

Published August 29th, 2012

Saint Mary's Soccer Earns Win in Home Opener

By Simon Tryzna



After a late season surge that saw the Saint Mary's men's soccer team win its first ever West Coast Conference Championship and make a Cinderella run to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament, the expectations were high in Moraga as the #18 Gaels opened their regular season at home with a 2-1 victory over UNLV on Sunday, August 26.

In his first game in two years, sophomore Ismail Adams opened the scoring with over 18 minutes left in the first half. The Gaels found the back of the net again a few minutes later, but the goal did not count because two Saint Mary's players ran into the goal keeper.

In the second half, captain senior Trevor Newquist converted on a penalty kick to give the Gaels a 2-0 advantage. The Running Rebels would respond on a counter attack with just over 17 minutes left in the match to remain in the game. UNLV improved its attack as the Gaels withstood a second half barrage to hang on for the season opening win.

"Always good to get a win," said Newquist. "UNLV is a good team and we battled it out. There are some positives that we can take away and we definitely need to play better in the second half. But a win is a win."

In order to prepare for a tough conference season, head coach Adam Cooper, the WCC Coach of the Year, prepared a tough non-conference slate. Prior to the season

opener, the Gaels scrimmaged at Stanford, losing 1-0.

The opportunity gave the newcomers a chance to get some game experience as well as give their head coach a lesson on what the team needs to do to improve for the upcoming year. "We tweaked some things in the lineup but didn't really do anything differently," said Cooper.

The Gaels will host CSU Bakersfield on September 7. Saint Mary's defeated the team last year in the first round of the tournament. They also host #3 Creighton just two days later on September 9.

While the Gaels have high hopes for the year, the team is mostly inexperienced. A total of 18 players have entered the season never playing a Division I game and there are only five seniors. Five of the 18 fresh faces made their debuts Sunday.

"I have high expectations for our freshmen," said Cooper. "They are all doing really well right now and they all still got to learn and improve as the whole team does. The guys were focused, they had a good week of training, and they were ready to play."

Only three starters and twelve players total returned. However, behind preseason All-WCC seniors Newquist and Jose Cabez, Saint Mary's remains the favorite to defend its WCC title and hopes to make another long run in the tournament.



Jose Cabez earned All-WCC preseason honors.



Ismail Adams opened scoring for the Gaels.

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