

SPORTS

LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS



Women's Gaels Show Great Promise

By Mikaela Cowles



Jontelle Smith in last year's Fresno play Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's women's basketball team looks forward to a promising season. With a team stacked in experienced returnees and talented newcomers, head coach Paul Thomas has high expectations.

Despite going from a 14-14 season in 2007 to a 15-17 record in 2008, Thomas said the Gaels had a more successful season than the previous one, finishing with an RPI of 127. Saint Mary's raised their Rating Percentage Index by 67 points, making their improvement the second highest increase in the West Coast Conference and one of the highest in Division I women's basketball.

The Gaels also broke an im-

portant streak during the 2007-2008 season, as they beat Loyola Marymount 71-67 in the conference tournament. This win advanced the Gaels to the second round of the WCC Tournament for the first time in seven years.

Despite the loss of seniors Serena Benavente, Lauren Shaughnessy and Mikaela Cowles, the Gaels return with experienced leading scorer Jontelle Smith, freshman sensation Louella Tomlinson and crafty fifth year Maija Lahde.

Smith broke SMC's all time record for three-pointers scored in a career last year, totaling 189, as well as the record for three-pointers made in a season, finishing with 84. Thomas said he has seen incredible

maturity and growth not only in Smith's game, but also her leadership, and he is confident that she will bring big things to the team.

As a freshman, Tomlinson broke the NCAA Division I record for blocks in a season with 156. Averaging 12.8 points, 6.3 rebounds and 4.8 blocks per game, Tomlinson returns stronger and with the experience of a season under her belt.

Saint Mary's also looks to incorporate the freshman class right away. Thomas is pleased with their competitive spirit and love for the game. He says they bring "important tangibles, such as versatility."

Keep an eye out for point guard Alex Carbonel of American High School who comes in with an average of 27 points and 6.5 assists per game. Also on the court this year will be local favorite Katie Batlin from Miramonte High School.

With a lengthier lineup and another year to learn Thomas's Freak Defense, he is confident that his weapon of choice will be ready for the upcoming season. The fast paced, full court defense is not only hard to understand and learn, but is also extremely hard to beat when implemented correctly.

Thomas says the success of Freak will depend upon two main factors. First, he says, "it doesn't matter what offense or defense, coaches need to adjust to the personnel's skills." Second is "trust." He believes Freak will work well with his roster and that the trust will be there this year to bring success.

Check out the Gaels in action at their season opener Sunday, Nov. 9, at 4 pm in McKeon Pavilion when they face off against San Francisco State.

Gaels Lose Heartbreaker to Hilltoppers

By Kevin D. Shallat

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.

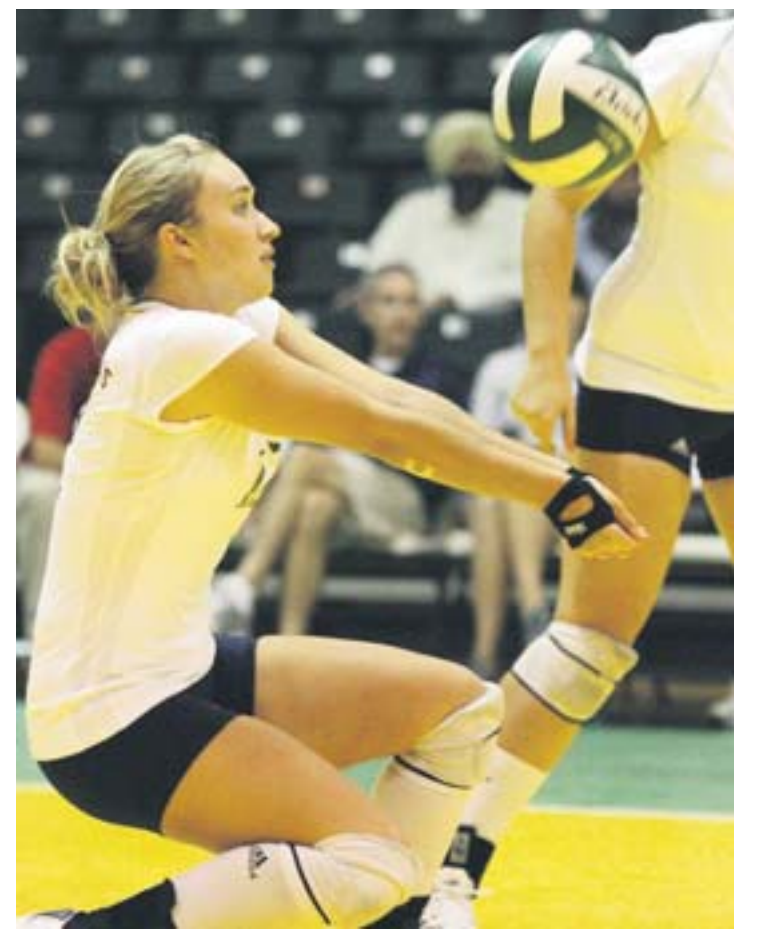
There were no glaring errors by either team in the last two sets. USF secured a two point lead at the right time, forcing a fifth set tie-breaker after winning the fourth set 28-26. The Dons got the good rolls at the right time, and they walked away with a big league road win, outlasting the Gaels 15-12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



Setter Kapua Kamana'o (14) Photo Tod Fierner



Libero Alita Fisher (12) Photo Tod Fierner

Can You Hit Off a Kid?

(Information submitted by Stuart Gruendi)



Tyler Bartis at bat Photo submitted

On Friday, November 7, the Lamorinda Baseball Academy Rangers challenge you to try to hit off of one of the strongest pitching staffs in 12U Northern California travel baseball. At the same time, you will help the team raise money for its efforts to send its Championship team to Cooperstown Dreams Park National Invitational Tournament in the summer of 2009.

The Rangers is a competitive, community-based baseball team that is currently one of the top-ranked 12U Fall Baseball teams in

Northern California. LBA (or "the Academy,") consists of seven different teams representing five different age groups. The Academy was formed in order to foster a high level of training and skills development for each player involved. The goal is to hone their love and skill of the game.

"This is our second year with the Lamorinda Baseball Academy, which has been awesome for our 12 year old son Tyler. He loves to travel to tournaments and pitch in clutch situations and close in big games. He has a lot more experi-

ence now than when he was younger, and I am worried that I won't even be able to get a hit off of him," says Steve Bartis of Moraga.

Bartis' son Tyler talks about his experience with LBA: "I love playing for the LBA Rangers because it gives me a chance to deal with a lot of pressure when I pitch in big games, while also being able to hang out and make jokes with my friends. Going to Cooperstown, New York, to play baseball has been a dream of mine since I was eight years old, and I am getting closer to fulfilling that dream with the Rangers."

To help Tyler and his teammates go to Cooperstown, come to Buckeye Fields, 711 St. Mary's Road, between 4:00 and 6:00 on November 7. \$20/at bat - Get a hit and make it to 1st base--Win a prize! This event is sponsored by All Out Baseball of Pleasant Hill. For more information and to sign up contact Stuart Gruendi, 510-682-6108, stuart@bay-rock.com.

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SMC Gaels Home and Local Games			
Fri, Oct 31	All Day	Sun, Nov 9	2:00 PM
Men's Tennis		Men's Soccer	
Gael Classic	Moraga	San Francisco * Saint Mary's Stadium	
Sat, Nov 1	All Day	Sun, Nov 9	4:00 PM
Men's Tennis		Women's Basketball	
Gael Classic	Moraga	San Francisco State Moraga	
Sun, Nov 2	All Day	Fri, Nov 14	2:00 PM
Men's Tennis		Men's Soccer	
Gael Classic	Moraga	Portland * Saint Mary's Stadium	
Sun, Nov 2	1:00 PM	Fri, Nov 14	7:05 PM
Women's Soccer		Men's Basketball	
Pepperdine	Saint Mary's Stadium	Seattle Pacific	McKeon Pavilion
Thu, Nov 6	7:00 PM	Sun, Nov 16	1:00 PM
Women's Volleyball		Men's Soccer	
Portland	Moraga	Gonzaga * Saint Mary's Stadium	
Fri, Nov 7	7:05	Mon, Nov 17	11:00 PM
Women's Basketball		Men's Basketball	
Showtime Basketball	Moraga	Fresno State	McKeon Pavilion
Sat, Nov 8	1:00 PM		
Women's Volleyball			
Gonzaga *	Moraga		

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