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Injuries Don't Stop Gaels

By Michael Sakoda



Michael Semenza (9) and Rafael Sanchez (4)
Photo Gint Federas

Week for games played Oct. 5-11.

"I keep the mindset of trying to play the perfect game," said Rawls. "I come in every day trying to get to that level."

Head coach Adam Cooper said that while he's pleased with Rawls' performance, his success is evidence of a lingering problem.

"You can look at [the saves] as a good stat for Rawls and a bad stat for the team [since] he's had to face that many shots," said Cooper. "He's had to deal with a different back four in front of him almost every game this year, and that's not easy for a goal keeper. He's handled it just like a leader should."

The inexperience has at times hindered Saint Mary's, but the young players are improving, rounding into shape for league play.

"They've all done really well and stepped up," said Cooper of his underclassmen. "They made some mistakes, but they've done a good job of learning from those mistakes and making adjustments to their individual games."

Sophomore Rafael Sanchez is one of the young players having a huge impact for the Gaels, filling in wherever the team needs him and ranking among the top five in assists for the WCC.

"Rafael is our utility man this year. He's had to play four or five different positions," said Cooper. "Talk about a warrior and a gamer, a guy that you can absolutely rely on for 90 minutes every game."

Helping out Sanchez on the offensive side of things is senior forward Michael Semenza, who leads the WCC in total points (4). Semenza has had to raise the level of his play after an ACL injury sidelined junior Cory Schmidt (top 5 in assists WCC) for the season.

The Gaels opened conference play Friday with a 0-2 loss at San Diego, but rallied for a 2-0 win Sunday against defending WCC champions, LMU.

As his team improves, Cooper is optimistic about their chances in a tough conference.

"I think the WCC is, as every year, any man's race," said Cooper. "Everybody starts 0-0-0 going into these last seven games. On the road to open the conference season is a very good challenge, very difficult, but the WCC is anybody's, any day."

Saint Mary's looks to notch a second straight win when they host University of San Francisco

The Saint Mary's men's soccer team (8-4-2, 1-1 WCC) heads into conference play after earning the best non-conference win percentage in school history (7-3-2), despite a slew of injuries to key players.

Eleven players for the Gaels have missed games with injuries, and 10 of the 22 players to have played at least one game are freshman or sophomores.

"It's always tough losing some of your players, especially your older ones, where some of the younger guys have to grow up a little bit," said senior Emmanuel Sarabia. "We all need to stay focused, make sure that when our number is called, we're ready to help this team, whatever it means."

One player coming up big for the Gaels is senior keeper Andre Rawls. With 69 saves on the season, Rawls is leading the WCC and is 12th best in the NCAA. He was selected as WCC Player of the

Friday, Oct. 24.

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