

SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS



SMC Golf Records First-Ever WCC Title

By Rebecca Eckland



Joining the team as a walk-on, junior Ben Geyer finished first at the West Coast Conference tournament last week. Photo Kyle Terada

At the 18th hole of the West Coast Conference Golf Championships, Saint Mary's junior Ben Geyer, a walk-on, found himself fighting for a top finish.

He had two choices to end his three-day campaign: he could angle his putt for a par finish that would place him in second or third place; or, he could go for a long shot—an extremely difficult putt—to make a

birdie that would give him the conference title and that would contribute to the first-ever WCC title for the team.

"I knew the situation, other golfers with 8-under were already in the clubhouse, and I was 8-under on the last hole. The safe shot would be to finish with a par. I asked Coach Hardy what he wanted me to do. He said he wanted me to hit it and make the shot," Geyer said.

"I was pretty nervous on the putt, [that I] wasn't going to leave myself more than a foot...but when it went in, I went crazy," Geyer said. In addition to earning the title, Geyer was recently named First-Team All-WCC.

Teammate, senior Andres Engell, who finished sixth overall and was also named to First Team, was still in shock by Geyer's putt two days later.

"Ben made his last hole to win by one. I'm still not over that... made the birdie to win by one point."

The Gaels had a strong showing the first day of the three-day tournament with freshman Jonathan De Los Reyes, who placed ninth, leading the way to a 14-under par, 274 performance. De Los Reyes was named honorable mention All-WCC.

The second day the Gaels finished just one under par. On the third day, they hit their stride to outpace second place San Francisco by nine strokes (853, -11). BYU finished third (866).

"We didn't have it handed to us. USF played really well the last two rounds. That shows how strong we are as a team," said Geyer. "All year long, we knew we had a good chance

to win. But you still have to go out and get it done."

Head coach Scott Hardy once an SMC golfer himself, walked on the team in 1994. He has watched the program grow under his 12-year tenure as coach. "They are great accomplishments-- the team title was one of our goals for the year," said Hardy of capturing both titles. Hardy was named WCC Coach of the Year.

Now, the Gaels are focusing on NCAA Regionals which will take place May 17-19. They will need to finish in the top five teams in order to advance to the National Competition. The last time the Gaels competed at NCAA Regionals was in 2008.

"I know if we play well, we can beat them," said Engell.

Team Standings:

Team	Scores	Total
1. Saint Mary's (CA)	274 287 283	844
2. San Francisco	289 278 286	853
3. BYU	290 286 290	866

Individual Scores:

Place	Player	Scores	Total	Par
1	Ben Geyer	67 72 66	207	-9
t-6	Anders Engell	71 70 71	212	-4
9	Jonathon De Los Reyes	65 73 76	217	-2
t-12	Eric Grimberg	69 78 70	217	+1
t-28	Mac McClung (First Team)	77 72 76	225	+9

SMC Women's Tennis Vies for Spot in NCAA Tournament

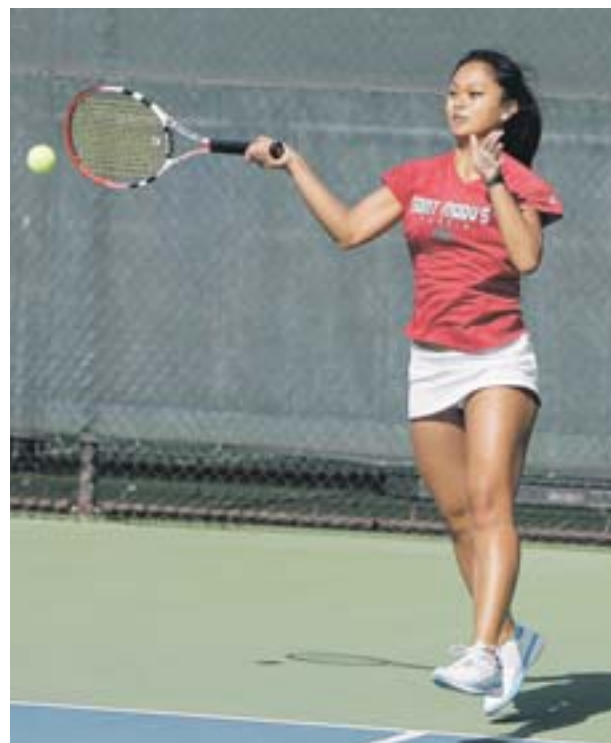
By Marissa Harnett



Elizabeth Searl



Photos Tod Fierner Jenny Jullien



Catherine Isip

Saint Mary's women's tennis team concluded the regular season with two decisive wins to earn the #2 seed in the upcoming WCC tournament. The #42 Gaels finished with a 14-6 record, going 7-1 in WCC play.

They played their final regular season match in San Diego on April 21 against the #68 Toreros. After losing all three doubles matches, the Gaels managed a 4-3 win with solid singles play.

The Gaels, whose only league loss came late in the season against Pepperdine, returned to their winning ways against south bay rival Santa Clara University, finishing 6-1 on April 15.

In their final home match, the Gaels doubles opened up a quick lead over the Broncos. Senior Molly Aloia and freshman Elizabeth Searl made quick work of their opponents, finishing 8-3. On court two senior Anna Chkhikvishvili and junior Catherine Isip crushed their opponents, 8-2.

The play on court one was a battle. Jade Frampton and Jenny Jullien struggled, trading the lead with SCU throughout the eight game pro-set. SMC gained solid footing at 7-5, but couldn't seal the deal, and SCU tied it up at 7-7 and then 8-8.

The tiebreaker mirrored the match, the teams exchanging the lead, but SMC took control and fin-

ished the match with a dramatic final point. Jullien hit a reflexive winner to clinch the match, 9-8 (7-3).

Going into singles play, the Gaels were up 3-0. SMC won the next five out of six matches to solidly secure their overall win.

In Isip's second match of the day, she faced off with SCU's top player and highest ranking singles player in the conference, Katie Le, in the #1 singles match. Isip easily won the first set, 6-2.

The second set saw a shift. Le gained confidence and Isip struggled. The pair battled and Isip dropped the set, 5-7. Isip eventually won the tiebreaker, 4-0.

Isip beamed with the win. "I lost

to her the last time – the only time – we've played singles. I came in there and really wanted to win it."

The SMC tennis program has improved under the fourteen-year tenure of head coach Lisa Alipaz. "I scrapped together a few girls early on that were super ambitious and each team has built off what the team before has left us."

Alipaz tries not to create hard set goals. "We're just trying to get better every single match and play to our potential. We know that if we do that then we're definitely a contender for a conference title and we definitely want to be in the NCAA tournament because we're capable."

SMC won the WCC championship in 2010 and has earned a spot in the NCAA for the past two years. If they win the WCC, they will automatically enter the NCAA tournament.

If not, the Gaels must secure a ranking of 42 or better to receive an at-large bid to qualify for the tournament. With the rankings constantly fluctuating, Alipaz knows it is hard to predict. "It's going to come down to the wire. We've got to play and practice as if every point, every match, every hour we spend out there is crucial."

The WCC championships begin today, April 25 in San Diego with SMC as the #2 seed.

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