

SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS



Gaels Dominate Eastern Washington Eagles

Volleyball Continues Hot Streak

By Alex Crook

Saint Mary's women's volleyball expanded their hot streak to five straight victories against Eastern Washington last Thursday, September 10th, at home in McKeon Pavilion.

The Gaels entered the match coming off a sweep of San Jose State the previous night, while the Eagles looked to bounce back from a defeat in the desert to Arizona.

In set one Saint Mary's took early control off of an Eagle's error, cruising behind junior outside hitter

Megan York's five kills. While Eastern Washington did put up a fight, they had no chance to take the set and Saint Mary's recorded the win, 25-13.

In set two, Eastern Washington started to find their groove, but it was not enough for the win and Saint Mary's again held them off for a 25-23 victory. A kill from Gael's senior outside hitter Lauren Jaeckel acted as the trigger putting Saint Mary's up 16-14, and the Gaels took the lead for the rest of

the set. After an Eagle kill from Hayley Hills, Saint Mary's caught a break with a close shot down the line, and then finished off set two, 25-23 for a 2-0 overall lead.

Eastern Washington found their rhythm in the second set and opened the third with incredible intensity. Set three started with a seemingly endless rally that was awarded to the Gaels. Hills' block early in the set stood as Eastern Washington's first lead of the set, 3-2. The Eagles and the Gaels then

battled back and forth, trading points, until Eastern Washington went on a 5-0 run to give them the lead, 13-17. In response, SMC coach Rob Browning called timeout for the first time that evening.

Out of the timeout, the Gaels capitalized with a 4-0 run of their own, to pull to 18-17 and the match saw another timeout, this one from Eastern Washington. The battle continued and the teams traded match points until freshman outside hitter Lauren Corp finished the

set and the game with two kills, 29-27. Corp and junior middle blocker Shannon Lowell led the victors with 10 kills each on the night.

Saint Mary's improves their record to 7-1, with the only loss coming in a season opening invitational tournament to then ranked #6 California, while Eastern Washington drops to 3-4 on the year.

Prior to this season, the Gaels were picked to finish third place in the West Coast Conference (WCC) which, according to

Browning, is always a battle. Having made the NCAA Tournament last year, Browning anticipates, "they continue to believe in themselves.... if we do that, we'll do great."

Saint Mary's defeated San Diego State on the road Sunday to expand their win streak to six games. The Gaels return to action against Berkeley at Haas Pavilion on Friday, September 18th and travel to Stanford on Saturday, September 19th.



Shannon Lowell (10) and Kapua Kamana'o (14) Photo Doug Kohen



Lauren Corp (1) in foreground, Alita Fisher behind Photo Doug Kohen



Megan York (8) Photo Doug Kohen

One Girl, Two Sports; a Rare Feat

Saint Mary's Senior plays Volleyball, Tennis

By Mikaela Cowles



Alita Fisher (12) with Megan York (8) and Lauren Corp (1) last Thursday playing Eastern Washington Photo Doug Kohen

Diving for digs on the volleyball court wasn't enough for Alita Fisher. She is the rare division 1, two-sport athlete. She moves from the volleyball court to tennis court and back again.

This senior Gael arrived on full volleyball scholarship in 2005, as the team's designated defensive specialist (libero). She has led the Gaels in both her sophomore and junior seasons in digs. Although averaging an impressive 3.76 digs in the West Coast Conference (WCC) last year, something was missing in Fisher's life. She says tennis is "something I've done my whole life and I would feel sort of empty without it."

In eighth grade Fisher quit the constant search for national rankings in tennis, and left the competitive training to others.

While at Bellarmine Preparatory High School in Tacoma, Washington, Fisher earned four varsity letters in both volleyball and tennis. In 2004 and 2005, she was named the Most Valuable Player of the Narrows League for volleyball. Playing tennis just for fun, Fisher won the Washington State 4A doubles championship in 2003, 2004, and 2005, along with the Narrows League and District Championships.

Last year Fisher approached head volleyball coach Rob Browning about joining the tennis team. Fisher laughed as she recounted his two stipulations, "He told me if I play tennis there were two conditions: we have to go out and get some doubles going, and he would teach me how to serve." Speaking with her teammates, Fisher

found them "all super excited."

Fisher recalls the women's head tennis coach Lisa Alipaz telling her, "that exceptions could be made and volleyball would remain my first priority." Fisher said, "I just went out and hit tennis balls and played. I was really excited to be doing just that and I wanted to see how much I could improve from the beginning to the end of the season." So far she has not had the chance to earn points for the Gaels on the tennis court, but looks forward to someday having the opportunity.

Fisher finds time to add in an extra sport to the juggling act of being a student athlete. As a kinesiology, sport and recreational management major, she works hard both on and off the court. Fisher said, "My social

life was kind of lacking. I get some if it by being on two teams with my friends."

What isn't lacking is her performance on the volleyball court this season, which she attributes to her mental game. Fisher said, "I sort of entered training camp and this season with a different mind set, because this is my last year and there's no point in wasting time on negative emotions." Fisher earned her fifth game in a row of double digit digs. The proud and beaming Browning said of Fisher, "She's just really good at what she does."

With no specific idea where her life is headed, she has considered pursuing a Master's degree so she could keep playing tennis and, "after that I want to travel, because I've never really gotten the chance."

Send sports stories and ideas to:

sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

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Fri, Sep 18	WSOC California	Saint Mary's Stadium 4:00 PM
Sun, Sep 20	WSOC UNLV	Saint Mary's Stadium 1:00 PM
Thu, Sep 24	WSOC Nevada	Saint Mary's Stadium 4:00 PM
Fri, Sep 25	MSOC UC Davis	Moraga, CA 4:00 PM
Fri, Sep 25	VB CSU Bakersfield	McKeon Pavilion 7:00 PM
Sun, Sep 27	WSOC Stanford	Saint Mary's Stadium 1:00 PM
Wed, Sep 30	WSOC Fresno State	Saint Mary's Stadium 4:00 PM
Fri, Oct 2	MSOC Gonzaga *	Moraga, CA 4:00 PM
Sun, Oct 4	MSOC Portland *	Moraga, CA 2:00 PM

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