

Saint Mary's Rugby Dominates in Win over Sacramento State

By Kevin D. Shallat



Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's rugby club is back in action this year, and they are as good as ever – once again ranked as one of the top ten teams in the nation. The Gaels hosted Sacramento State Saturday, Dec. 1, in blustery conditions, yet were unfazed as they rolled over the Hornets 53-12.

The Saint Mary's men's rugby team has everything going for them right now. After making it to the quarterfinals of the national tournament last year with reigning coach of the year in Tim O'Brien and, they are currently ranked sixth in the nation.

The Gaels played the Hornets last year in Moraga as well, and beat that Sacramento State team by a similar score of 68-13. However, when the two teams squared up against each other in March, they played under sunny, ideal conditions. This was not the case Saturday, as the two teams played in near freezing

temperatures.

Saint Mary's captain Kevin Swiryn wasn't slowed by the cold weather, as he scored the first try of the game, and went on to score four tries in the match. Swiryn scored two of the three tries for the Gaels in the first half. His second try came off an impressive 20-yard run down the far sideline. Saint Mary's only hit one of their three conversion attempts in the first half. Sacramento State was able to keep the score close, as they scored a try down their sideline just before half, cutting the Gaels lead to 17-7 at halftime.

Swiryn, one of the last players to have been recruited to play football at Saint Mary's, has proven to be a real asset to the Gaels rugby program. In this game Swiryn excited the Saint Mary's fans as he was able to cut through the Sacramento State defense with ease. "He sees a gap

and can hit it pretty quickly," O'Brien said.

When Swiryn wasn't getting his teammates involved, he was active on the defensive end.



Photo Tod Fierner

On one play he stole the ball away from an opposing player and tipped the ball to himself. Swiryn then calmly passed the ball to a teammate, stopping any chance of Sacramento State scoring on their drive.

It may have taken the Gaels a full half to warm up in the unusually cold weather in Moraga, but it was worth the wait, as Saint Mary's scored six more tries in the second half. The Gaels played a strong defensive game, which was largely due to the exceptional play of their interior, as they held the Hornets to only 12 points. However, the day belonged to the offense for the Gaels. Saint Mary's fly half Matt Crawford was everywhere Saturday, as his strong heads up play garnered him player of the match honors.