

20th win for Saint Mary's in dominating San Diego, 86-57



Photo SMC Athletics / Tod Fierner

Logan Johnson (0) with assistant coach Justin Joyner (center) and head coach Randy Bennett (right).

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When a team's record is 10-3, most coaches are loath to make any changes. Bennett was pleased with the way his offense and defense was playing but felt the need to make a change at guard after that 13th game, starting freshman Augustus Marciulionis and

bringing senior Tommy Kuhse in off the bench, a decision he put a lot of thought into.

"I found that when we started the game with Johnson and Kuhse the ball stuck in their hands because they're both guys that try to make plays and they're good at it, but things could get stagnant. Augustus is more of a pass first point guard and is a very

good defender. If I were to start Kuhse, I might not get to Augustus who needs the minutes to develop. He is really developing, and we are moving the ball better. It also helps that we have a nice scoring punch with Kuhse coming off the bench and it's worked out well. When the change was made, Tommy came to me and said 'Coach if

you think this is going to help us, I'm all in.' That's how he approached it."

It has also helped that the team is scoring six points a game more than last year and has improved their overall shooting percentage from 42.2% to 46.5% and connecting on 35.6% of their 3-point shots after shooting 29.4% last season. Kuhse, in particular, has improved his 3-point shooting percentage from 27.5% to 45.1%.

"A lot of Tommy's improvement came from having a good spring, summer and fall practicing in the gym and working on his mechanics," Assistant coach Mickey McConnell said. "The improvement of the entire team is due in part to having a number of players back that were injured last year. Our shot selection has also been better. Last year with Alex Ducas and Leemet Bockler out, we started to press. This year, we've told the players to take the open shots when you get them. We have a lot of confidence in our players, and they've done a great job in sharing the ball."

The adversity of battling through all the injuries last season has proven to be a positive factor on this year's team. "Last year we scrapped out the majority of our wins,"

Johnson said. "This year we're putting more points on the board and we're still scrapping. You may have an open shot, but we'll still be looking to find someone who has a more open shot. We've taken the right steps, getting everyone involved offensively and knowing our defensive assignments each game has allowed us to keep growing."

Senior Matthias Tass (12.8) and junior Alex Ducas (11.0) have been the team's leading scorers and keys in the overall play of the team. "Ducas and Tass both really stepped up this year. We've been able to use them in different ways, lining them up in the post and playing off them and then our guards can off-penetrate. The players are really unselfish and have really gotten comfortable with their roles and in sharing the ball. Dan Fotu is playing a short role this year but still is an unbelievable teammate. The players have figured out their roles offensively, cut down on their turnovers and started shooting it better. We had a breakthrough confidence wise and had a better idea of what we wanted to do since the early season Maui tournament."

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