

SPORTS

LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Saint Mary's Men's Basketball Season Preview

By Mikaela Cowles



Ian O'Leary (4) screams in excitement to teammate Diamon Simpson Photo Tod Fierner

At 7 am on Monday morning, the Saint Mary's men's basketball team is not tucked in their beds. Rather, they are in the gym getting ready for the upcoming season.

"There are higher expectations (this season) from the media and polls that might be a little unrealistic," head coach Randy Bennett says.

Realistic or not, the Gaels graduated only two seniors and return with their top three scorers, including 2008 Olympian Patrick Mills.

figures they posted last season. However, Bennett says that the team has "a lot of guys who are capable of scoring as well. They have to take on other roles, though, because not everyone can be a scorer."

With players such as Ian O'Leary, who averaged 7.6 points per game and shot 43 percent from the field, and Wayne Hunter, who averaged 8.8 points per game, the Gaels can certainly keep their options open. With the addition to the roster of transfer Ben Allen from Indiana, who is now eligible, the Gaels gain a 6'11" force in the center.

Coach Bennett's defensive strategy will remain the same, but his offense will make small, yet decisive changes. He plans to keep the free flow offense for which he is so well-known. In addition, he says there will be more half court sets now that he has a better grasp on how his players like to score. In tight games, such as their 88-76 loss at Gonzaga last year, quick hits will make a huge difference, giving the Gaels a better opportunity to get the bucket they want when they want it.

Catch the men at their season opener on November 14th at 7 PM in McKeon Pavilion when play Seattle Pacific, to see if they live up to the hype.

"The talent this year is as high as it's ever been. We have huge strengths in our depth and our experience," Bennett says.

Mills returns leading the team with an average of 14.8 points, 3.4 assists and 1.7 steals per game during the 2007-2008 SMC season. Leading the scoring charge beside him are Diamon Simpson and Omar Samhan, who both averaged double digits in points per game last year and together brought down an average of 16.9 rebounds per game.

Mills, Simpson and Samhan draw a lot of attention due to the

Mills Impresses at Olympics

By Mikaela Cowles



Patrick Mills this October Photo Tod Fierner

Patrick Mills turned heads with his 2008 Olympic performance, averaging a team best of 14.2 points per game while coming off the bench for each competition. He also posted 2.1 rebounds, 2 assists, 1.7 steals and 23 minutes on average to help the Australian Olympic team achieve a 3-3 record.

As the only collegiate basketball player competing in the Olympics, Mills scored an individual tournament high of 22 points against Argentina. Most memorable for Mills, however, was not his outstanding performance but fulfilling what he describes as his "ultimate dream goal, to wear my country's colors and represent

them." Mills says he was completely surprised to be chosen for the team. "I never thought I would be. It wasn't until I was back there, went through camp and sat down with the coach, and he told me I had a good chance, that I really thought it could happen."

A surprise for Mills was a logical conclusion for Saint Mary's head coach Randy Bennett. "After the season he gave us, I couldn't see it not happening. There just aren't two point guards in Australia who are better," he says.

What was a shock, said Bennett, was just how successful Mills was. However, with Mills' humble attitude and

what he calls his "taking it one day at a time" outlook on his basketball career, his success should have come as little surprise.

Mills is not only Australia's youngest basketball player ever to compete in the Olympics, but also the country's most successful one with an indigenous background. Mills said his background heightened his experience because he is able to provide an important role model for the indigenous community.

He hopes that "being seen in the community and schools, where I can meet kids and they can meet me, will help them believe in the success they can have on the basketball court. If I can give them tips and let them see that they can make it, then hopefully they will try."

The upcoming season for the Saint Mary's Gaels brings much promise for the success of the team, and Mills as well. He believes the lessons he learned at the Olympics will help him immensely in his upcoming season.

"Our captain (Matt Nielson) was an amazing leader. I learned so much from him about how to lead the team," Mills says.

Catch this phenomenal young man as he once again dons Saint Mary's red and blue and looks to lead the Gaels in another successful season.

SMC Men Drop Double Overtime Soccer Match

By Kevin D. Shallat



Bryan VanDoorninck (10) Photo Tod Fierner

Sunday, Nov. 9 marked the beginning of a final three game home stand for the Saint Mary's men's soccer team as they played host to the University of San Francisco. Despite the Gaels 3-3-3 WCC record going into this match, they have showed that they can compete with the best teams in the league. The Gaels were able to split wins against a league leading San Diego team this year.

Sunday they looked to establish themselves as a real threat in the conference with a chance to knock off the second place San Francisco Dons. The Gaels came close, as they were able to keep the Dons scoreless in regulation and overtime. However, they were unable to stop the Dons from knocking in a goal in double-overtime to lose the match 1-0.

On a brisk day game at Saint Mary's Stadium that saw more of the moon than the sun, neither team could muster enough offensive power to generate any goals in regulation.

Saint Mary's goalkeeper Jason Badger established his dominance both with his play and with his voice. The talented keeper was as vocal as possible, acting as another coach on the field for the Gaels. Several times his instructions saved his team from touching the ball before it went out of bounds and

losing possession in key moments of the match. Badger finished the game with 12 saves on the day.

Unfortunately for the Gaels, Badger could only do so much as a protector of the goal. Saint Mary's struggled mightily to establish an offensive rhythm. The Gaels successfully set up their offense from

mid-field, but were unable to pass the ball effectively near the San Francisco goal.

Despite San Francisco's 13-3 advantage in shots on goal, the Gaels did a good job in keeping the Dons scoreless for roughly 99 minutes. Both Corey Heldreth and Scott Eberhardt played a solid defensive game for Saint Mary's. For most of the game, the Gaels were able to shut down Conor Chinn, San Francisco's star player.

With 17 minutes remaining in the second half, the Gaels had their best opportunity to score in the game. After Dominic Smith met the San Francisco goalkeeper head on, his shot was deflected to a wide-open Yousef Samy. With San Francisco's goalkeeper out of position, Samy had an opportunity to take a long distance shot for the Gaels. As the crowd stood on its feet in anticipation of a goal, the shot sailed wide right for the mid-fielder. Samy led the Gaels with two shots on the day.

In double overtime, Chinn finally struck for a goal in the 100th minute of play for his eighth goal in nine games. Chinn took a one-timer from the cross from teammate Justin Kendro. Chinn's shot hit the far right upper corner of the goal to end the game. With the loss, the Gaels move to 4-9-4 (3-4-3WCC), and the Dons improve to 8-8-2 (6-3-1WCC).



Jared Medina (6) Photo Tod Fierner

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SMC Gaels Home Games	
Fri, Nov 14 Men's Soccer Portland Saint Mary's Stadium	2:00 PM
Fri, Nov 14 Men's Basketball Seattle Pacific Moraga (McKeon Pavilion)	7:05 PM
Sun, Nov 16 Men's Soccer Gonzaga Saint Mary's Stadium	1:00 PM
Mon, Nov 17 Men's Basketball Fresno State Moraga (McKeon Pavilion)	11:00 PM
Sun, Nov 23 Men's Basketball Vanguard Moraga (McKeon Pavilion)	4:05 PM
Fri, Nov 28 Women's Basketball La Salle Moraga, CA	7:00 PM
Sat, Nov 29 Women's Basketball Indiana or Radford Moraga, CA	7:00 PM
Sat, Dec 6 Women's Basketball UC Davis Moraga, CA	2:00 PM

For complete schedule go to: <http://www.smcgaels.com>

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