

Jontelle Smith and the Gaels Dismantle Fresno State

By Kevin D. Shallat



Erika Ruiz (3)

Photo Tod Fierner

Coming off a three game losing streak to the likes of Cal, Vanderbilt, and Alabama (all major conference teams) and continued play without one of their key rebounders, Maija Lahde, the Saint Mary's women's basketball team got back on track with a big win on Monday, Dec. 10 against the Fresno State Bulldogs. After being down by one at the half, the Gaels were able to take care of business at home and defeat the Bulldogs by a score of 79-68.

Lauren Shaughnessy got the

game off to a good start for the Gaels as she made a fancy behind the back dribble and running lay-up to give Saint Mary's a 2-0 lead. However, Tierre Wilson had some fancy moves of her own, as she was able to help the Bulldogs jump out to an early 11-5 lead. Jontelle Smith would single handedly bring the Gaels back into the game with back-to-back jumpers. One of her five 3-point jump shots came from NBA range. As good as the Gaels played in the first half, they still found themselves trailing the

Bulldogs 35-34 at the break.

Smith made the game look easy while scoring a career high, 27 points. It's possible she was inspired by her family and friends who were in attendance Monday night. Smith, a native of nearby Pinole has been scoring in the high twenties with regularity throughout her career. In fact, she scored 26 points in a game against Toledo last December, and averaged 21.4 points in high school. She continued her torrid scoring output and hustle in the second half as well, finishing the game with 27 points, five rebounds, and four steals.

The Gaels received big-time contributions from their other players as well, which helped Saint Mary's break out to a single digit lead for most of the second half. "We were in front of our home crowd, we had to play together, that was the big key to make sure we won this game," Smith said.

Serena Benavente came up with a number of big steals for the Gaels. She would finish with 14 points, four assists, and six steals. Shaughnessy was a solid force at the other guard spot for the Gaels, as she hustled for 11 rebounds in 31 minutes.

Louella Tomlinson continues to put up astoundingly efficient numbers for the Gaels in her early collegiate career. The 6'4" freshman had seven blocks in this game alone. She turned out 13 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists, and 7 blocks in just over one half of play. Tomlinson was able to limit Fresno State with her impressive defensive play. However with 4:42 seconds left in the game, the Bulldogs were able to cut the Gaels lead to 67-64. Finally, Smith was able to ice the game with a 3-pointer at the 3:40 mark, which ended any real threat of a Bulldog comeback.



With the Ball Serena Benavente (20), Louella Tomlinson (2)

Photo Tod Fierner