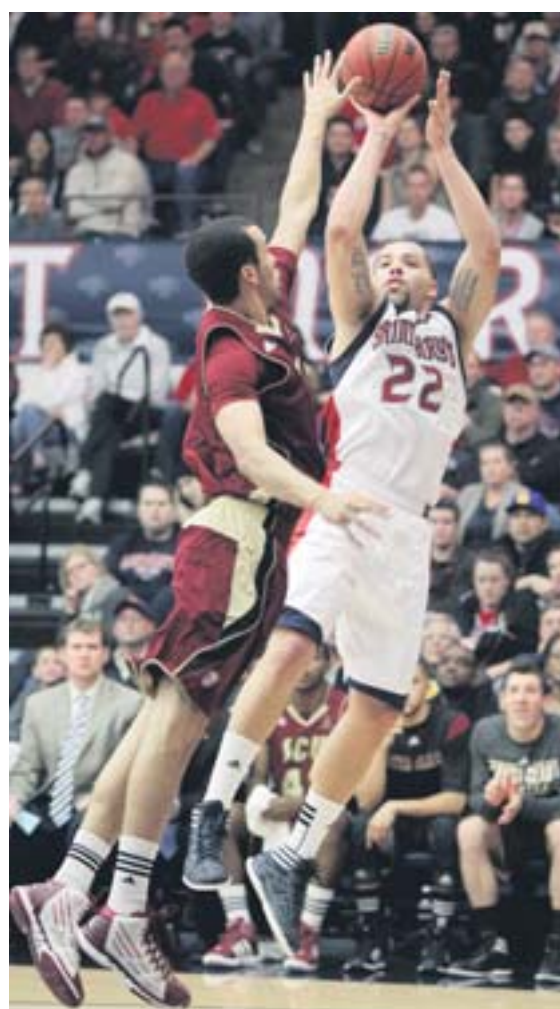


# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Saint Mary's Bounces Back to Beat the Broncos

By Alex Kozela



Rob Jones #22

Photo Tod Fierner

The Gaels' incredible undefeated WCC run came crashing to a close at the likeliest of locations. The Gaels fell to perennial rivals, Gonzaga, in front of a boisterous crowd at "The Kennel" in Spokane on February 9.

Saint Mary's, ranked #13 in the ESPN/USA Today coaches' poll, the highest ranking in the program's history, and #16 by the Associated Press, couldn't keep its streak alive last Thursday night, losing 73-59 in a match-up of WCC titans. The loss dropped SMC to #21 in the AP Poll and #16 in the Coaches Poll. Gonzaga's win over the Gaels helped propel them to #24 in both the AP and Coaches Polls.

The Gaels (22-3 overall, 12-1 WCC) got back on track Saturday at home with an 82-67 win over a plucky Santa Clara team. The Broncos were determined to pull an upset despite residing at the bottom of the WCC standings.

The win was an important one for the vulnerable

Gaels, as the Zags (20-4, 10-2) are still very much alive in the race for the regular season WCC title.

"I think it just proves how tough a team we are," said Gaels' senior forward Rob Jones, who followed a quiet eight point, seven rebound night against Gonzaga with a commanding 25 point, 12 rebound performance against Santa Clara.

"You can't be proven as tough if you don't face adversity. After last game, I just really had to come out tonight and prove to myself and everyone that I'm still here with this team," added Jones.

Despite having the worst record in the WCC (8-17, 0-12), the Broncos were a solid test for the Gaels to regain their confidence.

Jones and junior guard Matthew Dellavedova both had double-doubles, with Jones notching his 15th of the season, while Dellavedova scored 16 points and added 10 assists. Despite the 82-67 score line, the Broncos fought back on numerous occasions.

"Santa Clara's playing well for their record," said Saint Mary's head coach Randy Bennett. "I thought it was going to be a tough game, [with the teams] tough to separate."

After a back-and-forth second half that saw Saint Mary's lead 40-35 at the half, the Gaels sprang out to a 54-40 lead with 15:48 remaining. The Broncos pulled within three, trailing 62-59, after going on a 19-8 run, before the Gaels went ahead to take the lead for good.

"When it got close, I'm glad our guys responded the right way: hit some shots, got some stops. It was a good win," said Bennett.

Last Thursday in Spokane, the Bulldogs avenged the 83-62 drubbing they suffered in Moraga a month ago in a big way, as freshman Kevin Pangos hit 27 points to keep the Zags in the running for their 12th consecutive regular season title. Dellavedova scored 20 points for Saint Mary's, who shot a season-low 38 percent from the field, going 21-55, including 5-21 from three-point range.

The Gaels only trailed by three at the half, losing 34-31, and opened the second half on a 9-4 run. The Zags, who shot 52 percent from the field, including 7-15 on threes, were persistent, however. Big threes by the freshman guard duo of Pangos and Gary Bell Jr. down the stretch sealed the victory for the Bulldogs.

"We had a great stretch," said the Gaels' Jones, referring to the Gaels 11 straight wins in WCC play. "But it happens. We didn't play our best and Gonzaga got us."

The Gaels will look to complete its second undefeated home season in school history tomorrow against Loyola Marymount in the last regular season game.

## Saint Mary's Women Hold onto Fourth Place in WCC

By Alex Kozela



Morgan Hatten #24

Photo Tod Fierner

After losing back-to-back games for the first time this season, the Saint Mary's women's basketball team got back on track with two straight wins.

The Gaels bounced back from tough losses to nationally-recognized opponents Gonzaga and Brigham Young with a 75-58 win over Portland at home last Thursday and a 57-47 win against rivals Santa Clara on Saturday.

The Gaels (18-8 overall, 9-4 WCC) sit in fourth place in the WCC, one game behind third place San Diego, who they face on February 23.

"They understand. They knew tonight was an important game," said Saint Mary's head coach Paul Thomas

after the win against Portland. "They know the rest of our games our important because it's going to have some bearing on our West Coast Conference standings."

Saint Mary's junior guard Morgan Hatten had a double-double, scoring a career-high 15 points, while grabbing 10 rebounds, and sophomore forward Danielle Mauldin added 13 points and nine rebounds to lead the Gaels to victory over the last-place Pilots (8-17, 1-10).

"[Hatten] was extremely focused tonight, very much in rhythm," said Thomas. "I think that had a lot to do with her focus and her mental approach to the game and her teammates did a great job of finding her."

Senior guard Jasmine Smith and sophomore guard Jackie Nared also scored in double figures with 11 points each.

"Today we all came together and everyone contributed," said Hatten. "I think that's what we need to continue to do to win out the rest of our games."

In the first half, Saint Mary's shot 62 percent and out-rebounded the Pilots 22-9. Leading by 20 points at half-time, the Gaels finished the game with 52.3 percent shooting. Saint Mary's out-rebounded the Pilots 39-28, while forcing them to turn over the ball 18 times.

"The team did an exceptional job of executing the game plan," said Thomas. "We didn't want them to get off and shoot a bunch of threes, and get a lot of early clean looks and our team did a fantastic job of not letting them do that."

Two days later in Santa Clara, the Gaels once again had a strong defensive performance, while out-rebounding the Broncos 57-23. Nared led the team with a double-double, scoring 16 points and nabbing 14 rebounds. Mauldin added 10 points.

Just like in the previous game against Portland, the Gaels limited their opponents to only nine rebounds in the first half, going into halftime with a 36-20 lead.

The Gaels extended their lead immediately after the halftime interval, leading 45-24 at the first timeout in the second half. The Broncos (10-15, 3-9) scored the last seven points of the game, but it was too little of an effort to surmount the massive deficit.

Saint Mary's will close out their home schedule Saturday against Loyola Marymount.



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