

LAMORINDA SPORTS

SMC Wins Seven-Straight, Breaks into Top 25

By Alex Kozela



Junior guard Matthew Dellavedova scored 26 points against Gonzaga.

Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's men's basketball team keeps on winning.

The Gaels maintained their undefeated WCC record by thoroughly routing perennial conference rivals Gonzaga, 83-62, last Thursday night at McKeon Pavilion. Two days later, the team improved to 6-0 in WCC with a 69-61 home win over Portland.

But it was the huge win over the #21 Zags that elevated the Gaels to conference favorite. It was Saint Mary's third win over Gonzaga in their last five meetings and it snapped the Zags' eight-game win streak.

"I think Gonzaga has a really good team, and I think this team is better than last year's," Gaels head coach Randy Bennett said. "I thought we played at a high level tonight."

Junior guard Matthew Dellavedova hit five 3-pointers, scoring 26, one point shy of his career high. Freshman center Brad Waldow contributed with a double-double of 17 points and 10 rebounds to help the Gaels (17-2, 6-0) down the Zags (14-

3, 4-1) at home for the first time since 2008.

"It's a really big rivalry game," said Dellavedova. "We're happy to get a win and keep it going in conference."

Senior forward Rob Jones, who averages almost 15 points a game for the Gaels, didn't score until the second-to-last minute of the game, but grabbed 11 boards and dished out 8 assists in addition to his two points.

"I think Rob Jones probably played the best game I've ever seen anyone play without scoring until the end," said Bennett.

Jones contributed to a defensive effort that limited the Zags to 40 percent shooting and star center Robert Sacre to only four points.

"It's the most complete game we've played," said Bennett. "We were very consistent on both ends of the floor. They frustrated us defensively for spurts, but for the most part we were pretty consistent. You have to do a really good job of limiting them to the points they had tonight."

Junior forward Elias Harris led the Zags with a 17 point, 11 rebound performance. Freshman Kevin Pangos added 12 points.

The Gaels, still feeling the momentum from the previous game, went on to defeat Portland two days later, a 69-61 home victory that improved the team's record at McKeon this season to 13-0. Sophomore guard Stephen Holt tied his career high with 21 points, while Jones added a double-double with 10 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Gaels to their seventh consecutive win.

The big wins last week propelled Saint Mary's into the top 25. The Gaels are now ranked #24 in the AP poll and #23 in the ESPN/USA poll. Saint Mary's looks to defend their position with a home game against Pepperdine on Thursday before hitting the road for a three game road trip at Santa Clara, Loyola Marymount, and Brigham Young. The Gaels will face Gonzaga in a rematch of WCC favorites on February 9 in Spokane.



Senior forward Rob Jones had 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Gaels.

Photo Tod Fierner

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