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Competitive Chemistry Key to Success SMC Women's Basketball Preview

By Mikaela Cowles



1 Hatten, Morgan 2 Tomlinson, Louella 3 Ruiz, Erika
5 Carbonel, Alex 10 Gaze, Kate 11 Levesque, Alyssa
12 Davis, Suzie 13 Kojola, Kira 14 Coatney, Amber
21 Batlin, Katie 22 Smith, Jontelle 23 Bailey, Andrea
24 Richey, Leanna 25 Puletasi, Tifa 32 Smith,
Jasmine 33 Smith, Ashlee Photos Tod Fierner

current career record for blocks at Saint Mary's. Incoming freshman forward Tifa Puletasi will join Tomlinson in the middle, adding another strong force down low for the Gaels.

The Gaels success this year does not depend entirely on the strength of their competition, but also lies within them. Thomas believes if they compete and continue to stay focused, everything will take care of itself.

Saint Mary's beat Chico State, 78-55, in an exhibition game, Sunday November 8th. Thomas played multiple girls and he felt they learned a lot. However, Thomas hopes to improve defensively, "we need to a better job of defending individually and as a team." Saint Mary's returns to the floor to take on Idaho State on Friday, November 13 at 6:00 p.m.

Saint Mary's women's basketball enters the '09-'10 season with a team full of talent and high expectations for success. The Gaels finished last season 11-19 overall and 7-7 in conference. Reflecting on last season, head coach Paul Thomas said the team, "ended the season poorly and of course that leaves a bad taste in your mouth." The team has only gained experience, losing just one senior; St. Mary's gained three freshmen in addition to three redshirts. They added strength and athletic ability with two year redshirt Jasmine Smith and the group of incoming freshman. Competitive chemistry will be the Gaels theme this year. Thomas expects to mix-up line-ups and use the depth of the team's talent to his advantage. Thomas believes this is the first time since he has been coaching at Saint Mary's that the depth of the bench is of this quality. He is "feeling comfortable about the competitiveness in that depth. There is just not as big of a drop-off."

Returning to the court with her sister is redshirt senior Jontelle Smith, who holds the college's career record for most 3-point field goals. Jontelle was named to the West Coast Conference (WCC) Preseason All-Conference Team. Her long-range game will force opponents to extend, opening up the middle. Jasmine Smith's drives will force defenders to collapse. The sisters' dynamic should provide opponents with a difficult challenge and Saint Mary's with a lot of offensive opportunity.

Adding to the combination is junior forward Louella Tomlinson. Tomlinson was named WCC Defensive Player of the Year last season; she finished second in the nation in blocks per game and holds the



Sophomore forward Ashlee Smith (above) started 16 games last year as a freshman and averaged 9.6 points and 4.8 rebounds for the Gaels Photo Tod Fierner



2 Louella Tomlinson Photo Tod Fierner

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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