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Tom Gieryng, owner and operator

Saint Mary's rugby team

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"We did a lot of nice things today on defense," O'Brien said. "The guys had the defensive mindset of just wanting to get up and get out there and get the body profile right. We did create a lot of turnovers, but we also had a few big misses on defense due to our over aggressiveness."

The offense was led by juniors Inoke Waqavesi and Karl Keane. "We had our share of missed opportunities but Inoke and Karl both had good games and Karl was just a fraction away from being pulled," O'Brien said.

After a final score by Saint Mary's to close out the scoring, O'Brien could not restrain his satisfaction at defeating a program like Cal after their early season loss: "Every time you're playing rugby, you learn something. That's the beauty of the sport. We need more games like this where there's a big disparity in the talent levels in our programs, but I love the competition and what Cal has done for the college game. We need more rivalries like this. Every player on Cal is one of the top players in the country and we're like the island of misfit toys but we just find a way to get it done. We've had every kid come to practice for the last two weeks during the breaks when other people went away. We always expect to be playing in the last week of the season and we've done all the right things to be here, so we're not shy to say it."

The Gaels will be in Houston next Saturday to take on Army for the national championship, but O'Brien allowed himself to enjoy the victory over Cal for a little bit longer: "I'm not sure how we're going to address Army, but I'll start looking at film when I get home."

Since O'Brien became the head coach at Saint Mary's in 2007, they've had a run of success that can stand up against the top teams in any sport and the results speak for themselves:

2007-08 National semi-finals, ranked No. 2; 2011-12 - Undeclared season up to national semifinals;

2012-13 Lost in national finals; 2013-14 National champions; 2014-15 National champions; 2016-17 National champions; 2018-19 Undeclared, no playoffs; 2019-20 Undeclared, no playoffs; 2020-21 Undeclared, no playoffs; 2021-22 Heading to the national finals.

For Marty Storti, the assistant vice president for club athletics and revenue at Saint Mary's, the formula for the success of the rugby team is simple: "Unlike at a school like California, where rugby is a varsity sport with all of its advantages and resources, at Saint Mary's, we just happen to have a great coach and passionate players that are willing to put in the time and effort to learn the game and play it in a dynamic way. The fact that most of the funds that go into the rugby program (\$300,000 to \$400,000) are raised with the very generous help of our alumni groups makes the success of the program all the more impressive."

For Storti, it's much more than talent that has elevated the program at Saint Mary's. "We have great players but it's the culture that O'Brien has created and developed that is very supportive and encouraging for leadership. It's being held accountable by your peers and it has proven to be extremely successful," Storti said. "The amount of time and effort that he has the players studying the game, watching the game and his design of a physical offensive and defensive attack have all contributed to the success of the team. We have a culture that supports that style, taking the higher risk on offense that is harder to defend and that is really making a difference."

In the end what O'Brien feels makes his teams so successful is that they are just that: a team. "We don't recruit. We just have boys that come out in September, wearing a white T-shirt that has their name on it and off we go. Everybody practices and trains together and they all understand each other's position and profile and what their assignments are. We're pretty much all in and it's a pleasure to be a part of it."

Broad smiles greet Brook Street Park



Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

Zinab Lagab celebrates the Lafayette airport-themed Brook Street Park with her children.

toddler and a first-grader, Robbie Peacock says he's relieved that the park has reopened. "During the pandemic it was a lot of sitting inside trying to find something to do so they didn't drive me crazy. It's a place to come and play and burn off energy," Peacock says. "Jack runs into a lot of his friends from LES here. Oliver is making friends. It's great because everybody gets to hang out. Even parents get a chance to talk to each other."

Scott Tanenbaum, a retired educator, might have outgrown the playground decades ago, but he says he'll never outgrow the park. He and his 13-year-old golden retriever, Katie, often take in the morning excitement as families rush their children to school. "This is a place that gets people out of their homes so they can see who their neighbors are."

Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan helped cut the ribbon for the park's official opening. For Bauer-Kahan, investing in parks is a way to invest in healthy, accessible and inclusive communities. "It's so important to give kids a place to play together to move their bodies, play and learn to work together, to use their imaginations and to become the kind of adults we hope they can grow into," Bauer-Kahan says. And parks that are accessible to people of all ability levels and centrally located do play an important role in building inclusive communities that are environmentally friendly. "It's critical that we have parks in communities that people can walk to."

Jay Lifson from the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce has many fond memories of the park when it had a pirate theme and was also known as the Pirate Park. Even though his grandson has outgrown the park, Lifson says he's happy to see the new iteration of the park - Airport Park - come to life. "We needed this park in the downtown area so badly," Lifson says. "They've done a beautiful job laying it out and it will be a great place for years to come."

Service Clubs Announcements

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary

Every Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m.
Lafayette Veterans Memorial Building
OR Zoom Link at <https://lamorindasunrise.org/speakers>

May 2022 Weekly Speakers

6: Dennis Fay, Mayor of Orinda
13: Scarlett Hawkins, Peace Scholar - Quarterly World of Rotary
20: Brian Donohue, Social Determinants of Health
27: Eydis Lima, Odyssey to Freedom:

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She recalls joining the commission because there was just one baby swing in all of Lafayette, which was at the community center. "There was nowhere for a young mother, a nanny or a babysitter to take their kid and swing (in downtown Lafayette) and now we have four," Herpich says. "Just to see a family swinging together and hearing children's laughter makes four long years worth it."

Herpich's own child, Connor, appreciates the park and even helped with the ribbon cutting, but Herpich believes the park is vital for all children in the community, especially those in dense housing units. "People don't realize how many people don't have backyards. We have a lot of people who live in apartment buildings who do not have places for their kids to go outside and play. That made the last two years really hard. I hope this rectifies that."

As a longtime Lafayette resident and the parent of a



Mike Rosa

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