

Saint Mary's Women Show Depth in OT Win

By Kevin D. Shallat



Suzie Davis (12); Serena Benavente (20); Lindsay Ekkis (25) Photo Tod Fierner

Saturday, Nov. 3 was the season opening game for the Saint Mary's women's basketball team as they took on Loyola University of New Orleans at McKeon Pavilion. The Gaels outmatched this New Orleans team in almost every way, but Loyola found a way to come back and send this game into overtime. With the combination of a proven rebounder, a freshman rising star, and a fifth year senior, Saint Mary's won the game in overtime, 93-86.

It looked as if the Gaels were going to put this game away in the first half. Fifth year senior guard Serena Benavente did a good job of controlling the tempo of the game for the Gaels. She made a number of tough shots in traffic when Saint Mary's needed it the most. Benavente's clutch shooting, as well as her six assists and control of the ball, enabled the Gaels to get everyone involved. "Everybody's buying into our new

defense and it's up tempo style, in your face, pressure all the time kind of style," said Benavente.

The men's team isn't the only squad with a highly touted Australian recruit. Gaels forward Louella Tomlinson came over from Melbourne, Australia, and is only a freshman, but was able to make quite an impact in her Saint Mary's debut. Tomlinson was 10 of 13 from the field, scored 22 points, grabbed nine rebounds, and had five blocks in only 29 minutes of action. She also added two steals and three assists in her near triple double opening performance. Tomlinson was able to catch the ball up high throughout the game, and either pass it or shoot it without putting the ball on the court. "She's versatile where she can go inside and outside, and if you get bigs on other teams that try and guard her, she can drag them out (of position)," said Benavente.

Saint Mary's junior Jontelle Smith also had a nice game, as she scored 13 of her 21 points in the first half. Smith led the team in minutes and was able to track down seven rebounds in 38 minutes.

Loyola was able to keep the score close in the second half by a strong performance from Trenese Smith, who scored 37 points in 41 minutes. The score was 69-63 in favor of the Gaels with only 5:21 left to play in regulation when the Gaels called for the substitution of several starting players. Shortly thereafter Loyola would close the gap and get within two points before Benavente hit a free throw to go up by three with 12 seconds to go. Loyola's Christine Mainguy hoisted a 3-point shot as the horn sounded and the shot clock light went off. Despite being heavily guarded by Gaels forward Maija Lahde, the ball dropped in to send the game into overtime. Lahde would get her revenge though, as her defense and rebounding would single handedly propel the Gaels in overtime to give Saint Mary's the win.

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