



Saint Mary's Women's Hoops Downs Northern Colorado

By Kevin D. Shallat

The University of Northern Colorado Bears came into town on Saturday, Dec. 30 to take on the Saint Mary's women's basketball team. Northern Colorado did their best to take advantage of the Gaels, as they were without their leading rebounder and scorer. Maija Lahde has been out for some time, but Jontelle Smith was unable to play after injuring herself on the last road trip. After trailing by 15 points at halftime, the Gaels pulled off a gritty victory at home after a strong second half, taking down the Bears, 73-62.

The Gaels struggled to put points on the board in the first half. Saint Mary's had nine turnovers in this half as well, but that wasn't the main factor for the large deficit at half, because Northern Colorado had 14 turnovers in the half as well. The Gaels clearly missed Smith's offense. They shot just 32 percent from the field, and 37 percent from the free-throw line. Conversely the Bears shot close to 52 percent from the field, and 84 percent from the free-throw line.

The pressure defense the Gaels instilled was not working, and the coaches decided to sit some of the starters for the last few minutes of the half. The Gaels knew they would improve their shooting percentage in the second half, but the real question was whether there would be enough time to come back in the second half of play.

After the first few minutes of the second half, head coach Paul Thomas got his starters back in the game, but things got worse before they got better. Saint Mary's found themselves down by 17 points at the 18-minute mark.

Forward Mikaela Cowles was able to hit two free-throws and a 3-pointer to get the Gaels in the right direction, but every time Saint Mary's would score, Northern Colorado would answer right back. Serena Benavente hit a big 3-point shot to get the Gaels to within 7 points at the 6:41 mark, but time was running out for Saint Mary's. With 4:35 to go in the game, Louella Tomlinson drew a triple team down low in the paint, and was able to pass it out to Sierra Chambers, who calmly knocked down the 3-point shot to cut the deficit to 2.

After a traveling violation by the Bears, Lauren Shaughnessy was able to hit a beautiful shot off the glass to tie the game at the 3:10 mark. From the 3-minute mark on, it was all Louella Tomlinson. In the last 2:51, Tomlinson had four rebounds, three points, one assist, a free throw, and one block, which helped the Gaels close out the game. Despite Tomlinson's domination toward the end of the game, she remained humble in victory. "This was a great team win for us. It's nice to have back to back wins going into league play," said Tomlinson.



Lauren Shaughnessy (11)

Photo Tod Fierner

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Sierra Chambers (10)

Photo Tod Fierner



Serena Benaveute (20)

Photo Tod Fierner