# SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS











**By Bryant West** 

# Last Season's Success Leaves SMC Men's Soccer Hungry for More

Justin Girder (15) was named WCC Defensive Player of the Year last season.

Photo Tod Fierner Adam Cooper acknowledged that ast year was an historic season for the Saint Mary's men's one of the team's biggest weaknesses is inexperience – 15 Gaels were not soccer team – a second place finish on the team last year – he said that in the West Coast Conference and the team expects to return to the 10 wins led them to the program's NCAA Tournament this winter. first appearance in the NCAA tour-Cooper was named WCC nament. All this success came in a Coach of the Year last season after conference that finished fourth out

And while Gaels Head Coach

of 23 in the nation and had four

squads make the big dance.

peat the experience. "I think we got a taste of the tournament and that made us hungry to get back and really push to go further and do better. We've got to do the little things that will get us back there."

On September 3, Saint Mary's started the season in the right direction. The Gaels hosted the Saint Mary's Tournament and won their own show after a 0-0 tie against CS Fullerton and 3-2 victory over #9 Northwestern. While Saint Mary's and University of San Francisco both finished with 1-0-1 records in the tournament, the Gaels took the crown with more goals scored.

Sunday's win over Northwestern really was, as Cooper called it, a "tale of two halves." The Gaels scored all three of their goals in the first 18 minutes of the contest – junior Tom Mohoric, sophomore Jose Cabeza and sophomore Trevor Newquist each scored as the Saint Mary's energy powered past the lackluster Northwestern performance. Northwestern made a run in the second half – scoring twice and threatening late to tie - but the Gaels' defense stepped up and prevented a meltdown against the ninth ranked team in the nation.

"We've got a lot of young guys," Cooper said after the game.

"This year, we've got fifteen new players so incorporating them with the returning guys is one of our biggest priorities and the guys have done very well at adjusting so far."

But while the large number of newcomers is a weakness, Cooper says the veterans of the team are the Gaels' greatest strength. Four players received WCC Honors last season, including junior Justin Grider (Defensive Player of the Year and All WCC first team), senior Dylan Leslie (All WCC first team), Cabeza and Newquist (both All Freshmen Team) – and the experience will help the newcomers.

The Gaels were picked fourth in the WCC Coaches Poll before the season, earning one first place poll and finishing behind Loyola Marymount, Portland and San Diego. Portland is currently ranked 16th in the NSCAA/Adidas Division I Rankings with Loyola Marymount and Saint Mary's both receiving votes. But with the strength of the returners, Cooper has high hopes for another historical season. "It's like a shark sniffing the blood in the water," he said. "They sniffed it, they got a taste, and they want more."

Saint Mary's defeated #19 Cal Berkeley 2-1 on September 10 in double-overtime.



## **New MCC Club Champion**

the Gaels historic run, and said the

tournament appearance last year

makes his players determined to re-



Jerry Isaacs (left) took second place and Tom Tyson finished first in the MCC Golf Club Championship. Photo C. Tyson

Surprising even themselves, first and second place finishers Tom Tyson and Jerry Isaacs beat out a field of younger competitors to take the top spots at the Moraga Country Club Championship.

"Who would have thought

the gray-haired guys were winners?" said Jerry Isaacs. "I haven't had this much fun since my honeymoon." Isaacs will be celebrating his sixtieth birthday in two weeks; Tyson describes himself as a "highmileage" fifty-one-year-old.

## Lamorinda Girls Hit the Trail

Submitted by Roxiene Maisano



he Contra Costa chapter of Girls on the Run (GOTR) moves to Tice Valley Community Park and will begin its season on September 20.

GOTR is a non-competitive, curriculum-based program dedicated to educating and building confidence in girls in the third through fifth grade. Participants meet twice a week for a total of 20 lessons. The girls improve their fitness while learning life lessons that prepare them to navigate the often difficult pre-teen years. Each season culminates in the Lollipop 5K run in Golden Gate Park, where participants from all GOTR Bay Area programs run with a designated "running buddy."

Last spring, a Lafayette third grader came in first out of 400 runners.

To find out more, visit www.gotrbayarea.org.

## Splashball - A First in Northern California

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"Having little kids play Splashball is a wonderful way for them to learn to love the game, while having fun and strengthening their swimming skills," says Brown. "Fifteen or twenty different skills can be taught at this level," he adds, "like handling skills, shooting, catching, and passing." Kim Everist, the Campolindo girls' water polo coach who is working with the program, says that Splashball is also a good way to introduce kids to a team sport in a recreational environment.

"When I grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana, we had three sports to choose from, and two of them were football," says Chris Cooper, who now lives in a much closer Lafayette. "Our kids are so lucky to have so much to choose from," he says, adding that his six-year old son, Warren, loves Splashball. "What better thing could you do on a hot Sunday afternoon?" asks Cooper.

Four coaches and eight assistants are in the pool with the children at all times. Recent Cal graduate Heather Stewart is one of the coaches. "It is so much fun to teach the little ones," she says, "the ratio of coaches/assistants to players is over 1 to 4; we want this to be safe." The sport is played in a shallow pool and the children sit on Swim Noodles. Stewart adds that she is amazed at how much enthusiasm the kids have. "They play at 120%," she

Cooper believes, "By the time the Splashball players reach the first level in water polo at age ten, they will definitely have an

The Splashball season runs through November 7th and new players are still being accepted. Register at Moraga Parks and Rec, http://moraga.ca.us/production/moraga parks recreation.ph p. Lachance says LWP plans to offer Splashball again in 2011 with spring, summer and fall seasons. For more information about LWP go to http://www.lamorindawaterpolo.org/.

Send sports stories and ideas to: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

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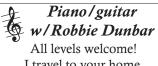
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