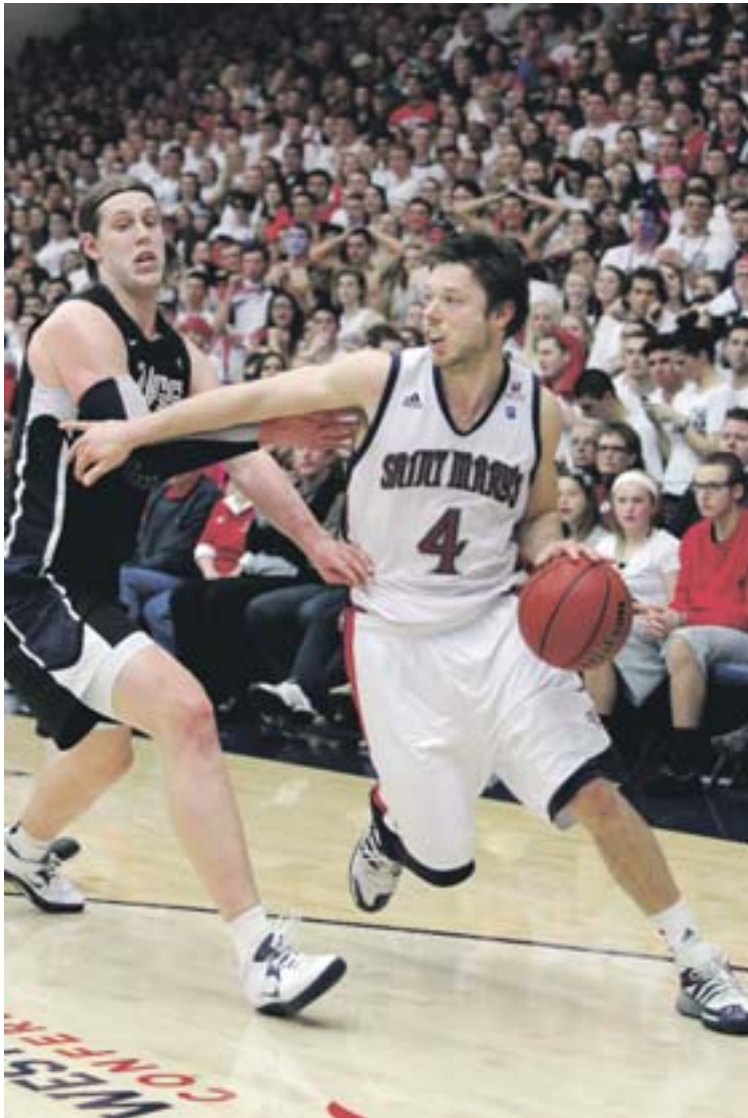


LAMORINDA SPORTS

Saint Mary's Breaks into Top 25

Gaels Secure 2nd Place in WCC

By Michael Sakoda



Matthew Dellavedova

Photos Tod Fierner

Saint Mary's men's basketball may not have gotten the upset it was hoping for against Gonzaga, but the Gaels were able to bounce back and win three straight to secure a second place finish in the WCC and a No. 23 ranking in the USA Today poll.

On Feb. 14, St. Mary's (24-5) hosted the No. 3 ranked Bulldogs of Gonzaga—first place in the WCC

on the line. Gonzaga had an answer for everything St. Mary's threw at them, and the Gaels fell 77-60.

Gaels senior guard Matthew Dellavedova had an outstanding first half in the Gonzaga game, scoring 19 of his game high 22 points. "The shots didn't fall," Dellavedova said about struggles in the second half.

A late first half foul by senior

forward Mitchell Young sent the Zags to the free throw line which cut the Gael's lead to 33-32 at the half.

"We weren't making smart plays," said head coach Randy Bennett in regards to the first half play.

Gonzaga rattled off seven straight points to open the half, building a 39-33 lead in the first 1:04 of play and the Bulldog's lead just continued to grow.

"We weren't ready in the second half," said junior guard Stephen Holt remarked. "They were more physical, and they were hungrier." Holt had 17 in the loss.

Bennett's mantra through the season and his key to the remainder of the year are the same. "We need to keep getting better," he said.

Even after the tough loss, the Gaels got better. SMC locked up second place in the WCC, winning three straight games. They traveled to beat Loyola Marymount (61-50), and hosted BYU (64-57) and Creighton (74-66) in the Bracket Buster on Feb. 23.

Dellavedova led Saint Mary's with 19 points against Creighton while sophomore forward Brad Waldow had his first double-double of the season with 12 points and 12 rebounds.

The win over Creighton was huge for the Gaels' post-season chances since SMC lacks solid non-conference wins. With a No. 23 ranking, the Gaels are in good position for a NCAA tournament bid.

Saint Mary's finishes the regular season with a home game against Santa Clara on March 2 before heading to the WCC tourney in Las Vegas for a March 9 semifinal game.

Lamorinda Thrills in Girls NCS Soccer Tourney

By Hunter Hewitt



Sophie Fuller

Photo Brian Fessenden

blowout, a first-round comeback upset, a rivalry matchup and two penalty-kick shootouts summed up the thrilling North Coast Section Division II playoffs for the Lamorinda high school girls soccer teams.

The first round began on Feb. 13, with Campolindo, Acalanes and Miramonte each taking the field.

Second-seeded Campolindo (15-2-2) hosted No. 15 Hercules (10-9-1) in the first round, and made a serious statement with a commanding 8-0 win. Junior midfielder Emmy Melkonian led the

way for the Cougars with three goals, while junior midfielder Julia Reshke added one goal and three assists.

No. 10 Acalanes (10-10-4) entered its first-round matchup as the underdog when it faced off against seventh-seeded Ygnacio Valley (17-6-2). The seeds proved irrelevant, however, as the visiting Dons rallied from a 1-0 deficit to knock off the Warriors, 2-1. Acalanes prevailed with a clutch second-half performance from senior forward Kaitlin McGee, who assisted the game-tying goal and scored the game-winner soon after.

Fourth-seeded Miramonte (7-7-2) suffered an upset loss in the first round, falling to No. 13 St. Mary's in dramatic fashion. Tied 1-1 at the end of regulation, the teams continued to battle through two scoreless overtimes. The Panthers eventually came out on top when they defeated the Matadors 4-3 in a penalty-kick shootout.

"We had some chances, but we just could not put the game away," Miramonte head coach Mohamed Mohamed said. "The girls gave it all they could, and it was still a good season because a year ago we didn't even make the playoffs."

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