

Saints Women Have Stellar ‘Rebuilding’ Season

A review of the 2009-10 Women’s Basketball campaign.

The Saints had some large shoes to fill from the 2008-09 team when they lost nearly 50% of the minutes and more than 50% of the points to three graduating seniors who had combined to start eight seasons among them. The team had to replace a lot of experience, and had a thin roster to do so with little experience. Throw in a new coaching staff, and the team had a lot to overcome heading into the season. The Liberty League pre-season poll had the Saints picked sixth in the eight team league.



But what a year it was! Even though three of their starters had never started a college game before, and a fourth who had only started five games, the Saints surprised everyone with a final record of 18-7, and a second place Liberty League finish with a record of 10-4. They won 9 of their last 10 regular season games and once again played in a Liberty League playoff game. Sophomore Casey Capello was named to the Liberty League First Team and sophomore Katie Edgerton was named to the Honorable Mention Team. With all starters returning for next season, the future looks bright for the Saints!



St. Lawrence started off well, going 6-1 before Christmas, including a huge win at Ithaca College, a team who ended up as the top ranked team in the East Region and eventually went to the NCAA National Tournament with a 21-4 record.

They also won the RIT Women’s Basketball Tournament by defeating SUNY-Brockport in the opening round and host Rochester Institute of Technology in the championship. The Saints were finding themselves, as new players adapted to new roles and significant playing time, and even starters had to adapt to new positions and roles on the team. In addition, the whole team was adapting to a new style of play on both ends of the court and a new coaching staff.



Head Coach Dan Roiger said this about the early season schedule, “We won a lot of close games during that stretch. It was a real credit to our players that we were able to make plays near the end of games and find a way to win. At the same time, we weren’t playing well at that time but there was a tremendous growth curve in our play as we kept learning and learning. We had a lot of players finding out what it took to be college basketball players, and they were improving rapidly.”

After the new year, the Saints went to Williamsport , PA to play in the Lycoming Tournament. They again won both games in the tournament, playing one of their best games of the year in the final game against Misericordia College. “That’s where our defense grew up,” said Coach Roiger. “We saw what we were capable of

when we played with intensity and mental focus while executing our game plan. We began to see the future of what our team’s personality would become as the season advanced.”

The Saints had to face another hurdle though as they dropped their next three games and four of the next five as they started off Liberty League play with a 1-3 record. After starting off 8-1, the Saints were now 9-5 and things looked a little bleak. It seemed like every game they would play well in one phase of the game but break down in another. “We still didn’t have a level of consistency to be successful most of the time,” explained Coach Roiger, “and our shooting was very poor during that stretch. But I give our players a lot of credit because they just kept working hard in practice and believing, and ultimately were rewarded for their efforts.”

The Saints then won nine of the next ten games, and it all started with a victory at Skidmore. The Saints were the only team in the Liberty League to defeat Skidmore all regular season, and they did it twice. The first time was at Skidmore, and after a slow start, the Saints finished on a 23-8 run to end the first half with a 27-20 lead. They then used a huge run in the second half, at one point leading 64-33 to pull off an upset.

However, despite playing better against Skidmore and in splitting their next two home games, the Saints finished the first half of the conference season with a 3-4 record.



But the second half was where the Saints came into their own. They ran the table the second time through the conference schedule, going a perfect 7-0 with four of the wins coming on the road. They defeated Clarkson at home before heading to Vassar College and RPI. They dominated those two road games, winning 64-39 and 62-38 against two teams that had beaten them at home. They followed that up with a double overtime road victory over Hamilton College, another team that had beaten the Saints at home in the first round, and then closed out their road schedule with a victory at William Smith College.

Those four road wins saw the Saints go from tied for fourth place to second place, and they returned home for their final two games, the first against Skidmore, who now came in with an 11-1 record. In an exciting game that saw two teams play outstanding defense, it was the Saints who had the final run, scoring twice in the last 28 seconds to break a tie and win by four points. On Senior Day and the final regular season game, the Saints completed their second half sweep with a win over Union College.

“It was a great second half of the conference season!” exclaimed Coach Roiger. “It was a real test for us to see if we were improving and we did a great job of demonstrating that we were getting better and better.” When he was asked what the most important factor was in the team’s success, Coach Roiger went on to explain, “We played great defense during those seven games. We were able to be more intense out on the floor and played with a high degree of mental toughness. Our players executed the game plan and were able to quickly make defensive adjustments during the game.”

In those seven games, the Saints kept every team in the Liberty League to fewer than their season average except Hamilton, who beat their average by one point but needed two overtimes to do it. In the second half of the conference schedule, the Saints gave up less than 50 points per game, and finished second in the league overall in defense while also leading the league in offense.





The Saints headed to the playoffs and lost a game to eventual champion RPI. The Saints were competitive, trailing by just a point with five minutes to play, but couldn't make plays to pull out the win. "That was a disappointing loss. We played nervous in that game and had some opportunities to make plays, but just weren't able to do so," Coach Roiger said. "But that itself is a growth opportunity, and if we can get there next year then we will have gained that playoff experience."

The Saints will return all five starters next year and will probably not be the sixth pick in the preseason poll next season! There is a lot to look forward to if you are a Saints fan! "It was a great season in the sense of laying the foundation for future success," said Coach Roiger. "Even though it was a great year, we have a lot more to do to become a great team." He went on to add that the team developed the necessary skills to continue to show improvement such as work ethic, team chemistry, and a commitment to success of the program. "Some players have a commitment to be on a college team. But what we really want are players who have a commitment to be on a successful college team."

Coach Roiger believes the Saints have a solid recruiting class coming in next year. "We will add some athleticism, height, and depth that should allow us to have more competitive practices next year. That will help our team improve but we really need our players to develop more and better skills also, especially in the area of shooting. If our players buy into that, and have the commitment to follow through with it, then I think we can look forward to another good season."

It's a pretty good sign of the strength of the Saints Women's Basketball program when a 'rebuilding' season concludes with 18 wins and a second place finish in the Liberty League! The solid season by the Saints casts a bright light on the future!

