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Saint Mary's Falls in Semi-Finals to Zags Gaels hope for WNIT invitation

Alex Kozela



Jackie Nared scored 26 points in the WCC Tournament loss to Gonzaga. Photo Tod Fierner

"It was a fun game, especially that first half watching both teams go up and down and make all of their shots," Thomas said.

The game was the third time the teams met this season, and the third game went down to the wire. Saint Mary's won 66-63 on January 14 in Spokane and lost 75-70 at home on January 28.

"All three games [against Gonzaga this season] were so close because both teams have too much pride to lose to one another," senior guard Alex Carbonel said. "We match up with them really well and we played them really well. Everybody stepped up. I can't think of any game that we've been pumped up for than a team that has Gonzaga across their chest."

The Zags went on to lose to Brigham Young in the WCC Final, 78-66, on Monday, March 5. Gonzaga is likely headed to the NCAA Tournament, while the Gaels learned of their post-season fate late Monday night.

"I'm super happy and proud of the team," said Thomas. "We have more basketball to play this year." Check Lamorindaweekly.com for information regarding the women's post-season schedule.

The Saint Mary's women's basketball team put forth a valiant effort against perennial rivals Gonzaga in the semifinals of the WCC Tournament in Las Vegas, but came up just short, losing 83-78 on Saturday, March 3.

The Gaels, led by sophomore guard Jackie Nared's 26 point effort, were up 49-47 at halftime after a back-and-forth first half. However, the Bulldogs went ahead for good with a 77-70 lead with 4:08 remaining. The #20 Zags held on to the lead in the final few minutes as the Gaels ran out of time.

While Saint Mary's (21-10) played well and will most likely receive a WNIT bid (the announcement was made after the press deadline), head coach Paul Thomas acknowledged that there is always room for improvement.

"There are no moral victories in our program anymore," Thomas said. "That was a couple of years ago. We're deeply disappointed."

Both teams had fantastic shooting performances, especially in the first half, when the teams combined for 96 points. The Gaels shot 65.5 percent compared to the Zags' 57.6 percent. It was the best half of field-goal percentage basketball for the Gaels under Thomas.

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