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## Bringing Their "A" Game Gaels basketball off to a strong start

By Michael Sakoda



Danielle Mauldin Photo Tod Fierner

Building on last year's momentum, the Saint Mary's women's basketball team is off to the best start in school history. The Gaels finished last season with a record of 23-11 (11-5 WCC), advancing to the quarterfinals of the NIT Tournament - the furthest a Gaels' team has advanced - where they were edged 58-55 by Utah.

The 2012-2013 Gaels raised the bar going 10-0 in games following a loss, becoming the first team to avoid back-to-back losses in school history and getting a single season record 356 rebounds from Danielle Mauldin.

This year's team continues to improve on last year's success. The hot start has the Gaels with an 8-1 record, including a payback win against Washington and wins over Toledo (last year's MAC Champions), Butler, and Alabama.

The catalysts behind the Gaels' hot start - effort and desire.

"We ended last season with a loss on our home court, and the team hated that," said head coach Paul Thomas. "They put in work over the summer and in the fall to start strong...they trained hard and they're getting results."

"We weren't satisfied with the results of the last few years, so that hunger to win is there," said returning guard Kate Gaze. "I think that's the difference...just the feel about this team."

With four returning starters - Jackie Nared, Danielle Mauldin, Kate Gaze and Carli Rosenthal - two of whom were named to the pre-season All-WCC team (Nared and Mauldin) this is a veteran team with big time experience.

"Danielle provides a way different facet to our game than anyone else does," said Thomas of his standout forward. "She rebounds the ball...has that midrange pull up, and if you try to close out hard she's going to go right by you."

So far this season, Mauldin and the Gaels offense have been on a tear, putting up 85.11 points per game while holding opponents to an average of 74.11 points per game.

"I'm never concerned about our offense," said Thomas. "But our defense has to improve...we have to be able stop people...and I don't think we're about to do that quite yet."

The need for stops was evident in the team's lone loss of the season, a heartbreaking 92-94 loss to Sacramento State on Dec. 5.

"We let any and everyone drive by us, and our rotations and our close outs were non-existent," said Thomas of the disappointing game.

"The game at Sac State really opened our eyes," said Jackie Nared. "Any team can beat us if we're not on our A game every night."

But the Gaels bounced back after another strong week of practice, toppling UC Davis 88-71 on Dec. 15, the Gaels 14th straight win following a loss going back two seasons.

"They hate losing," explained Thomas. "When you have that kind of personality on your team it makes coming off of a loss a much easier situation."

St. Mary's travels to Los Angeles for a road test at USC on Dec. 19, and at CSU Northridge on Dec. 21.

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