

Saint Mary's Earns First WNIT Win in Over 10 Years

By Alex Kozela



Alex Carbonel Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's women's basketball team capped off one of its best seasons ever with a victory over UNLV in the first round of the WNIT.

The Gaels (22-11) won their first

postseason game since 2001, defeating UNLV 71-63 on March 15 at McKeon Pavilion. It was the team's 22nd win of this season, tying the second most in school history.

It was a special night for the seniors, who were given the opportunity to play one last game in front of a home crowd.

"We were really excited," senior guard Jasmine Smith said of the last chance to play in front of the Saint Mary's faithful. "Being a senior, it meant a lot to me, and the rest of [the seniors.]"

Smith had 21 points in the win. Sophomore guard Jackie Nared led the Gaels, scoring 22 points and grabbing eight boards.

Saint Mary's carved out a 19-point lead early in the second half, but the Rebels fought back, cutting the lead to 42-35 with 15:19 left. After Smith and senior guard Alex Carbonel scored baskets to regain the Gaels' double-digit lead, UNLV once again pulled close, trailing only 51-47 at the 7:10 mark. The Gaels scored the next five points to build a nine-point lead and never looked back.

Saint Mary's head coach Paul Thomas was impressed by his team's performance.

"Our kids showed such character tonight," said Thomas. "We weren't feeling that comfortable [early in the second half], and our kids just picked

it right back up. I couldn't be happier."

Two days later the team took the court in Corvallis to face Oregon State, and despite shooting just 23.4 percent from the floor, the Gaels kept the deficit manageable the entire game, but still eventually lost 56-41.

Smith was the only Gael to score in double figures with 12 points, while Nared scored eight while nabbing 11 rebounds.

Despite the second round loss, the Gaels' postseason berth served as a culmination of how far the team has progressed over the last few years. The team garnered big wins against Brigham Young (54-48 on December 31), at Gonzaga (66-63 on January 14), and in the WCC Tournament against Pepperdine (67-63 on March 2) en route to their third WNIT appearance in as many years.

Thomas attributed this year's success to those who have helped build the team into what it is today.

"This season is a combination of what everybody who came before them has added to this team. They helped this team understand how to win a postseason game. I think they're all a part of this as much as the people in uniform right now," said Thomas.

"They knew they made history. We've made history for a lot of this year."

Saint Mary's Adds Track Team to Athletic Program

By Rebecca Eckland

Saint Mary's College added a new sport to its athletic program this spring. The Gaels now boast a track team.

Though the new program technically offers no scholarships, the NCAA grants additional funds to Saint Mary's athletics for use toward athletes in the cross country and track programs. It also grants athletes with additional training time.

Junior Erin Burke said the addition of the track team will help her improve as a runner. "Now I can train and race more seriously than I have in the past."

Without a track program, a SMC runner received 656 fewer practice hours over the course of a four-year career than an athlete at other West Coast Conference schools and SMC athletes only had an opportunity to compete in 48 competitions, where comparatively, other athletes competed in nearly 100 meets.

Recruiting new talent has also become easier, according to assistant coach Mark Carberry. "Good runners didn't want to commit to a program that didn't have track," he said. "[With the addition of track], we can now utilize the beautiful area we train in year-round... it's going to put us in a good position."

"As an alumni of Saint Mary's cross country, it was hard to see the WCC grow while SMC didn't progress at the same rate. It's exciting to see us step up with a full-time coaching staff, and now, a track program—we're going to become an even stronger team," said head coach Marty Kinsey.

They began their season on March 3rd, running the Kim Dunst Invitational at Cal State Stanislaus, followed by the UC Davis Aggie Open on March 10th. This past week, the Gaels competed at the Johnny Mathis Invitational hosted by San Francisco State.

The athletes will focus on middle-to-long distances, running the 800 meter (or half-mile) to the 5,000 meter (3.12 mile) races.

Early this season, redshirt sophomore Rajpaul Pannu set a school record in the 5000m at the Kim Duyst Invitational. Pannu placed 8th with a time of 14:58.

For the women, strong middle distance races have been the headlines in this young season. Sophomore Alicia Doohan ran the 1500m in 4:52.41 in her first race of the season at Stanislaus. She continued an impressive running day finishing 2:22.81 for



Sophomore Rajpaul Pannu, ran a 14:58 5K in his first track race of the season. Photos provided



Freshman Cristina Garcia ran an 11:12.31 3000m race at the Aggie Open hosted by UC Davis.

800m. Freshman Gilbert Mundo is happy about the new season. "It means a lot to me," he said before practice on a spring day—something a Saint Mary's distance runner has not experienced before. "I really look forward to the next four years here at Saint Mary's... and being on the first Saint Mary's track team."

The next stop for the new track team is a meet at Chico State on April 13th. Selected athletes will compete at the West Coast invite, hosted by the University of Portland, to close the season.

Oakland Strokes Beat Bay Area Rivals

Submitted by Diane Moe



Oakland Strokes' lightweight women captured first place in the recent Battle of the Bay regatta. From left: Michelle Lee (Orinda), Brittney Presten (Orinda), Anna Weitlmann (Piedmont), Indigo Catton, (Lafayette), Alia Shafi (Lafayette), Lizzie Pate (Lafayette), Cassey Chan (Piedmont) Photo provided

The Oakland women's varsity and junior varsity boats bested their Bay Area rivals, Berkeley High Crew, Marin Rowing Association and the St. Ignatius High School Rowing team, in the decade-long tradition of

the Battle of the Bay regatta on Sunday, March 11 on the Oakland estuary.

"This is a pretty big race because the Marin and Oakland girls are typically battling it out at the end of the

season," said women's varsity coach Derek Byrnes. "This race is how we gauge the rest of the year."

The women's first place finishes included the varsity eight, JV eight, 3V eight, and lightweight eight.

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