Written by Mike Kelly
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The Lees-McRae College men's volleyball team posted 10 service aces and a hitting percentage of .410 en route to a straight set sweep of Belmont Abbey College in Conference Carolinas play on Thursday evening in Williams Gymnasium.

Lees-McRae (3-2, 3-2 CC) won the match by scores of 25-19, 25-13, and 25-14, holding Belmont Abbey (4-4, 1-4 CC) to an attacking percentage of .000 while recording 41 kills, 32 digs, and eight blocks.

John Lucas (Cincinnati, Ohio) led the way for Lees-McRae with a match-high nine kills, adding a .368 hitting percentage as Matt Harpenau (Cincinnati, Ohio) added eight smashes, a contest-best three blocks and a .500 clip on the attack.

Sam Sheers (Centerville, Ohio) chipped in a strong performance with seven kills on 10 swings without an error, as Brady Markle (York, Pa.) and Joshua Jones (Christmas, Fla.) each posted six smashes. Efrain Negron (Caguas, Puerto Rico) recorded a match-high 14 digs, while Randy Ramirez (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) and Drew Blecher (York, Pa.) tallied 23 and 14 assists, respectively.

Evan Young paced the Crusaders with seven kills, while Derek Sullivan and Aaron DeKalb added 16 assists and 11 digs, respectively. Griffin O'Camb chipped in six kills, while Nolan Albrecht posted five smashes of his own.

The Bobcats jumped out to a 14-5 lead in the first set, opening the nine-point margin following back-to-back-to-back kills from Lucas, Markle and Harpenau before Belmont Abbey answered with a 5-0 spurt to close the gap to 14-10. Lees-McRae countered with a 9-6 run, pushing the advantage to 23-16 on a block by Lucas and Harpenau before Markle capped the set with an emphatic smash.

Lees-McRae carried the momentum into the second frame, opening the set with a 9-4 run before stretching the lead to 14-7 following a service ace by Javier Jimenez (San Sebastian, Puerto Rico). The Bobcats would then close out the set with an 11-6 spurt, taking a commanding 2-0 lead in the match on a Harpenau smash to cap the 25-13 second-set victory.

Harpenau and the Bobcats continued to dictate play in the early moments of the third, taking a 4-1 lead on back-to-back aces from the junior middle blocker before pushing the advantage to 14-6 following a Sheers smash. The Bobcats would close out the set and the match from there, capping the frame with a 9-5 run to claim the victory on back-to-back kills from Sheers.

Lees-McRae returns to the court on Friday when the Bobcats host Limestone College in conference play at 7 p.m. in Williams Gymnasium.

Photo Courtesy: John Lucas, LMC Athletics