

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