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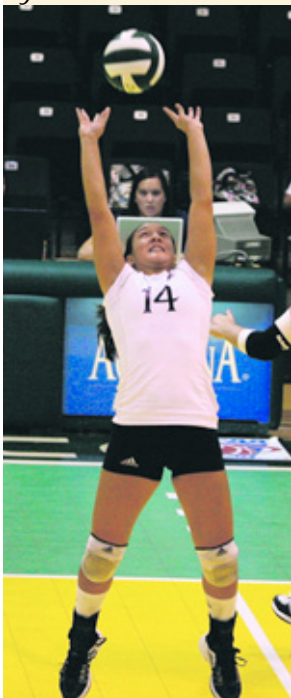
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Gaels Lose Heartbreaker to Hilltoppers

By Kevin D. Shallat



Setter Kapua Kamana'o (14) Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's women's volleyball team got off to an impressive start this year. The Gaels have compiled a 13-4 overall record, with a 3-1 record in the West Coast Conference. Their one loss in league was against a nationally ranked Pepperdine team. On Thursday, Oct. 16, the Gaels looked to continue their hot streak as they hosted the University of San Francisco. The Dons, or Hilltoppers, as they are affectionately called, came in with an identical 13-4 overall record, boasting a 3-0 record in league play. The Gaels survived a slow start to take a 2-1 set lead, only to lose the fifth set tie-breaker 12-15. With the loss, the Gaels move to 13-5, with a 3-2 record in league play.

The Gaels kept the score close in the first set despite a few misfires on offense. San Francisco's Darcy Carroll made a few key plays for the Dons to put them back ahead each time the Gaels evened up the score. After taking a 23-20 lead, the Dons looked to take the first set with ease.

However, Megan York and Shannon Lowell had other ideas for the Gaels, as they cut the San Francisco lead to 23-22. Unfortunately, Saint Mary's was unable to sustain their comeback bid, and they dropped the first set 22-25.

The Gaels made some real progress in the next two sets, as they truly played inspirational volleyball. Setter Kapua Kamana'o went from 12 sets in the first set to 18 sets in the second. After surviving the best rally of the match in the second set, something seemed to click for the Gaels, and their confidence level appeared to rise. Nevertheless, the Gaels would again find themselves down at the end of the second set.

Saint Mary's trailed 21-23 before Shannon Lowell took over for the Gaels.

Lowell had back to back kills followed by a service ace to help propel the Gaels into a 1-1 tie in sets, taking the second set 27-25.


Saint Mary's jumped out to a 16-8 lead in the third set, largely due to the heads up play by York. York normally relies on her power to assert her dominance, but she evolved her game into a more strategic, finesse game in this match. She had more delayed tip shots in this game than any other in recent memory. Her strategy to utilize location over power appeared to pay off, and the Gaels took the third set 25-17 after Megan Burton blocked the final shot by USF.

There were no glaring errors by either team in the last two sets. USF secured a two point lead at the right time, forcing a fifth set tie-breaker after winning the fourth set 28-26. The Dons got the good rolls at the right time, and they walked away with a big league road win, outlasting the Gaels 15-12 in the tie-breaker.

Middle blocker Megan Burton
Middle blocker Shannon Lowell
Setter Kapua Kamana'o
Middle blocker Megan Burton
Libero Alita Fisher
Outside hitter Taylor Groess
Head Coach Rob Browning

Catch the next Gaels game by checking the schedule online at:
www.SMCGaels.com





LiberoAlita Fisher (12) Photo Tod Fierner

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