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Saint Mary's Off to Strong Start Despite Loss

By Michael Sakoda



Lauren Nicholson scored a game-high 23 points for the Gaels.

grabbed a rebound and ran the length of the court to score, giving SMC a 62-60 edge - the Gaels' first lead since their 4-2 lead at the start of the game.

But Pacific center Kendall Kenyon came on late, scoring 19 of her team-high 21 in the second half and overtime, including the game tying basket at the end of regulation.

Nicholson, who scored a game-high 23 points, had two looks to tie the game at the end of overtime, but the ball just wouldn't drop.

"We missed some shots today, missed some free throws," said Saint Mary's head coach Paul Thomas. "We ran a little set we've worked on all week, and did a good job of executing it, but we did a poor job defending. We didn't make them do something different, and that's how you lose."

The Tigers showed off their range, knocking down 12 three-pointers to the Gaels' one, while scoring 20 points off of the Gaels' 21 turnovers, which ultimately gave them the edge and an 88-86 win. It was the Gaels' seventh game decided by two points or less this season, and the first one they lost.

Shannon Mauldin scored 19 to go with five assists and three steals to pace the Gaels.

With 13 games left to go in the regular season, Saint Mary's looks to finish strong.

"I think we can definitely win the WCC, even with that loss (to Pacific), we showed that we can beat that team, any team," said Nicholson. "It's a very up and down conference. Anyone can beat anyone, and we're very capable of being the champions at the end."

The Gaels will look to start their next winning streak tomorrow at San Diego.

The Saint Mary's women's basketball team faltered over the weekend amidst one of their hottest starts in recent memory. The Gaels started this year 11-5 (4-1 WCC), and they're striving to grow together.

The Gaels, who went 23-10 (11-7 WCC) last season and reached the second round of the Women's NIT, had won four straight games before an 88-86 loss to Pacific on Jan. 10.

"Everyone is stepping up this year," said junior guard Lauren Nicholson, who has been named WCC Player of the Week twice this season. "We've had a couple of tough losses, but we've definitely shown we have potential."

The game started out with back-and-forth scoring, but Pacific took a 42-36 halftime lead behind tough defense and great outside shooting.

In the second half, Saint Mary's trailed 38-48 with 16:06 to play, but they fought back, getting to the basket and the free throw line to spark a 13-3 run to tie the game at 51 all.

With 8:53 left, freshman guard Carly Turner



Shannon Mauldin had 19 points and five assists. Photos Tod Fierner

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