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Nied and Co. on a Roll: Win WCC Opener

By Kevin D. Shallat



Daniella Spann (19) and Alex Ciliento (3) Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's women's soccer team got off to a good start to begin league play, hosting a mid-day match against the University of San Francisco Dons on Sunday, Oct. 12.

The Gaels came into this game with a 7-4-1 overall record, while the Dons carried a record of 5-5-2. This was a pivotal game for the Gaels, as they have two road games next week against their archrival Santa Clara and 20th ranked San Diego.

After a scoreless first period, the Gaels were able to pour it on in the second half and walk away with a 2-0 victory.

Neither team scored in the first half, but the Gaels were able to dominate the time of possession and shots on goal. The conservative play would pan out for the Gaels in the long run. Instead of going for risky steals, Saint Mary's kept the ball handler in front of them all day long, which forced the Dons to make bad passes throughout the match.

The Gaels effectively shut down USF's Nicole Moore, who had tallied four of the team's nine goals so far this season.

Danielle Spann and Ashley Nied picked right up where they left off last week, having garnered the hot player of the week honors on the SMC website. Both players scored game-winning overtime goals in the week prior to this game. Spann scored the game-winner in double overtime in a 2-1 win at Nevada, and Nied scored the game-winner in a 1-0 win over San Jose State.

The two players stood out again in this game against USF. Nied scored the go-ahead goal with 14:30 to go in the second half. Nied timed a beautiful lob pass from Spann, and headed the ball over the San Francisco goalkeeper to give the Gaels a 1-0 lead. Once again Nied was in the right place at the right time for the Gaels, as she converted her sixth goal in 13 games.

In her first two years, she tallied only four shots on goal, but now the junior forward is enjoying a breakout year for the Gaels. When asked about her knack for finding the goal, Nied said, "It's a dream come true ... it's been nice to finally help the team out with that."

Spann has been a big part of the early success for the Gaels this season. She was able to record her second assist of the day after she teed up a perfect pass on the ground to give Mercede Koning her first goal of the season. Spann could have attempted the shot herself but instead elected to pass to her teammate, who was able to get open on the fast break.

Koning was having a stellar day for the Gaels even before she slid on the grass to kick the second goal of the game with 11:40 to play. The 2-0 lead with just over 10 minutes to play was more than enough to give the Gaels their fourth shutout of the season.



Goal keeper Tara Larson (1) Photo Tod Fierner

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