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## Saint Mary's Women Hold onto Fourth Place in WCC

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Morgan Hatten #24 Photo Tod Fierner

After losing back-to-back games for the first time this season, the Saint Mary's women's basketball team got back on track with two straight wins.

The Gaels bounced back from tough losses to nationally-recognized opponents Gonzaga and Brigham Young with a 75-58 win over Portland at home last Thursday and a 57-47 win against rivals Santa Clara on Saturday.

The Gaels (18-8 overall, 9-4 WCC) sit in fourth place in the WCC, one game behind third place San Diego, who they face on February 23.

"They understand. They knew tonight was an important game," said Saint Mary's head coach Paul Thomas after the win against Portland. "They know the rest of our games our important because it's going to have some bearing on our West Coast Conference standings."

Saint Mary's junior guard Morgan Hatten had a double-double, scoring a career-high 15 points, while grabbing 10 rebounds, and sophomore forward Danielle Mauldin added 13 points and nine rebounds to lead the Gaels to victory over the last-place Pilots (8-17, 1-10).

"[Hatten] was extremely focused tonight, very much in rhythm," said Thomas. "I think that had a lot to do with her focus and her mental approach to the game and her teammates did a great job of finding her."

Senior guard Jasmine Smith and sophomore guard Jackie Nared also scored in double figures with 11 points each.

"Today we all came together and everyone contributed," said Hatten. "I think that's what we need to continue to do to win out the rest of our games."

In the first half, Saint Mary's shot 62 percent and out-rebounded the Pilots 22-9. Leading by 20 points at halftime, the Gaels finished the game with 52.3 percent shooting. Saint Mary's out-rebounded the Pilots 39-28, while forcing them to turn over the ball 18 times.

"The team did an exceptional job of executing the game plan," said Thomas. "We didn't want them to get off and shoot a bunch of threes, and get a lot of early clean looks and our team did a fantastic job of not letting them do that."

Two days later in Santa Clara, the Gaels once again had a strong defensive performance, while out-rebounding the Broncos 57-23. Nared led the team with a double-double, scoring 16 points and nabbing 14 rebounds. Mauldin added 10 points.

Just like in the previous game against Portland, the Gaels limited their opponents to only nine rebounds in the first half, going into halftime with a 36-20 lead.

The Gaels extended their lead immediately after the halftime interval, leading 45-24 at the first timeout in the second half. The Broncos (10-15, 3-9) scored the last seven points of the game, but it was too little of an effort to surmount the massive deficit.

Saint Mary's will close out their home schedule Saturday against Loyola Marymount.

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