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WCC Co-Champions Prepare for WCC Tourney Tomorrow

By Michael Sakoda



Jenny Jullien

Saint Mary's women's tennis team enjoyed an impressive season and now gears up for the WCC tournament. The Gaels finished the season as co-WCC champions with Pepperdine and Santa Clara. It was the team's second WCC title in four years, and the second in school history (the first came in 2010).

Although finishing in a three-way tie, the Gaels No. 42 ranking will give them the top-seed and a two-round bye in the tournament, which begins on April 25 at the University of San Diego.

"We've put ourselves in a good position," said Saint Mary's coach Lisa Alipaz, looking ahead to the post-season. "We're the highest nationally ranked team in conference, so if there's a tie with records, it goes to national ranking."

The Gaels finish a regular season filled with "firsts" with a 12-8 overall record and a 7-1 conference record. Junior Jenny Jullien became the school's highest ranked player ever when she reached No. 18 in the country (she finished the season at No. 20), and the Gaels tallied their first win against a top ten opponent when they defeated No. 7 Stanford on February 16.

"It's been a bit of a rollercoaster," Alipaz said of the season. "We've had some amazing highs-the win over Stanford was probably the highlight of my career-and we've had some lows, but we've managed to stick together and find ways to get together. I think the best is yet to come for us."

The Gaels team wrapped up their impressive season on April 14, clinching a share of the WCC title, by defeating Loyola Marymount 4-3 in a nail biter.

Senior Catherine Isip and her partner, junior Audrey Leitz, were the only Gaels tandem to notch a win in doubles.

"It was tough watching courts one and three go down," Isip said. "But luckily my partner and I pulled it through." This was only the fifth match for Isip and Leitz as a pairing, but so far, the two have gone undefeated.

In singles, the Gaels showed their strength. Jullien recorded a 6-1, 6-1 win at number 1, while junior Jade Frampton earned a 6-1, 6-3 win at number 4.

Isip was the next to wrap up, and on Senior Day, she walked off the court a 7-6, 6-2 winner over. "I lost to (Parravi) last year," said Isip. "It felt really good to beat her."

But the match wasn't over. With the score tied 3-3, Isip's doubles partner had dropped her first set 4-6 on court six. While Isip and her teammates cheered her on, Leitz rallied, taking the second and third sets 6-2 and 6-3, winning the match, and clinching a share of the title for the Gaels.

"It's been an up and down season," Isip said after her last match at the Korth Tennis Complex. "It's bittersweet, but I couldn't have asked for a better ending. Seeing my doubles partner clinch for us, it was amazing."



Catherine Isip Photos Tod Fierner



Audrey Leitz Photo Tod Fierner

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