Written by Whitney Noble
Monday, 11 February 2013 07:34

The Lees-McRae College men's volleyball team rallied from a 24-22 deficit and fought off five set points in the fourth set to defeat Saint Francis University, 3-1, in non-conference action on Sunday afternoon.

Lees-McRae (7-3) won the match by scores of 25-16, 25-22, 20-25, and 33-31, outlasting Saint Francis (4-8) while holding the Red Flash to a .138 hitting percentage in the contest. The Bobcats hit .237 in the match, including a blistering .636 clip in the first set, while recording 50 kills, 35 digs, and 14 blocks.

Joshua Jones (Christmas, Fla.), Brady Markle (York, Pa.) and Matt Harpenau (Cincinnati, Ohio) each recorded eight kills in the match, while Javier Jimenez (San Sebastian, Puerto Rico) and Jose Ribas (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) both added seven smashes.

Randy Ramirez (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) chipped in match-highs of 36 assists and three service aces, as Jones and Ramirez posted seven and six block assists, respectively. Efrain Negron (Caguas, Puerto Rico) recorded a match-high nine digs for the Bobcats.

Logan Patterson led the way for Saint Francis with a match-high 17 kills, as Colin Sherwin added 15 smashes of his own. Adam Roche chipped in nine kills, as Mike Kresch posted 34 assists.

Lees-McRae started off strong, opening the match with an 11-5 run before pushing the advantage to 22-14 on a Jimenez smash. The Bobcats would then tally three of the final five points in the set, taking a 1-0 lead in the match following a Red Flash miscue.

The Bobcats carried the momentum into the second frame, opening the set with a 16-8 run that was capped by back-to-back aces from Jones. Saint Francis battled back, answering with a 12-5 surge to close the gap to 21-20 following a block by Roche and Kresch. Lees-McRae countered with a 4-2 spurt, taking a commanding 2-0 advantage in the match on a stuff by Jones and John Lucas (Cincinnati, Ohio).

Saint Francis responded in the third, claiming a 19-13 lead on the heels of a 9-4 run that was capped by a block from Sherwin and Mark Kochan. The Bobcats would answer with a 5-4 spurt, trimming the margin to 23-18 before the Red Flash halved the match-lead to 2-1 following a Bobcat miscue.

Lees-McRae countered quickly in the fourth set, opening the frame with a 7-2 run before Saint Francis cut the lead to 12-10 following a Kochan service ace. The Bobcats would counter with a 4-2 spurt, stretching the margin to 16-12 on a Ribas kill.

Saint Francis answered once again with an 8-4 run, evening the tally at 20-20 on back-to-back kills by Sherwin before pushing the Bobcats to set point at 24-22 following a Patterson ace.

The Bobcats battled back, fighting off five set points before tying the score at 29-29 on a kill by Jones. Lees-McRae's hard work would be rewarded a few moments later, when Jones delivered an emphatic smash and Markle recorded a textbook solo block to claim the set and the match for the Bobcats.

Lees-McRae returns to the court on Friday when the Bobcats host Washington Adventist University and the University of Puerto Rico – Mayaguez at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., respectively, in Williams Gymnasium.

Photo Courtesy: John Lucas, LMC Athletics