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Saint Mary's Basketball Second in WCC Fan-favorite Paul McCoy makes SMC debut

By Simon Tryzna



Beau Levesque #15 had 20 points against USD and added 19 against Pepperdine. Photos Tod Fierner

When the West Coast Conference preseason coaches' poll came out, it might have been surprising to see the defending champion Gaels predicted to finish third. Midway through the season, the 6-1 Gaels are in second place behind Gonzaga and ahead of BYU.

After dismantling LMU in its WCC opener 74-61, the Gaels traveled to Spokane Jan. 10. Despite being down by 20 points, the Gaels managed to climb back into the game, and had a chance to tie it late, but ultimately lost by five, 83-78. After a slow start at BYU six days later, the Gaels tied the game late. BYU went up 69-67 with 2.5 second left in the game, but senior point guard Matthew Dellavedova silenced the home crowd with a forty-foot buzzer beater to give Saint Mary's the 70-69 win.

The Gaels played hardnosed defense the last thirty minutes of the BYU game, which allowed them to come back and win.

"We have been working on that for a while, and we weren't making much progress," said head coach Randy Bennett. "Sometimes it takes a little while for it to transfer into games."

The improvement in defense allowed the Gaels to blow out Portland, 60-38, on the road Jan. 19. The win marked Portland native, senior guard Paul McCoy's first Saint Mary's game. He transferred to SMC prior to the 2010-2011 season, after injuring his knee at Southern Methodist University. Following a mandatory redshirt year, McCoy suffered a second ACL tear and missed all of last season as well.

"I've been here three years with him and it's so great to finally see a guy who worked so hard to get into a game," said sophomore center Brad Waldow.

While in previous years Saint Mary's had trouble with San Diego, such was not the case Jan. 24. Led by junior forward Beau Levesque and a strong defensive effort, the Gaels built up a 42-19 lead and never looked back, winning 81-48. With chants of "We want Paul!" ringing in McKeon Pavilion, McCoy finally made his home debut, logging 10 minutes.

"Paul is a high level competitor, tremendous athlete" said Bennett. "He hasn't gotten a chance to show it and now we all get to see him play. People will love him because of how hard he plays."

Two days after dominating USD, the Gaels were challenged by visiting Pepperdine. The Waves were able to keep pace with the Gaels throughout the majority of the first half until Saint Mary's made a late push and took a nine point lead into halftime, before pulling out an 84-72 win.

Levesque was once more the center piece of the offense, scoring 19 in the game. After the game he deflected all the praise to Dellavedova, who had a remarkable 21 assists with zero turnovers in the two home games.

"It's all because of #4 [Dellavedova] creating plays," said Levesque. "It starts with him and we just try to help him out. It's great to play with such a great leader and a great point guard."

The Gaels travel across the Bay to San Francisco Jan. 30 before hosting Portland Feb. 2. After two road games against Santa Clara and San Diego, Saint Mary's hosts Gonzaga in a Valentine's Day match-up that will likely be one of the biggest home games of the year.



Paul McCoy #2 logged 10 minutes against USD in his home debut. He had two steals, two points, and three rebounds.

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