

SPORTS

LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

St. Mary's Rugby Hangs Tough In Loss To Cal

By Kevin D. Shallat



Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's Rugby squad made the short trip from Moraga to Berkeley for a match-up that featured the fourth ranked Gaels against the number one ranked Goliath, California. It was a dream atmosphere for everybody in attendance Saturday, Feb. 16, as both teams have a rich sporting history, and a promising future.

The two teams are only 14 miles apart, but find themselves linked by the rankings that have both teams in the top five, nationally. Despite only scoring five points in the first half, the Gaels were able to fight back and hold their heads high, as they scored 22 points against the juggernaut of Cal Rugby. The Gaels were able to record 17 points in the second half without their best player, Kevin Swiryn, who was unable to play in the match because of a previous injury. However, the Cal offense proved too much for Saint Mary's, as the Golden Bears

finished off the Gaels by a score of 78-22.

After soaking up the atmosphere and taking in the sights, the game began and reality soon set in for the Gaels, as they found themselves down 7-0 in the opening minutes. After two penalty kicks the Bears jumped out to a 13-0 lead. Before the first half hour of play the Bears were able to run the score up to 39-0.

The Bears eventually raised the score to 44-0 before Saint Mary's was able to get on the board. Despite the score, there was no panic in Saint Mary's Fullback Matt Leatherby, as he stepped up and told his teammates to hold their heads high and play hard. Shortly thereafter, the Gaels were able to punch the ball in for a try. Tate Sonilia was able to record the first of two tries on the day for Saint Mary's. The Gaels headed into halftime trailing the Bears, 44-5.

The Gaels were able to pull their offense together in the sec-

ond half and make a game out of it. Matt Hensley recorded the first points of the second half with a try for the Gaels. Saint Mary's then recorded seven more points on a penalty by Cal's Rikus Pretorius, who made a late tackle on a Gael after kicking the ball. This cut the score to 44-17. The short-handed Gaels did a tremendous job to keep the Golden Bears scoreless in the second half for almost 15 minutes. Rob Carlson had a fine day for the Gaels, as his quick tackles helped neutralize the pass, thus preventing Cal's offense from gaining ground.

Cal's lead grew to 66-17 before Sonilia was able to dive in for one more try, cutting the Bear's lead to 66-22. Blake McGahan made a great one-handed catch that started the Gael surge toward the home sideline. Sonilia caught the last pass of the drive and beat everybody else to the corner, as he touched the ball down for the Gaels' last score of the day.



Photo Tod Fierner

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at Sun Valley Pool (1000 Leland Drive, Lafayette)

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No. 25 Saint Mary's Handles USF, Improves Record to 21-3

By David Anderson

McKeon Pavilion was completely sold out and packed to capacity Friday, Feb. 8, with fans seeking a glimpse of the WCC's first place Saint Mary's Gaels as they took on the University of San Francisco Dons. The Gaels continued their march to the head of the WCC with an impressive showing that left USF in its wake. Even with legendary Head Coach Eddie Sutton at the helm for USF, the Gaels were still able to finish off the Dons by a lopsided 25 point margin in their 76-51 victory.

The Gaels wasted no time Friday evening scoring three quick baskets to open the game forcing Sutton to call the Dons first timeout just a minute into the first half. Led by Freshman Guard Patrick Mills (Averaging 14.4 Pts/game) and Junior Forward Yusef Smith, Saint Mary's did not stop there as they kept control of the game throughout the first half. Mills added most of the intensity and energy on the court while Smith did most of the first half scoring. Smith contributed 12 of his 15 points in the game to the 44-29 halftime lead.

The second half started out much like the first with a 7-0 Saint Mary's run that forced Sutton to call another early timeout. The struggling Dons could not get much to go their way at any point during the game. In fact, USF was unable to score a point during the second half until just over six minutes in.

Perhaps the one bright spot for the Dons during the game was the play of Sophomore Forward Dior Lowhorn, who was able to score 22 points on the Gaels despite the team's considerable deficit. The play of Lowhorn, however, was not enough to keep the game close. Five Gaels finished the game with double digits in scoring. Yusef Smith led the way with 15 points, while Tron Smith and Omar Samhan added 12 points each, followed by Patrick Mills and Diamon Simpson with 10 points apiece.

Playing one of their best seasons since they won the WCC Championship in 1996-97, the Gaels are now tied with Gonzaga for the lead in the WCC. (Saint Mary's overtook Gonzaga in overtime on Feb. 4, 89-85.) Saint Mary's is currently ranked 25th in the AP top 25 poll and 21st in the ESPN/USA Today Poll and are riding a wave that could take them back to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since the 2004-05 season. Saint Mary's next home game is against Kent State on Feb. 23 at McKeon Pavilion.



Carlín Hughes (3)

Photo Tod Fierner



Patrick Mills (13)

Photo Tod Fierner

SMC Women's Water Polo Hosts Local Tournament

By Jennifer Wake



The Gaels women's water polo team poses by the Saint Mary's pool

Photo Jennifer Wake

Just two games into the women's water polo season that began Feb. 13, the Saint Mary's women's water polo team will host its first local Collegiate Water Polo tournament this weekend, Feb. 23-24, at the Campolindo Soda Aquatic Center.

The Gaels will face teams from Chico State, UC Davis ("A" and "B" teams), and UC Berkeley at the CWPA Sierra Pacific Division Qualifying Tournament #1.

"The tournament at Campo is important because it will make people aware that Saint Mary's water polo is a force to be reckoned with," said club president Alyssa Schroeder.

Since the pool at Saint Mary's has limitations, many of the team's games are played out of the area. "We play most of our games away, and we're excited to have a fan base and an opportunity to host a tournament and get our name out there," said Gracie Bone, the

club's vice president.

"We have one of the best goalies in the country in Malia Chung," Head Coach Stephen Imperiale-Hagerman said. "Blair Smith and Rene Fleming anchor our defense at the 2m position. Gracie Bone, Amanda Bjerke, and Alyssa Schroeder will all play major roles on offense."

Leading freshmen include Clair Pelpel and Barbara Perking - two of the fastest players in the Sierra Pacific Division, said Imperiale-Hagerman. "It will take some time to get used to the college game, but they have the speed and determination necessary to make an immediate impact."

Gracie Bone agrees that one of the team's assets is its speed. "Our biggest strength is that we are really fast," said Bone, who has been on the team for the past three years. "We are able to move really quickly and our team is really eager to play."

Last year, the Gaels fin-

ished fifth in their division. It was the first year competing in the Collegiate Water Polo Association.

"Since then, we have added several key players and have only improved," Imperiale-Hagerman said. "The greatest strength is the team's cohesion. They enjoy each other's company in and out of the pool, and newer players are not afraid to make mistakes, but rather learn through doing."

"Stephen has helped our team care more about the game and about each other," Schroeder said. "Our biggest strength is the number of players, the experience level of the team, and our level of friendship."

"We've gotten more girls and won more games," Bone said. "It's so much fun to see so many girls in the pool. Stephen was such a blessing. It's been great to have someone so knowledgeable to coach us. We have a great coach."