

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Matt O'Reilly – from Campolindo to Bucknell to Saint Mary's



Photos Jon Kingdon

Matt O'Reilly with his father, Robert, after the game.

By Jon Kingdon

On Dec. 19 the Saint Mary's basketball team defeated Bucknell 85-59. It was Coach Randy Bennett's 400th victory since becoming Saint Mary's head coach. The statistical highlights for the game included the Jordans, Ford and Hunter, scoring 28 and 15 points respectively, the Gaels shooting 55 percent as a team and outrebounding Bucknell 44 to 26.

However, the outcome of the game was not the top story of the evening. The top story was that this was to be the last game of former Campolindo student and Moraga resident Matt O'Reilly whose four-year career with Bucknell was ending prematurely due to a back injury. It was not a coincidence that O'Reilly was able to play in his hometown in front of family, friends and fans. This final game for O'Reilly was scheduled by Saint Mary's and Bucknell out of respect for O'Reilly and his family through the combined efforts of Bennett and Bucknell's head coach Nathan Davis.

The character and integrity of Bucknell's program were key factors for Bennett: "We always knew that Matt was at Bucknell and I was able to set up this game with Coach Davis. I have a great deal of respect for Bucknell. We have similar programs in that we have players that stay all four years and graduate. I have a lot of respect for them. It was very classy of them to start Matt for the first time tonight."

O'Reilly, who lettered every season but had only appeared sparingly in two games this season, appreciated how special this game was: "It was an amazing evening. It was everything I wanted it to be, to have my family, friends and loved ones here at the game. I knew that Coach Davis and Coach Bennett were working on having us play at Saint Mary's and that was just

awesome."

O'Reilly, who will be graduating with a degree in history and economics, made the Patriot League Academic Honor Roll four straight years. The weather was the main adjustment for O'Reilly: "When it started snowing and kept snowing, that's when I was most homesick." The academics were not as trying for O'Reilly, which he attributes to his excellent preparation in high school: "Campolindo was an amazing school. I was at ease with the academic work at Bucknell and what the professors expected of me. I had an awesome time at Bucknell. The school was great and it was great to be part of a team that had such success and always worked so hard. After graduation, I plan to return to the Bay Area and work in San Francisco in some type of business.

O'Reilly's father, Robert, who played basketball at Princeton, and his mother Sophia made two to three trips a year to watch Matt play. O'Reilly much appreciated that it was just a short drive to his son Matt: "The closest Bucknell had come to the Bay Area had been when they played once in Las Vegas. We had over 250 people that came out tonight specifically to see Matt close out his career."

Jon Terry, the director of Athletic Communications for Bucknell, said the game was a benefit to Bucknell because they originally were scheduled to travel directly to Hawaii for a tournament: "This worked out very well for us. To be able to play Saint Mary's and then leave the next day was far more appealing than flying nonstop from Pennsylvania to Hawaii."

O'Reilly will still be on the roster for the rest of the season, attending and possibly dressing for the games and practices, says Terry: "Matt is still technically eligible to play but it's just very, very doubtful unless his back miraculously feels better."



O'Reilly speaks with family and friends after the game.



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