Senior guard Rachelle Rogers and the Gauchos could not find a way to extend their Big West regular season winning streak to 50 games.

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A Perfect Circle played in the Thunderdome on Friday night, hours before the Gauchos took over their own stage against Cal Poly.

Santa Barbara took a step closer to perfection, dribbling the Mustangs 95-88 for their fifth straight victory. UCSB made an astounding 74 percent of their shots in the first half and finished the evening engulfing the nets with flames for a 67.4 shooting percentage in the game.

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Cal Poly (8-13, 2-8 in the Big West) found its rhythm and break the Gauchos' 95-88 victory Saturday night in the T-dome for their fifth-straight win.

Freshman forward Casey Cook leaps head-and-shoulders above every Mustang defender during the Gauchos' 95-88 victory Saturday night in the T-dome for their fifth-straight win.

Gauchos Ride Mustangs

By ELAY APPELBAUM
Staff Writer

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"We're shooting the ball really well," UCSB Head Coach Bob Williams said. "I'm really pleased with the rhythm of our shooting."

Cal Poly (8-13, 2-8 in the Big West) found its shot was more frigid than an ice-cream, checking the ball at a frigid 29 percent. The Mustangs, who fell behind by as many as 22 points yet came within two points during the second half, could never get over the hump of their horrendous shooting.

"[Our shooting] really killed us," said Cal Poly freshman guard Jamaal Scott, who led his team with 21 points. "We shot 29 percent. That's the game right there. If we make some shots, it's a different game."

Sophomore forward Mark Hull drilled a career-high 31 points on 9-14 shooting from the field and a perfect 11-11 from the charity stripe for the Gauchos (10-11, 7-4). Hull found his stroke late in the first half after freshman forward Branduin Pollowe and junior power forward Mike Vukovich provided the bulk of the offensive early.

I found myself a little bit more open [later in the half]," Hull said. "I had a few more open looks and a lot of our game plans are just trying to make plays and draw defenders out to me."

Pollowe and Vukovich combined for 7-7 shooting in the first half, and they both shot 4-5 from the field. Pollowe finished with 14 points and five assists. Vukovich ended his night on the bench, but not before going out with nine points and three pivotal blocks.

Yet it was Hull spraying jumpers everywhere, dismantling Cal Poly at critical points in the game. Hull scored 10 of Santa Barbara's 12 points at the end of the first half, finishing the half with butter rolling from his fingers after connecting on 5-5 shots in the first 20 minutes of action. Hull continued his rampage in the second half, scoring 16 points.

"This was as aggressive as I've seen Mark in both halves of the game," Williams said. "He was more aggressive and more determined to create turnovers offensively.

The Gauchos opened up a 17-5 lead on a rimmed out a 17-5 lead on a rimming jumper at the buzzer to give the Gauchos a 39-31 halftime lead. Despite being down eight at the half, UCSB was confident to take control by running off nine straight points. Mustang guard Odessa Jenkins nailed a jumper at the buzzer to give the Mustangs a 39-31 halftime lead.

At that point Cal Poly seemed to be a daze at the start of the second half. The Gauchos coughed up the ball 28 times in the game all season, appeared to be in a daze at the start of the second half. Turning the ball over on countless possessions. The Gauchos coughed up the ball 28 times in the game, compared to only 19 by Cal Poly.

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Nevertheless, UCSB was on the verge of a comeback when senior forward Nicole Greathouse hit a short hook to pull Santa Barbara within three, 48-45. But Cal Poly responded with a 6-0 run to reclaim a nine-point lead, 56-47, midway through the period.

With its winning streak on the line, UCSB cut the deficit down to eight on sophomore point guard Deddy Caine's three-pointers. Momentum seemed to swing to Santa Barbara, but Greathouse, who finished with a game-high 17 points, threw the ball away on consecutive possessions, failing another golden opportunity for the Gauchos.

Following the turnovers, the Mustangs took their largest lead of the night at 66-53 on senior guard Jennifer Sorosky's three throws with three and a half minutes remaining in the contest.

Santa Barbara made one final gasp, cutting the Mustang lead to six with 25 seconds left to play. UCSC was forced to foul, and Cal Poly made its free throws.

The Gauchos are now left scratching their heads about the loss and must regroup before facing Irvine on Wednesday at the Thunderdome. But junior forward Kayte Christensen says that the team will not have trouble bouncing back from the loss, and that the defeat could serve as a valuable learning experience.

"The loss was a huge eye opener," Christensen said. "It showed us that we can't mess around, but I expect everyone to come out and prove it to ourselves and our coaches that we can play better. I'm just glad that we lost now instead of in the Big West Tournament."

Everyone knew that the UC Santa Barbara women's basketball team could not keep its conference winning streak going forever.

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