

Published September 10th, 2014

SMC Women's Soccer Looks to Improve

By Michael Sakoda



Caroline Beaulne has been a leader this season for the Gaels. Photos Tod Fierner

Among those returners are last season's All-WCC performers-juniors Caroline Beaulne and Cassidee Lynch.

"Cassidee's a leader on and off the field; she does things the way they're supposed to be done all the time," Edwards said. "Caroline is one of the best attacking players in the country; she has the ability to beat players one-on-one, and her technical talent makes it very hard for teams to defend her."

Beaulne said she's trying to shoulder some responsibility. "The All-WCC Honorable Mention last year motivates me a lot. I feel like I have to help lead my team," she said.

But this past weekend was a tough one for Saint Mary's, as they dropped a home game 0-4 to Cal last Friday, and a heartbreaker, 1-2 at Nevada on Sunday. Still, the 3-3 mark is a better pace than that of a year ago.

As the Gaels look to bounce back against Idaho this Friday, Edward's said the focus doesn't change. "Teams change; standards don't. We have prepared this week as we do every week, working as hard as we can and as smart as we can."

A player that will help keep the standards up this season is senior Vicki Shimkus, who fought through injury much of last season.

"Vicki will have a much greater statistical impact than she had last year," said Edwards. "She already has one goal, three assists, and there were two goals (at Oregon State) that her movement off the ball created."

As for the season, the team and coaches are set on making the NCAA tournament which they missed last year, after finishing with a 6-14 record (2-7 WCC; eighth in the conference).

"With the great start we've been motivated to keep going, to make it to the NCAA tournament and win as many games as possible," said Beaulne. "But we're going to have to work hard."

Edwards said if his team can finish in the top five of the WCC this year, making the tournament could be a very real possibility.

"Being fifth (in the WCC) would be a good natural progression from where we were, and it would put us in contention for the NCAA tournament," said Edwards. "It's something we have to go earn. Every game is a challenge, and no one's going to give us anything."

After a hot start, the Saint Mary's women's soccer team has suffered its first setback of the season—two consecutive losses.

The Gaels (3-3) opened their season with a pair of shutouts at home, besting Albany 2-0 on Aug. 22, and St. Joseph's 4-0 on Aug. 24. After faltering at Oregon 0-2 on Aug. 29, the team rallied, posting a 4-2 victory at Oregon State on Aug. 31.

"We showed a lot of character to come back and beat Oregon State," said head coach Kai Edwards. "We scored four goals on a Sunday, away, which is very difficult to do."

Part of the Gaels' early season success must be credited to the team's nine returning starters.

"We only have to teach a couple players our philosophies and our ideas, and that has allowed us to focus on refining and elevating the level of the kids who returned," said Edwards.



Vicki Shimkus has recorded one goal and three assists so far.



Julia McDonald Photo Tod Fierner

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