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Saint Mary's Volleyball Opens WCC Play

By Michael Sakoda



From left: Kristina Graven, Lauren Corp, Jordan Shaw, Gabby Jolly and Dalas Dodd Photos Kevin Nuygen

The second set was point-for-point play, LMU winning only after overtaking the Gaels at 18-19, to lead the rest of the way.

SMC held the lead through most of the third set, but eventually lost ground to trail 23-24. Senior outside hitter Lauren Corp (12 kills, 10 digs) fought to keep the Gaels afloat. She played recorded two big kills to tie the score at 24, and to give SMC a 25-24 lead, but the Gaels couldn't hold on and lost 26-28.

With Portland State and Pepperdine upcoming, Saint Mary's head coach Rob Browning says his team was going to have to simply push forward.

"We need to bounce back from this; we need to play better," Browning explained. "Our goal is to win the conference."

Looking ahead at a series of tough opponents in the WCC, there are hurdles the team will have to leap. The first of which is the conference itself.

"There are eight other teams...that want to win it, and almost all of them can, on any given night, beat any other team," said Browning.

Injuries have also been a large part of the Gaels' story this season. Saint Mary's has three players sidelined by injury, and still more fighting through them on the court.

Outside hitter Jordan Shaw (8 kills, 9 digs against LMU), a junior who led the team in kills last season, missed the first few games this year with a knee injury and she is just getting back to her usual role.

In addition Missy White, a red shirt senior, has missed all games this season with a back injury. In her place, the Gaels are playing red shirt freshman Dalas Dodd, who had a strong performance in the home loss to LMU.

"But usually the biggest obstacle is your own team, getting them to perform at their best, and that's certainly our biggest obstacle right now," Browning explained. We have a bunch of good players...we just need to put it together."

Saint Mary's takes on Pepperdine at the McKeon Pavilion, Thursday, September 27, 7 p.m.

The Saint Mary's College women's volleyball team opened conference play on September 20, losing at home to Loyola Marymount. While the season record (5-7) may not reflect it, this is a strong team. The Gaels and the University of San Diego were picked as the teams most likely to win the West Coast Conference and their earlier losses mostly came against top 25 ranked opponents.

They began their season August 24, going 1-2 at the Chevron Rainbow Wahine Invitational, with losses coming against then No. 7 Stanford and No. 8 ranked Hawaii. They earned their first win against Albany.

The Gaels then recorded a perfect 3-0 record at the Sacramento State Invitational, crushing Morgan State, Boise State and Sacramento State.

Saint Mary's finished out the preseason 1-4, including a second loss to Stanford.

The game against the Lions of LMU was close, and with the exception of the opening set, neither team led by more than four points throughout the remainder of the match.

While LMU notched a 3-0 sweep, the second and third sets showed the level of competition fans can expect to see in the WCC for the remainder of the season.



Senior outside hitter Lauren Corp recorded 12 kills and 10 digs in the loss.



Junior outside hitter Jordan Shaw had eight kills and nine digs.

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