

Published April 13th, 2011

## SMC Baseball Storms into WCC Play

By Bryant West



Photo Tod Fierner

nine of their runs in the eighth. Junior starting pitcher Mark Anderson won his sixth game of the season, giving up all four earned runs while striking out five.

The Dons won the second contest in a 1-0 pitchers duel. Sophomore pitcher Martin Agosta continued his strong pitching, giving up seven hits and striking out nine with just the one earned run, but Saint Mary's got just five hits of their own against San Francisco's Patrick Keane.

Saint Mary's recovered in the final game and won 6-5 in another comeback effort. Down 5-2 in the seventh, the Gaels scored four straight runs capped off by a three-run homer by sophomore third baseman Patrick Wisdom that captured the lead and eventually gave the Gaels the win.

Soto said that he thinks the series win will help propel the Gaels forward as conference play continues. "USF is not an easy place to play," he said. "...we had two comeback victories and the kids expect to win."

In addition to their recent victories, the Gaels also swept through the conference awards. Wisdom won WCC Player of the Month, after he went 26-for-60 (.433) in March with 11 runs scored and six doubles, two home runs and 17 RBIs. Anderson won Pitcher of the Month after a strong March, which included a complete game shutout against then #25 UC Irvine. He currently sits at 6-1 on the season.

Junior first baseman Troy Channing won WCC Player of the Week after going 7-14 against New Orleans the last weekend in March, with three runs, two homers and six RBIs, and Agosta was named WCC Pitcher of the Week after a complete game shutout of Southern Utah on Friday, April 1st.

Despite the recent hot-streak, it's been a turbulent year for Saint Mary's so far, who started the season cold before catching fire in mid-March. The Gaels lost six of their first nine games, and then were swept in the Dodgertown Classic in Los Angeles, losing to USC, UCLA and Georgia on the weekend of March 11th.

"We saw some of the best pitching the NCAA had to offer the first 12 games," Soto said before the Gaels traveled to take on the Dons. "We had a few of our offensive guys pressing and trying to do too much. They have done a nice job adjusting these past 12 games hitting what the pitchers give us."

As the Gaels offense recovered, so did their record. The Gaels entered conference play with a 12-12 record, having won seven of their past eight games.

The Gaels swept New Orleans March 25th and 27th in a three game series at Laney College in Oakland. Saint Mary's blasted past the Privateers with scores of 14-0, 7-3 and 7-0.

On Tuesday, March 29th, Saint Mary's took on #11 Stanford in Palo Alto and fell 16-14 - a considerable feat in itself, it is even more impressive considering Saint Mary's had trailed 10-2 in the top of the seventh.

The Saint Mary's Gaels entered conference play last week on a win streak and kept it up with a series win over the USF Dons in San Francisco. The Gaels, winners of nine of their past 11 contests, bested the Dons 9-4 on Friday, April 8th, lost the second game 0-1 on Saturday, April 9th, and recovered with a 6-5 win on Sunday, April 10th.

Saint Mary's sits at 14-13 on the year after a tough pre-conference schedule, but head coach Jedd Soto's expectations for the Gaels are as high as ever. "Our expectations every year are to win the West Coast Conference," he said. "We know that conference is a battle every inning, every pitch, every series."

Soto's confidence in his team may not be shared amongst the rest of the WCC - the Gaels were picked to finish last in a conference coaching poll. Saint Mary's was just 19-32-1 overall last season and went 8-13 in the WCC, finishing sixth overall. But this season, the Gaels got off to a great start in their matchups against San Francisco, getting the series win against the Dons for the first time since 2004.

In the WCC opener last Friday at USF, Saint Mary's trailed 4-0 in the top of the eighth, but saw six players belt out RBIs and scored all

The Gaels carried their comeback momentum into a three game sweep over Southern Utah March 31st-April 2nd in which they scored a total of 23 runs.

To the Gaels credit, they've only played three home games so far this year. Nineteen of the Gaels next twenty seven contests will be played in Moraga.

Saint Mary's traveled to Davis yesterday, Tuesday, April 12th for a one game matchup against the Aggies, and return home this week for a three game home stand against Santa Clara this weekend.



Patrick Wisdom was named WCC Player of the Month Photo Tod Fierner

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