

Published February 13th, 2013

Gaels Down Cougars for Second Place in WCC

By Simon Tryzna



Kate Gaze #10 hit critical baskets late in the game to help secure the win. Photos Tod Fierner

However, behind a barrage of three pointers and strong defense of their own, the Cougars quickly responded with a 17-2 run and took a 30-28 to halftime.

"BYU is a very, very tough defensive team, and they made us struggle," said Thomas.

After Stephanie Seaborn gave the Cougars a 36-31 lead with 17-minutes remaining in the game, the Gaels raised their intensity and their shots began to fall. After a pair of baskets by her teammates, Gaze hit her first shot of the game to give Saint Mary's a 37-36 lead. BYU and Saint Mary's would trade baskets from there on out, with BYU tying the game at 45-45 with seven minutes remaining.

Following a Jackie Nared basket, Gaze hit a big three from the corner to push the lead to five. A few possessions later, with the lead still at five, Gaze hit another three from the same place, this time with the shot clock running out and a hand in her face.

Despite starting the game 0-6 shooting, the Aussie guard hit her last three shots, with the last two propelling a 19-7 Gaels run to finish the game.

"I've been struggling a little bit, but my teammates are going to get me the ball and that's the main thing," said Gaze. "When those opportunities do arise down the stretch, you have to take them with confidence."

Gaze had 10 points in the effort. Junior forward Danielle Mauldin had 12 points and 10 rebounds off the bench. Senior guard Nared had nine points and nine rebounds.

Saint Mary's next travels to Spokane, kicking off a three game road trip for the Gaels. Following a showdown with the rival Zags on Thursday, the Gaels travel to Portland on Saturday before going to San Diego on Feb. 21.

"This is a tough stretch," said Thomas on the upcoming games. "We will see how tough this team is. We are going to have to play like we did today [vs. BYU] on the road."

Saint Mary's women's basketball fought for a huge win against BYU to secure second place in the WCC standings. The Gaels beat the visiting Cougars 64-52 on Feb. 9, setting up a big rematch at Gonzaga on Feb. 14 for a chance to share the top spot in the standings.

"Our team was motivated," said head coach Paul Thomas. "When our team is motivated, we can play very well. I felt that our team came out with a tremendous amount of energy, especially for a Saturday afternoon game."

After losing 66-58 in Provo on Jan. 31, the Gaels came back to Moraga with a focus on defense, and it played a huge part in the 58-53 win over Portland on Thursday. The same defensive intensity carried over to Saturday, as an improved effort in the second half allowed Saint Mary's to breakaway late and secure the much needed victory.

"When we played them last time, we were flat footed," said senior guard Kate Gaze. "To come out with the focus on defense put us in a great mindset offensively. We got a few shots and that gave us more flow on offense."

The great defense was shown in the first nine minutes of the game as Saint Mary's raced out to a 16-8 lead.



Jackie Nared had ten points.



Danielle Mauldin scored 12 points.

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