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Saint Mary's Men's Basketball Season Preview

By Mikaela Cowles



Ian O'Leary (4) screams in excitement to teammate Diamon Simpson Photo Tod Fierner

At 7 am on Monday morning, the Saint Mary's men's basketball team is not tucked in their beds. Rather, they are in the gym getting ready for the upcoming season.

"There are higher expectations (this season) from the media and polls that might be a little unrealistic," head coach Randy Bennett says.

Realistic or not, the Gaels graduated only two seniors and return with their top three scorers, including 2008 Olympian Patrick Mills.

"The talent this year is as high as it's ever been. We have huge strengths in our depth and our experience," Bennett says.

Mills returns leading the team with an average of 14.8 points, 3.4 assists and 1.7 steals per game during the 2007-2008 SMC season. Leading the scoring charge beside him are Diamon Simpson and Omar Samhan, who both averaged double digits in points per game last year and together brought down an average of 16.9 rebounds per game.

Mills, Simpson and Samhan draw a lot of attention due to the figures they posted last season. However, Bennett says that the team has "a lot of guys who

are capable of scoring as well. They have to take on other roles, though, because not everyone can be a scorer."

With players such as Ian O'Leary, who averaged 7.6 points per game and shot 43 percent from the field, and Wayne Hunter, who averaged 8.8 points per game, the Gaels can certainly keep their options open. With the addition to the roster of transfer Ben Allen from Indiana, who is now eligible, the Gaels gain a 6'11" force in the center.

Coach Bennett's defensive strategy will remain the same, but his offense will make small, yet decisive changes. He plans to keep the free flow offense for which he is so well-known. In addition, he says there will be more half court sets now that he has a better grasp on how his players like to score. In tight games, such as their 88-76 loss at Gonzaga last year, quick hits will make a huge difference, giving the Gaels a better opportunity to get the bucket they want when they want it.

Catch the men at their season opener on November 14th at 7 PM in McKeon Pavilion when play Seattle Pacific, to see if they live up to the hype.

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