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Saint Mary's Men's Basketball Perfect in WCC Play

By Caitlin Graveson



Photos Tod Fierner

Saint Mary's opened conference play with a strong statement by defeating conference newcomer and predicted title contender BYU and following it with a blowout win over Pepperdine. With the wins, the Gaels improve to 13-2 on the season and 2-0 in the WCC.

Playing in front of a large contingent of BYU fans at McKeon on December 29, the Gaels recorded an impressive 98-82 win.

"Great college basketball atmosphere [tonight] which is the cool thing about BYU being in our league," head coach Randy Bennett said of the unusual crowd.

Both senior forward Rob Jones and junior guard Matthew Dellavedova had double-doubles in the effort. Jones finished with 25 points and 14 boards. Dellavedova had 18 points and 12 assists.

The Gaels had four players finish in double digits. Sophomore guard Jordan Page started in place of injured senior guard Clint Stienl and put up 13 points and five assists.

"Tonight we played well, both halves," Bennett said. "I thought it was just a shoot-out. Both teams played well offensively. We were able to separate and that was the difference."

Saint Mary's went into the locker room up ten points on BYU (11-4), 53-43. They opened the second half with a 13-2 run to extend their lead 66-45 with 15:46 to play.

Jones was a major contributor in the run, knocking in two three's and recording a block.

He got off to a slow start in the first half, shooting just 2-12 from the field. The second half was a different story. Jones went 4-6, 2-3 and notched eight rebounds.

"You can't play one half. The game is two halves so I just knew I had to come out the second half and finish," Jones said.

Despite being down by 20 points, the Cougars refused to quit. BYU battled to within 10 points, 80-70, with 6:20 to play.

"We always knew that they would come back and make a run," Dellavedova said.

The Gaels were ready for that run. Dellavedova helped to put an end to it with a big three to bring the lead to 13.

Minutes later, redshirt freshman forward Brad Waldow scored a bucket and was fouled. He hit the free throw to extend the lead to 16 points, 86-70, with 5:03 to play.

The Gaels carried the lead to the finish, winning 98-82.

Saint Mary's was sparked by sophomore guard Stephen Holt in the first half.

BYU won the opening tip and notched a quick bucket and the Gaels seemed in for a battle.

Then, Holt nabbed a steal and ran back for a dunk. He was called for a technical, but remained undeterred.

Just two minutes later, Holt hit a step back three for a 7-5 lead.

"I got a lot of momentum when I got that steal and dunk. It got me juiced out there. Then I hit that three and I knew it was going to be a good game for us," Holt said.

Holt tied his career-high with 16 points in the first half off of 6-7, 4-5 shooting. He finished with 21 points.

Forward Brandon Davies had 28 points for the Cougars. BYU bounced back from the loss by routing San Diego 88-52 on Saturday.

Saint Mary's rode their win to Pepperdine on Saturday to take on the Waves (7-6, 1-1). The Gaels walked away with a solid 74-45 win. Dellavedova led all scorers with 16 points. Holt and Page added 14 each.

Saint Mary's returns to action on January 5 against San Diego.



Jordan Page had 13 points as a starter against BYU.



Rob Jones had 25 points and 14 rebounds in the win over BYU.

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