

# Gaels Look to Repeat as WCC Champs

## Men's basketball season starts Saturday

By Simon Tryzna



Coach Randy Bennett with Jorden Page  
Photos Tod Fierner

It might be tough for the Gaels to follow-up one of the most successful men's basketball seasons in school history. The 2011-2012 team won both the WCC league title and the WCC tournament.

Although the team graduated a key component of last year's squad in Rob Jones, who finished eighth in the nation in rebounds, the Gaels return one of the best point guards in the nation in senior Matthew Dellavedova. Dellavedova, who was one of the five finalists last year for the Bob Cousy Award, given to the nation's top point guard, gained experience playing for the Australian National Team in the 2012 Olympics.

Still, citing the loss of Jones, many of the national media outlets and the WCC coaches have the Gaels finishing third in conference play, behind Gonzaga and BYU.

"It's a good league," said Bennett in response to his team being chosen third by his fellow coaches. "You can make an argument for picking several of those teams."

While the league may have improved from top to bottom, the Gaels still return a strong backcourt. Dellevadova is joined by junior Stephen Holt, who averaged 10.1 points per game and was second in the WCC in steals, averaging 1.8 steals per game last year. He was named honorable mention on the All-WCC Team.

"[Dellavedova & Holt are] pretty good experienced [guards] that have been through the battle," said Bennett. "That is going to be the

strength of our team this year – the guard play."

With only one true small-forward in the rotation, junior Beau Levesque, Saint Mary's will likely play three guards as part of their offense, which worked well last year. Newcomer and Southern California Junior College Player of the Year James Walker III and junior Jorden Page will provide depth to guard play.

Replacing Jones at the power forward position will be 6'-11" Matt Hodgson, who has impressed Bennett already. "Matt Hodgson will help right away and I think could be a really good player," he said.

He will be joined with sophomore Brad Waldow, who will be an impact player at center. Mitchell Young will also be a key piece of the offense. Lastly, senior seven-footer Kyle Rowley will look to provide a huge boost off the bench for the Gaels.

"We return 13 guys off that team from last year," said Bennett. "We have a lot coming back off of a very positive experience from last year, and I think that's always important in college basketball."

In addition to a tough conference slate, the Gaels have a fairly tough, but manageable, non-conference slate. After opening the season against Sonoma State, the Gaels will travel to take on Utah State. The Utes have compiled an impressive 157-12 home record (with one of the losses coming from the Gaels) since 1998. Over Thanksgiving break, Saint Mary's will participate in the DirectTV Classic in Anaheim, opening up against CAA favorite Drexel on Thanksgiving Day at 1:30 p.m. on ESPN2.

On New Year's Eve, McKeon Pavilion will play host to a nationally televised matchup against the Harvard Crimson.

One of the most important keys for the Gaels is to see if they can improve on the 16-1 home record from last year.

"McKeon Pavilion is a great atmosphere for college basketball," said Steven Holt. "To have our student section be right on top of the court adds that flair, that intensity, just makes it a tough environment for opposing teams, [which is] obviously an advantage for us."

The Gaels will kick off their season this Saturday, November 10 against Sonoma State in McKeon Pavilion at 7 p.m.

# Practice! Practice! Practice!

## Prep basketball starts this week

By Michael Sakoda



Kiran Shastri Photo Kevin Nguyen

High school basketball teams reported for practice on Monday. While the future for Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte looks bright, it's always tough to win in the DFAL.

Acalanes finished last season with an 18-10 record, going just 6-6 in DFAL play. They qualified for the NCS playoffs and beat Piner High School in the first round before falling to El Cerrito. The Dons were the only Lamorinda team that failed to qualify for the CIF Tournament.

The Dons will return just five players to varsity—junior center Buster Souza, senior forward Ivan Harewood and senior guards Brendan Kirbach, Eric Thomas and Aaron Edwards.

Souza will likely be a focus of the offense and Thomas and Edwards are expected to move into bigger roles.

The Dons do have some players coming up from junior varsity. "Matt Thomas, Zack Kisner and Ross Teichman, who are all going to be impact players this year," said Dons head coach Darrell Hirashima.

Hirashima understands his team's weakness, but also has confidence in the team's strengths.

"We don't have the quickness or the star talent some of the other teams have," Hirashima admitted. "But defensively, I think we'll be able to match up with the big strong teams out there. Offensively, we definitely have some serious weapons in the arsenal... just not as deep as we've previously been."

Hirashima remains optimistic about his team making the playoffs. "We have a strong group of guys, and if we dedicate ourselves to what we're doing, we could make a little run there at the end."

Campolindo finished last season with a 23-7 record, going 9-3 in conference play, clinching the DFAL title. In the NCS playoffs, Campo defeated Drake then knocked off league rival Miramonte before falling to Bishop O'Dowd. They qualified for the CIF Tournament, but fell in the first round to Foothill of Palo Cedro.

The Cougars return six players—junior guard Issac Christian, sophomore guard Matt

O'Reilly, junior forward Justin Dunn, senior guards Jack Evans (the only returning starter), Tyler Garrison and Matt McCue.

"We should be a stronger defensive team this year," said Campo head coach Matt Watson. "We're always going to try to put the screws to someone."

Last season, the Cougars scored 62.8 ppg, while holding their opponents to just 55.5 ppg.

Offensively, Watson said keep an eye on the sophomore. "Matt O'Reilly was just a freshman last year... he will contribute a lot more. He's a very good shooter, very good offensive player... He'll contribute almost 100 percent more than he did last year."

Watson emphasized the influence of his three seniors. "They do a lot of policing of the rest of the players, keeping them all on board, reminding them that it's team first," Watson said.

McCue is indeed keeping his eyes focused on the team's goals. "We are planning to... work hard every day in practice and get into the best possible shape we can. The person who really wants to do something finds a way to, the other makes excuses."

Watson said winning the DFAL is no easy feat. "We've got a mix of young guys and just three seniors, so it would be challenging for us to repeat, but I wouldn't put it past us."

Miramonte finished last season with a 20-10 record, 8-4 in DFAL play. They defeated Analy in the first round of the NCS tournament before falling to Campolindo. The Mats were the only Lamorinda team to make it beyond the first round of the CIF Tournament, defeating Sierra before losing to Sacred Heart.

Drew McDonald, in his first season as head coach of the Mats, inherits a strong team. Miramonte returns 10 players, including senior forward and co-captain Kiran Shastri, a first team All-League selection, and junior guard Joey Goodreault, second team All-League.

McDonald is expecting big things from last year's standout, Shastri. "I think we have the league's best player in Kiran Shastri," he said. "He has done a lot of work in the off season to really make himself better, and I'm expecting him to have an outstanding season."

McDonald is no stranger to the Mats' system; he was an assistant coach for five of the past six seasons. "I'm very familiar with how the guys played in the past. We're going to try to play a little more up-tempo."

Last year, the Mats averaged nearly seven more points than their opponents. "We are going to aspire to be better defensively," McDonald said. "That's probably our number one goal right now."

Despite all the talent and experience on his bench, McDonald doesn't underestimate his opponents. "Campo is the league champ until someone beats them. Acalanes should be very strong. Dublin might be the most talented team... we have our work cut out for us."

While expecting a strong season, McDonald is focused on team play. "Our goal is to be as excellent a basketball team as we can be. If we do that, we'll let the chips fall where they may."



Kyle Rowley



Matthew Dellavedova

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