

SPORTS

LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Amidst Pomp and Pageantry, Gaels Make a Run At Goliath

By Kevin D. Shallat



Cal dominating the line out

The fans of Saint Mary's and Cal were treated to something special in Moraga on Saturday, March 21, as the third ranked Gaels hosted the number one ranked Cal Bears rugby squad. Both teams came into this game undefeated, with the Bears boasting a 25-0 record, and the Gaels carrying a 17-0-1 record.

After not allowing one try to Cal in the first half, the Gaels eventually succumbed to the Bears' offensive strength and lost the match, 20-5. The win crowned Cal the top team in the Northern California Conference, giving the Bears the top seed from the Pacific Coast in the national playoffs.

Saturday's game in Moraga had a mystical and Gaelic feel to it, as the fans packed the sidelines beneath the mist surrounding the rolling East Bay hills. Saint Mary's took the field in fine fashion as a bagpiper led the Gaels out onto the field. Yet even the bagpiper was not to be outdone, as two Navy F-18 jet airplanes flew directly over Pat Vincent Field following the conclusion

of the national anthem.

For the local rugby community, the SMC-Cal game was a homecoming of sorts. Both SMC and Cal recruit Lamorinda Rugby (Lamo) graduating players. The Gaels currently have five Lamo alumni on their roster, while Cal has ten. The 2009 Lamo team was on hand to watch their program's alumni battle at the elite collegiate level. One of those alumni included standout starter and SMC vice-captain Andrew Cook, a sophomore flanker for the Gaels. Local sports fans need only glance at the SMC or Cal roster to recognize graduates from each of the Lamorinda high schools, including Drew and Grant Hyjer (Miramonte), Mike Furlong (Acalanes), Connor Ring (Acalanes) and Nick Mascheroni (Campolindo).

The Gael defense was outstanding in the first period. They were able to keep the Bears out of the in-goal area for the entire first half, something only a few teams have done all season against Cal. However, the Bears still managed to get six points on two penalties to

take a 6-0 lead at halftime.

The Gaels picked it up offensively in the second period, dominating the time of possession during the first part of the second half. Perhaps the most exciting play of the day came when Tim Maupin intercepted a pass and quickly passed it off to Austen Mount, who then dished it off to Blake McGahan for the lone Saint Mary's try. The Gaels were able to cut the score to 5-6, but missed the conversion.

Perhaps no Gael was more dominant than Brendan O'Meara. The Saint Mary's center kept the Gaels in this match with a number of breakaway runs. Unfortunately for the Gaels, they were unable to turn those runs into scores. The Bears scored their first try of the game with just under 18 minutes to play. Then, with 36 seconds left in regulation, the Bears added their final try of the game to seal a 20-5 victory over the Gaels.

"If we're lucky enough, we put in the work, we'll get to fight against them again in the final four at Stanford," said O'Meara.

Photo Robin Schoettler Fox

Photo Robin Schoettler Fox

We'll Always Have "Moraga Madness"



Photo Tod Fierner

The NCAA may have snubbed SMC but fans stayed true, selling out the March 23, 2nd round NIT home match-up against Davidson in an unprecedented 45 minutes,

setting yet another school record this season. But that left unlucky fans to watch the game on ESPN2 and miss the energy that filled McKee Pavilion, complete with vendors selling

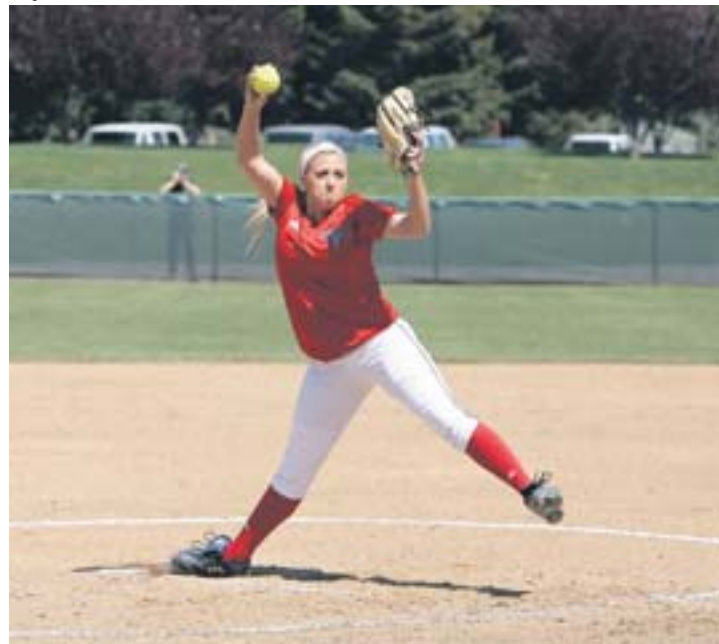
newly printed "Moraga Madness" t-shirts.

"The gym was almost packed before we even started warm-ups," said SMC's Patty Mills afterwards. "You could feel the tension in the air that this was going to be an exciting game." Davidson's Stephen Curry said he'd remember the game, that SMC's "high style crowd" and "big atmosphere" made it fun even though Davidson lost.

The Gaels' 80-68 win against Davidson advanced SMC to the NIT quarterfinals, a road trip to Southern California, where SMC ended its season by falling to San Diego State, 70-66. A disappoint - yes. But nothing can take away from Moraga's own March Madness and the game that pitted not just SMC against Davidson but also Patty Mills with Stephen Curry, players expected to face one another again one day on the NBA court. RSFox

Saint Mary's Splits with Dartmouth

By Mikaela Cowles



SMC's Brittany Linton poised to unleash a powerful pitch Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's softball team split their double header against Dartmouth on Tuesday March 24th, winning the first game 3-1, and dropping the second, 1-3. The home stand moved the Gaels to 14-15 on the season leading them into a 3 game home stand against Cal State Bakersfield.

In the early game, freshman righty, Brittany Linton went six innings and giving up one run, earning her 5th win of the season. The Gaels scored all three of their runs in the bottom of the third. Katelyn La Russa walked to begin the inning. A

sacrifice bunt up the third base line from Sadie Dolcini moved La Russa to second, and when Rebecca Sabatini grounded out the pitcher, La Russa moved on to third. The Big Green's pitcher Devin Lindsay walked Kayla Gonzales to first. Lindsay continued to struggle, giving up a single to Kat Delpit and putting Saint Mary's on the board for their first run.

The Gaels weren't done with Lindsay there, as Jenna Smith doubled to left field and scored Gonzales and Delpit. It wasn't until late in the game when Dartmouth found their

way onto the scoreboard, with a single run in the top of the seventh.

In the second game Saint Mary's took advantage of Dartmouth's early mistakes, as Sabatini scored an unearned run. The Gaels couldn't hold on to their momentum, as Maryanne Cronin gave up seven hits and three earned runs, falling to a 7-4 record on the season. The Big Green's first two runs came in the top of the third when Nikki Yee's single to center field earned her two RBI's. Saint Mary's held them scoreless until the 7th when Ashley Gleason led off with a double down the right field line and was driven in on a single.

The Gaels brought back Linton to close out the inning, but it was too little too late as they were unable to make a come back.

Last weekend, Saint Mary's went 2-1 with Bakersfield ending their non-conference play, 16-16. They will open the conference on April 4, against Loyal Marymount in Los Angeles, with great hopes for building upon their 27-26 season last year, the best in school history. "Conference is wide open for anyone to take it," says head coach Jessica Hanaseth. With only two home stands during conference play, Hanaseth says "it will be a challenge to be on the road so much," but she has full faith in the Gaels potential to finish out games.

Lamorinda Rugby Stays Undefeated in League Play

Submitted by Al Purdy



Lamorinda Rugby maul, ball carried by Zack Purdy (standing) and powered by (left to right) Ty Fach, Cole Huntley and David Eastman

Photo by Karen Drinkwater

The Lamorinda Varsity Rugby Club ("Lamo") took two games in league play against Piedmont and Hayward to bring their record to 3 and 0. On Saturday evening, March 14, Lamo took on the Piedmont Rugby Club at Piedmont High School. It was a hard-hitting battle in front of 500 enthusiastic fans. Lamo scored the initial try less than 10 minutes into the game when Rocket Rodriguez (Campolindo) sprinted around the outside of the Piedmont defense for an impressive 5-point try.

Piedmont came right back and scored at the 14 minute mark to tie the score at 5 to 5. The tough defensive hitting continued until the 24 minute mark when Zack Purdy (Miramonte) won a line out for Lamo and was powered 15 yards by a maul in for the 5 point score. Wes Van Tonder (Alhambra) finished off the scoring with a 3-pointer and extra 2 after the second try to bring the score to 15 to 5 at halftime.

The hard hits continued in the 2nd half but Lamo went down a man when their 8 man was tagged for a high tackle and tossed from the game. At that point Piedmont gained momentum quickly scoring twice over a 6 minute period to take the lead at 17 to 15. But the Lamo defense toughened and finally got the offensive break they needed.

Still down a player with 2 minutes to go in the game, Tuli Taufou (Ygnacio Valley) broke

away from 40 yards out, cut to the inside drawing the defense and zipped a crisp pass to Holden Nakamura (Clayton Valley) for the 5 point try and a hard earned 20 to 17 win for Lamo over Piedmont.

Lamo continued their winning ways on Saturday, March 21, in a daytime match against a big and experienced Hayward RFC Club. The battle in the scrums and mauls was fierce between these two very large front lines.

Lamo's front line of Cal bound Cole Huntley (San Ramon Valley), Ty Fach (Campolindo) and Zack Purdy, along with David Eastman (Miramonte), Phil Moldoff (Campolindo), Nick Lunsford (Acalanes) and Ignacio Martinez (Ygnacio Valley) generally overpowers their opponents, but not in this game. Lamo needed to use all of its speed on the outside, combined with crisp passing and a superior kicking game to beat the Hayward RFC, 25 to 10.

Wes Van Tonder was high scorer for Lamo with 10 points on two penalty kicks and two 2-point conversions. Lamo's outside speed from Chase Herring (Las Lomas), JT Chritton (Campolindo), PJ Gabrielli (Miramonte), Rocket Rodriguez and Tuli Taufou ultimately made the difference.

Long 5 point scores by Rodriguez and Taufou showed their precision teamwork as each player assisted on the other's score. Ty Fach also scored on a 10 yard run out of a scrum to complete the

scoring for Lamo.

Next up for Lamorinda Rugby Field Club is their annual spring break tour which takes them to Washington State and British Columbia Canada this year.

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