

SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Saint Mary's Men's Basketball Defeat Portland State, Pacific

Samhan leads offense with 31, 28 points

By Justine Sgalio



Omar Samhan (#50) led the Gaels with 31 points and 17 rebounds in the win against Portland State

The Saint Mary's Gaels secured their eighth and ninth wins of the season last week at McKeon Pavilion, defeating the Portland State Vikings 101-80 on December 15th, and the Pacific Tigers 80-65 on December 18th.

The 5-4 Portland State Vikings held the lead over the Gaels just once in the first half, after an early layup by Vikings senior guard Dominic Waters put the first points of the night on the board. But the Gaels caught up quickly. Almost four minutes into play a basket by

senior center Omar Samhan gave the Gaels an eight point lead over the Vikings.

But it didn't stay that way for long. Throughout the next 11 minutes, the Vikings refused to go down without a fight and pulled within just one point four times. A free throw by Waters tied the game at 31 with 5:19 to go in the half. But the Gaels offense stepped up, led by Samhan, who had 13 points in the half, and sophomore forward Clint Steindl, with 12, and by half-time they had a nine point lead.

The Saint Mary's offense



Clint Steindl (#11) notched 15 and 16 points last week, respectively

Photos Tod Fierner

came back strong in the second half, and by the 15 minute mark, had a 15 point lead over Portland State. The Vikings fought within 10 points of the dominant Gaels offense, but couldn't recover to take the lead.

Samhan had 31 points on the night, just two shy of his career record. Steindl, who has stepped up in a big way for the Gaels since senior guard Wayne Hunter went down with a torn ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) against Utah State, recorded 15, a noticeable improvement from the start of the season. "Clint gets better every

night," said Saint Mary's Head Coach Randy Bennett. "We've seen him really grow as a player in the last two weeks."

After the home win against Portland State, the Gaels hosted the 7-2 Pacific Tigers on Friday. The lead bounced back and forth, neither team led by more than six points in the first half. Tigers junior forward Sam Willard led the Pacific offense with 10 points in the first half, but the Gaels held onto the 43-39 lead going into halftime. SMC was led by senior forward Ben Allen who had 11 points in the half, and went



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3-3 from the three point line.

The two teams came out strong again in the second half, and with 9:38 to go in the game the margin had still not exceeded six points. But with 8:41 to go Saint Mary's freshman guard Matthew Dellavedova hit a foul shot to put the Gaels up by seven. By 8:14, the Gaels were up by 10 after another foul shot, this time by Samhan, who had 18 points in the half and 28 in the game.

"They were tough team," said

Samhan. "But fortunately down the stretch I got the ball in good positions."

The Tigers came within four of the Gaels twice in the last seven minutes but it was not enough. The Gaels continued their offensive momentum and came away with the 80-65 win.

"They're [Pacific] a really good team," said Bennett. "Our guys really exceeded my expectations tonight."

Saint Mary's Wins Big At Home

Despite Turnovers SMC Defeats Bakersfield

By Mikaela Cowles



Jontelle Smith (#22) went 5-of-8 from behind the arc in the win



Jasmine Smith (#32) was 5-for-7 from the floor (2-for-4 from the three point line), recording 14 points for the Gaels

Photos Tod Fierner

Saint Mary's women's basketball beat Cal State Bakersfield 94-80 on Wednesday, December 16th at home.

Ashlee Smith led the Gaels with a season high 19 points, as Saint Mary's shot a staggering 50.8 percent from field goal range and 44 percent from behind the arc.

The Gaels opened the season 4-4. While on the road against Washington State, head coach Paul Thomas changed the starting lineup, replacing freshman guard Kate Batlin for redshirt sophomore guard Jasmine Smith and sophomore guard Alex Carbonel. The change was just what Saint Mary's needed as they went on a five game win streak, running their record to 9-4.

In the first minute against Bakersfield, Jontelle Smith hit two 3-pointers, and the Gaels jumped out to a 6-1 lead. She would go on to finish the game five-of-eight from behind the arc, combining with her sister Jasmine (2-4) for a sister three-point duo of seven-of-12.

With quick ball movement and the looming 3-point threat from Jontelle, Saint Mary's drew Bakersfield out of its zone and worked the ball inside utilizing the high-low. In response Bakersfield switched to man-to-man defense and forced the Gaels into turnovers. Changing turnovers into fast break points, the Roadrunners brought the score to 15-11 at the 15:08 mark in the first half.

Less than nine minutes into the half, Bakersfield's Tamiko Davis picked up her third foul forcing her to the bench for the remainder of the first. Bakersfield crept to within four points, the closest the game would get, but SMC held them off with help from points in the paint. Sophomore forward Ashlee Smith and junior forward Louella Tomlinson combined for 27 first half points, pushing the Gaels' lead to 59-31 at half.

In the second half Saint Mary's held onto its lead and cleared the bench, playing all 13 players. The Gaels totaled 22 assists for the game, which

Coach Thomas described as, "unselfish play."

The turnover-plagued Gaels have suffered this season, averaging just over 25 turnovers a game. Against the Roadrunners, Saint Mary's recorded 34 turnovers. Thomas said of the turnovers, "We have to stop turning the ball over. I don't want my team to be afraid to make a pass. That's what makes our team shoot 60 percent. We have a great chemistry within our offense; we just are too careless sometimes."

Pleased with the first 30 minutes of the game, Thomas said the message after this game "will be loud and clear. If we'd played all 40 minutes the way we would like to have, I wouldn't have anything to build on. Now I have something to build on."

The Gaels will be on the road for their next three games. They return to McKeon Pavilion on Friday, January 8 against San Francisco for a 7:00 p.m. tip-off for their first West Coast Conference game.

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- Tue, Dec 29 MBB Binghamton Shamrock Office Solutions Classic McKeon Pavilion 7:35 PM
- Wed, Dec 30 MBB Stephen F. Austin vs. Binghamton Shamrock Office Solutions Classic McKeon Pavilion 5:00 PM
- Fri, Jan 8 WBB San Francisco * McKeon Pavilion 7:00 PM
- Sun, Jan 10 WBB Santa Clara * McKeon Pavilion 2:00 PM
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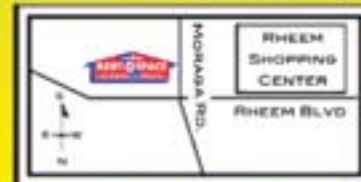
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