

## 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 Mickiewics 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 check on him, 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