



SPORTS

LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Saint Mary's Rugby Ranks Third in the Nation: Beats Chico State

By Kevin D. Shallat



Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's rugby squad was back in action this week, as they took on the Chico State Wildcats at home Saturday, Jan. 19. It wasn't the team's prettiest win of the season, as the Gaels got off to a slow start, but their balanced offensive attack was more than enough to take care of the Wildcats. Chico State was able to record the first points of the game. However, after they went up 3-0, the Gaels were able to kick it in

gear and win the match by a score of 46-11.

Chico State was able to get on the scoreboard first by a penalty against the Gaels. Saint Mary's scored three tries in the first half, but missed all three of their kicks. The Gaels held a slim 15-6 lead at halftime, but were lucky to be up by as much as they were after a quick turn of events in the first half. Saint Mary's threw an errant pass that was intercepted by a

Chico State player who took the ball back approximately 40 yards before Gaels team captain Kevin Swiryn caught up to him and saved what would have been a crucial try for the Wildcats.

The definition of a scrum half position is typically a player who is smaller than the other players, but possesses a high degree of vision. This definition fits Saint Mary's scrum half Chad Clark perfectly. He is not the biggest

player around, but he sees the whole field, and knows where every player is at all times. Clark was everywhere Saturday afternoon. He was able to help eight players score tries in one way or another. One assist came in the first half where Clark dished the ball unselfishly to lock Kyle Mickiewicz for the Gaels first try of the day. "That's the scrum half position I guess, you need to set up your teammates when you can," Clark said.

Saint Mary's had a strong second half offensively, thanks largely in part to fullback Matt Leatherby. The Gaels were able to get their points, but the Wildcats did their best to disrupt Saint Mary's with their physical style of play.

Swiryn had a terrific day for the Gaels, as he ran all over the Wildcats defense, but even Swiryn wasn't immune to the Wildcats rough and tumble style of play. Swiryn was roughed up on one play, and as the trainer began to run out on the field to the check on him, he was waved away by the Saint Mary's captain. When asked whether he would be all right to play in two weeks (when the Gaels play next) his response was typical of a rugby player. "Tomorrow, if wake up and I can walk around, then yeah, I'm good to go," he said.

The Gaels went on to win this match 46-11, and remain unbeaten at 9-0.



Photo Tod Fierner

Saint Mary's Survives Against Team in Turmoil

By Kevin D. Shallat

Just three days before the Pepperdine Waves basketball team was scheduled to play the Gaels in Moraga, the head coach of Pepperdine, Vance Walberg, stepped down. Walberg resigned his position as the men's basketball coach for what was deemed as personal reasons. Despite the disarray of their program, this Pepperdine team came into town Saturday, Jan. 19, and put forth a spirited effort that gave the Gaels a scare of their own. The Waves were down by only four points with 15 seconds to play, before Saint Mary's put the game away and won by a score of 79-74.

Last week the Gaels played against their arch rival, Santa Clara, which is always counted on for being a tight game. Saint Mary's won that game by 31 points. This week they played a team in turmoil, and were 20 point favorites, but wound up winning by the skin of their teeth.

The score was tied seven times in the first half, and the lead changed three times as well. This was a clear indication that the team was not functioning at it's best. Head coach Randy Bennett turned to his bench early, and that decision paid off. The Gaels bench scored 29 points in 66 minutes of

action. No bench player was more productive offensively than Tron Smith. Smith continues to take the ball hard and safely to the rim, which is something he says he has been working on.

"When I come in, I just want to create...I just have to step up as a senior leader, and take care of the ball, and do whatever I have to do to help us win," Smith said. Smith was 5-8 from the field, and scored 15 points in 26 minutes. Saint Mary's took a precarious 38-30 lead at halftime, as many of their shots in the first half rimmed out of the bucket.

The halftime didn't seem to change anything for Saint Mary's, as they picked up where they left off in the second half. The very first possession was a steal by Damon Simpson, but he was unable to finish the fast break, and turned the ball over. This play typified the Gael's night. Still, Simpson finished with near triple-double figures. He recorded 17 points, 14 rebounds, and five steals, while hitting 7-8 free throw attempts.

Carlin Hughes was uncharacteristically 0-4 from 3-point range, but had astoundingly efficient numbers for the game. Hughes finished with eight points, three rebounds, three assists, and

three steals in 23 minutes. Hughes also had the play of the year, which left the crowd rocking. He dribbled down the floor on a fast break, and put the ball around his back and in for a Globetrotter-like

layup. The Waves made things interesting, as they cut the lead to one with 14:54 remaining, but that would be as close as they got, as the Gaels were able to hang on and defeat the Waves 79-74.



Damon Simpson (20)

Photo Tod Fierner

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