

SPORTS

LAMORINDAS LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Jontelle Smith and the Gaels Dismantle Fresno State

By Kevin D. Shallat



Erika Ruiz (3) Photo Tod Fierner

Coming off a three game losing streak to the likes of Cal, Vanderbilt, and Alabama (all major conference teams) and continued play without one of their key rebounders, Maija Lahde, the Saint Mary's women's basketball team got back on track with a big win on Monday, Dec. 10 against the Fresno State Bulldogs. After being down by one at the half, the Gaels were able to take care of business at home and defeat the Bulldogs by a score of 79-68.

Lauren Shaughnessy got the game off to a good start for the Gaels as she made a fancy behind the back dribble and running lay-up to give Saint Mary's a 2-0 lead. However, Tierre Wilson had some fancy moves of her own, as she was able to help the Bulldogs jump out to an early 11-5 lead. Jontelle Smith would single handedly bring the Gaels back into the game with back-to-back jumpers. One of her five 3-point jump shots came from NBA range. As good as the Gaels played in the first

half, they still found themselves trailing the Bulldogs 35-34 at the break.

Smith made the game look easy while scoring a career high, 27 points. It's possible she was inspired by her family and friends who were in attendance Monday night. Smith, a native of nearby Pinole has been scoring in the high twenties with regularity throughout her career. In fact, she scored 26 points in a game against Toledo last December, and averaged 21.4 points in high school. She continued her torrid scoring output and hustle in the second half as well, finishing the game with 27 points, five rebounds, and four steals.

The Gaels received big-time contributions from their other players as well, which helped Saint Mary's break out to a single digit lead for most of the second half. "We were in front of our home crowd, we had to play together, that was the big key to make sure we won this game," Smith said.

Serena Benavente came up with a number of big steals for the Gaels. She would finish with 14 points, four assists, and six steals. Shaughnessy was a solid force at the other guard spot for the Gaels, as she hustled for 11 rebounds in 31 minutes.

Louella Tomlinson continues to put up astoundingly efficient numbers for the Gaels in her early collegiate career. The 6'4" freshman had seven blocks in this game alone. She turned out 13 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, and 7 blocks in just over one half of play. Tomlinson was able to limit Fresno State with her impressive defensive play. However with 4:42 seconds left in the game, the Bulldogs were able to cut the Gaels lead to 67-64. Finally, Smith was able to ice the game with a 3-pointer at the 3:40 mark, which ended any real threat of a Bulldog comeback.



With the Ball Serena Benavente (20), Louella Tomlinson (2) Photo Tod Fierner

Soccer Athlete Caroline Helfrich Eyes NCS Title Before Heading to LMU

Submitted by Paul Helfrich



Caroline Helfrich Photo provided

from my Club or ODP teams. I love the rivalries and the spirit of high school games." Campolindo's Women's Varsity Soccer team has been a dominate force in the North Coast Section, winning three of the last four NCS 2A Championships, and the 2007-8 squad is looking to continue that success. Awarded All-League Second Team as a sophomore and All-League First Team as a junior, Caroline adds leadership to a talented squad. "There are many gifted soccer athletes in our Lamorinda community," she said. "Our games against high school rivals Miramonte and Acalanes are always exciting."

In August, Caroline accepted a soccer scholarship offer from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and will be playing Division 1 soccer for the Loyola Lions beginning next fall.

"I'm looking forward to a great high school season," Helfrich said. "Committing to LMU has taken a lot of the stress out of my senior year. I can really focus on my studies and soccer, knowing that I am already set for university life next year at Loyola."

Playing Division One Soccer for one of the top collegiate soccer programs in the country will be a big step for Helfrich, but she says she is up for the challenge. "We have an athletic tradition in our family. Three of my cousins have won NCAA Championships for UCLA in Water Polo, and my cousin Jack currently plays

baseball for LMU. I am excited to join them in being a collegiate athlete."

But first things first: Caroline and the Campolindo Cougars have an exciting season ahead.

All our stories are available for download at www.lamorindaweekly.com

Cougars Conquer Southern California

Submitted by Anne McNally



2007 Lamorinda Cougars Photo provided

The 11-year-old Lamorinda Cougars feasted on some Southern California competition over the Thanksgiving Day weekend. By winning the USSSA Thanksgiving Super NIT in Chino Hills, the Cougars not only captured the season's most prestigious baseball tournament, they also earned a berth to the Elite World Series in Orlando, Fla.

In the championship game of the Super NIT, the Cougars defeated the San Diego Stars 4-3 behind a strong starting pitching performance by Daniel Slominski. Slominski pitched four innings, allowing one run and striking out three for the win. Matthew Bicker earned the save by pitching the final two innings, shutting down a late Stars rally in the bottom of the 6th inning. With two outs and the tying run at second base, a hard grounder was smashed to the left side. However, third baseman Mitchell Tom made a diving stop and then hopped up to throw the runner out at first base by half a step as the Cougars erupted in jubilation on the field.

The Cougars got off to a quick start in the championship game. In the first inning, Bicker doubled, was advanced to third on a grounder by Joe DeMers, and then scored on a passed ball. The Cougars added two more runs in the third inning as DeMers' triple knocked in Tom and then a grounder by Slominski scored DeMers. Then, with two outs

in the fourth inning, Walter Tucker singled, stole second, and scored on DB Vidal's single for what would prove to be the winning run.

The Super NIT Champion Roster included: Eric Benedetti, Matthew Bicker, Joe DeMers, Drew Downing, Remy Fujioka, Conner McNally, Jake Rider, Daniel Slominski, Matthew Tarantino, Mitchell Tom, Walter Tucker and DB Vidal. With his ten RBI's, a batting average of .588, and a slugging percentage of 1.176, DeMers was named the tournament's most valuable player.

Also batting over .400 were Tucker (.500), Benedetti (.455) and Bicker (.438). Tarantino's seven RBI's in a limited role due to his injury trailed only DeMers. Bicker led the team with nine runs scored, followed by DeMers and Tom with seven each and Vidal with six. Downing who pitched in the pool-play rounds didn't allow any earned runs during the entire tournament and Fujioka pitched four strong innings for the semifinal win. Bicker (5) and Tucker (4) led

the team in steals. The defense was led by the brilliant catching of Benedetti and Tom. Consistent and solid middle-infield play was provided by Vidal, Bicker and McNally who were filling in for the injured Tarantino. Game-saving outfield plays were made by Slominski and Rider.

Since the start of the Fall Baseball season, the Cougars have won two of three 12-and-under Tournaments and are six for six for 11 U Tournament, including the State Championship and the Las Vegas Desert Classic. The Cougars, who won the Northern California Fall Championship in October, currently hold title to the most important fall tournaments in both Northern and Southern California. They are currently ranked #2 in the Country behind the North Carolina Angels.

The Cougars will now begin preparations for a trip to the Elite World Series in Orlando in July where the best 24 teams in the country will assemble for a week-long tournament to decide travel baseball's national champion.

Go Gaels!
Upcoming Sports Events at Saint Mary's College

Men's Basketball vs. Furman vs. CS Fullerton, Fri., Dec. 28 at 5 pm
 McKeon Pavilion

Men's Basketball vs. Howard
 Friday, Dec. 28 at 7:30 p.m.
 McKeon Pavilion

Women's Basketball vs. Cal State Fullerton, Sat., Dec. 29 at 2:05 pm
 McKeon Pavilion

Women's Basketball vs. Northern Colorado
 Sunday, Dec. 30 at 2:05 p.m.
 McKeon Pavilion

For information about upcoming season schedules, visit the official Saint Mary's athletics website at www.SMCGaels.com.

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