

Keelhaulers Plunder Tobacco Road

Cal Maritime goes 3 – 1 at 20th Tarheel Invitational

The Cal Maritime Women's Water Polo team made an historic first trip outside the state of California this week-end, as they traveled to the University of North Carolina to participate in the 20th Annual Tarheel Invitational. It turns out that the trip wasn't the only history making event of the weekend for the Keelhaulers.

Facing four teams that they had never seen before, Maritime notched three wins while dominating their opponents. The average margin of victory for the wins was 7 goals. The Keelhaulers, by far the smallest team at the tournament with only eight players, showcased their experience and conditioning by dominating the second half of each game.

Facing Virginia Tech in the very first game of the tournament, CMA got started in a hurry, jumping out to a 4 – 1 lead in the first quarter behind goals from Kristen Swader (JR, Ojai, CA), Megan Braun (JR, San Bernardino, CA), Rachel Holder (FR, San Diego, CA), and Valerie Potts (FR, Pinole, CA). The Hokies were never able to get close, as Maritime kept up the assault the rest of the way to a 13 – 4 win. It was the largest margin of victory for the Keelhaulers in their short 2 year existence. Braun lead all scorers with 5 goals, while Swader and Potts found the back of the cage three times each.

The second game featured a very physical and tough match against Florida State Univeristy. The Seminoles feature two former Division I players who provided quite a challenge to CMA. According to Coach Timm Torchiana "our defense was outstanding against FSU. We neutralized their best player to the point that she was out of the game by the end of the third quarter. We are not a physical team at all, but we were able to hang with them all the way. I was very pleased with everyone's effort." Kristen Swader led Maritime with 2 goals in the 6 – 4 loss.

With a 1 – 1 record on the first day, the Keelhaulers found themselves in the semi-finals of the Consolation Bracket versus James Madison University. The first half of the game was a very competitive back and forth contest, with neither team being able to gain any momentum or advantage. Maritime led 3 – 2 at the end of the first quarter, and 5 – 4 at the end of the second. The second half was a different story. Maritime outscored the Dukes 4 – 1 to take a 9 – 5 lead into the fourth quarter and that was the end of any serious challenge to the lead. The Keelhaulers added four more goals in the fourth quarter to win the game going away 13 – 5. Kristen Swader had her best game of the year with six goals. Megan Braun contributed four, while Rachel Holder added two and Valerie Potts chipped in one.

The win put the team in the Consolation Final where they faced Emory University. The Atlanta school provided yet another first-half battle for Maritime. The teams traded goals

in the first half, with CMA holding onto a 4 – 3 at the half. After Emory tied the game at 4 at the 4:20 mark, the Keelhaulers scored two unanswered goals to take a 6 – 4 lead at the end of the third quarter, and effectively knocked Emory out of the game. Maritime went on to add two goals in the fourth for an 8 – 4 win. Swader again led the charge with four goals, while Braun added a pair, and Lila Schwarzbach and Shireen Blau added one each. It was Blau’s first goal of the season.

For Coach Torchiana, the trip justified his belief in the ability of his team. “We’re in a tough spot in California, with so many great teams. On any given week, and National Top 20 is dominated by teams from California (and since March 5, 2008, that has also included CMA).” “The trip gave us a chance to see how we stack up against teams from other parts of the country and overall I’d say we stack up pretty well. I hope that the trip will give us a little boost in the rankings.”

Notes from the trip: The team had a chance to visit the campuses of both Duke University and UNC. They also visited the state capitol, and had real, authentic North Carolina BBQ for dinner at Allen and Son, a legendary local landmark. Cary Family YMCA graciously offered use of their pool so that the team could swim on Thursday and Friday. During their visit on the UNC campus, the team took pictures at the Old Well. The Old Well is the symbol of the University of North Carolina, and was the site of a well that provided drinking water to the campus for almost 100 years. The students raised almost the entire cost of the trip through a series of fundraisers during the school year.

About the team: The Keelhaulers only won two games all of last year, so going 3 – 1 over the week-end was quite an accomplishment...Maritime wraps up the season in a few weeks, playing host to Sonoma State on Friday, April 4th at 500p, visiting UC Santa Cruz on Sunday, April 6th for a 200p game; and hosting the Sierra Pacific Conference finals on Saturday and Sunday, April 12 – 13....Saturday April 5th is Play-Day, as the team hosts Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Solano County for a play day and BBQ at the pool. Last year’s event was a big hit for all involved, and this year promises to be even better.

About Cal Maritime:...Cal Maritime is a campus of the California State University system, located in Vallejo, CA. The school has an enrollment of 700 students, of which only 120 are female.

About the program:...This is the second year of the program. The team competes in the Collegiate Water Polo Association, the governing body for over 260 collegiate water polo teams. In 2007, co-captain Kristen Swader was named to the CWPA All-America team. Swader and co-captain Megan Braun were both named Player of the Week in 2007. Braun has also earned a Player of the Week award in 2008.