

St. Mary's College, Athletics, Campus Life, News

Gaels Fall Short of Finals, Players Honored by WCC for Academic and Athletic Achievements

by Jennifer Wake

Although men's and women's basketball fell short of the WCC Tournament finals, several Gaels were recognized by the WCC for their excellence both on and off the court.

For Gaels senior forward Eghosa Obaiza, who was named to the WCC's All-Academic team along with junior guard Lauren Shaughnessy, the challenge lies in staying focused on succeeding in the classroom while continuing to excel on the court.

"With the demands of basketball it is hard to stay on top of school work, but I felt very proud to have achieved academically as well as athletically," said Obaiza, who has sustained a 3.22 GPA while continuing to be a dynamic contributor to the team.

"The most exciting part of being part of the All-Academic team is the recognition it brings to those who put in the extra time to do well in both school and sports," Obaiza added. "Hopefully it inspires other student athletes to concentrate and put maximum effort in both categories."

Obaiza says it felt great to be rewarded for her hard work.

For the men's senior forward Brett Collins, the recognition by the WCC was nice, but the excitement of winning overshadowed the accolade. On Feb. 19, Collins was named Co-Player of the Week for his outstanding performance scoring a team-high 26 points to lead Saint Mary's to a 92-83 victory over the USF Dons in a nationally televised contest.

"Of course the win was the most exciting part of the game. Playing well did not hurt either," Collins said. "The crowd was awesome, there was so much energy running through the place."

Collins also received Honorable Mention All-WCC honors, while sophomore forward Diamon Simpson was named First Team All-WCC and freshman center Omar Samhan was named to the All-WCC Freshmen team.

The third seeded Saint Mary's men's basketball

team (17-15) defeated seventh-seeded Portland in the quarterfinals before taking on the Santa Clara Broncos on March 4. Santa Clara beat Saint Mary's 63-47 on March 4 to advance to the West Coast Conference tournament final against Gonzaga. The No. 2 seeded Broncos, who defeated Saint Mary's twice during the regular season, were the only team to sweep the Gaels this season.

The loss came on the heels of one of the most lopsided wins in the history of the WCC tournament when Diamon Simpson notched his seventh double-double of the season and Brett Collins added 17 points to lead Saint Mary's to an 87-47 win over the host Portland Pilots on March 3 in the second round of the 2007 West Coast Conference Tournament.

The women's basketball team saw its season come to an abrupt end on March 1 when the Gaels fell to the Pepperdine Waves 71-67 in overtime from the University of Portland's Chiles Center. Although the Gaels took a 30-25 lead into the locker room at halftime and then increased it to a 38-29 lead with 15 minutes left, the Waves rallied back and took the lead with six minutes left in the game. The two teams went back and forth until junior guard Serena Benavente sank a three point shot with two minutes left to even the score at 57. Benavente again came up big for the Gaels with two key free throws with 35 seconds left to even the score at 59 and send it to overtime.

In the overtime, the Waves out-scored the Gaels 12-8 with Teiosha George and Teena Wickett led the Waves with two buckets a piece.

Shaughnessy had eight points, six rebounds and eight assists. Obaiza tallied six points and 10 rebounds.

In his first season, head coach Paul Thomas led the Gaels to 14-14 overall record and an 8-6 conference mark which is the best record by SMC in WCC play since the 2001 season.

Getting Valuable 'Face-Time'

Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher's Visit to Saint Mary's Informs, Inspires Students



In a world of \$1,000 per plate dinners, where even town hall meetings are invitation only, politicians can seem nearly inaccessible—especially if you are a college student. But on occasion, a politician graces the halls of academia, allowing students an opportunity to see the person behind the persona.

In a recent visit to Saint Mary's College, U.S. Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-CA) spoke to students, faculty and staff about her work in Congress to increase the minimum wage, cut the interest rate on Pell Grants, and try to convince the President to change course in Iraq.

"The best thing about having people like Ellen Tauscher here is the opportunity to learn not just from a textbook," said senior class president Mark Gilson. "It takes you out of the box."

For Saint Mary's junior Bianca Fuentes, Tauscher's visit solidified her desire to work in politics. "I was able to connect with her more on a personal level and get to candidly ask questions," she said.

A politics major who sits on the student senate, Fuentes has worked with fellow senate members to make changes on campus. "We're trying to get a shuttle to Rheem for those students without cars, we extended library hours and changed the cafeteria menu to offer more vegetarian options," she said. And although Fuentes concedes these issues are less critical than troop levels in Iraq, or chairing the House Arms Services Subcommittee, she says her senate participation "gives me a small taste of how the senate works at the Capitol."

For Douglass, who also coordinated Tauscher's visit to the SMC campus, the opportunity for students to meet representatives face-to-face is invaluable.

Fuentes agrees. "I had a 'complete 180' about the passion that goes into politics," she said. "They're just like regular people."

Did You Know?

Did you know that Assemblyman Guy Houston came to Saint Mary's on an athletic scholarship, thinking of a career in sports? Many elected and government officials began their careers with under-graduate degrees at Saint Mary's College. Below lists just a few:

Don Perata '67
Senate President pro Tem (D-Oakland)

Guy Houston '82
State Assemblyman (R-San Ramon)

Joe Canciamilla '87
Former Democratic State Assemblyman (termed out)
Karen Pank '92
Former Deputy Legislative Secretary to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

Peter Detwiler '71
Staff Director,
Senate Committee on Local Government

Dan Wall '68
Chief Lobbyist,
County of Los Angeles

In the Mood to Jig?

After Several-Year Hiatus, Lively Celtic Trio Returns to SMC

Looking for a way to get into the St. Patrick's Day spirit? The Bay Area's own distinctive Celtic Trio, Golden Bough, will delight you with their impeccable musicianship and lighthearted tales at a special St. Patrick's Day celebration on Friday, March 16 at 8 p.m. in the Soda Activity Center.

This trio of modern day minstrels blends their voices in three-part harmony, creating beautiful a cappella pieces, ballads and lively sing-alongs, accompanied by the Celtic harp, guitar, penny-whistle, recorder, violin, viola, octave-mandolin, accordion, and bodhran (the Irish hand drum). Combining stunning vocals, haunting instrumental pieces, and toe-tapping jigs, Golden Bough creates unique renditions of traditional Celtic songs with a dazzling array of acoustic instruments and haunting vocal styling.

Tickets are \$25 general, \$24 seniors, and \$12 for Saint Mary's faculty, staff and students. For reservations, call (925) 631-4670.



Go Gaels!

Upcoming Saint Mary's Sports Events

Friday, March 16

- Gaels Baseball vs. Southern Utah
Fri., Sat. at 2 p.m., Sun. at 1 p.m.
Louis Guisto Field
- Women's Tennis vs. North Texas
3 p.m. at Korth Tennis Complex

Saturday, March 17

- Women's Lacrosse vs. William and Mary
Noon at Saint Mary's Stadium

Monday, March 19

- Men's Tennis vs. Cornell
3 p.m. at Korth Tennis Complex

Campus Happenings

Art Exhibitions:

Paper Cuts: The Art of Contemporary Paper
March 24 through April 29

Opening reception with guest speaker Deb Koppman, artist/writer

March 24 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Hearst Art Gallery; Free

Lectures:

Tom Barbash, author of "On Top of the World — Cantor Fitzgerald, Howard Lutnick & 9/11: A Story of Loss & Renewal," a novel, "The Last Good Chance," and the forthcoming collection of stories, "The Break."
March 28 at 7:30 p.m. Soda Activity Center; Free

Special Events:

• Golden Bough Concert
March 16 at 8 p.m. Soda Activity Center

Tickets \$25 general, \$24 seniors, and \$12 for SMC faculty, staff and students.
Reservations, call (925) 631-4670.

• Brother Mel Anderson Roast
March 17 at 6 p.m. (Mass), 7 p.m.
reception and dinner Soda Activity Center

For info on table sponsorships, contact Lisa Moore, (925) 631-4328. For more information about upcoming events at Saint Mary's College, visit the college website at www.stmarys-ca.edu/news_events/.



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