

## Belmont Abbey Weathers Late Bobcat Rally

Written by Whitney Noble

Sunday, 24 February 2013 09:02

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Junior Layana De Souza (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) tallied game-highs of 23 points and eight assists to pace the Lees-McRae College women's basketball team as Belmont Abbey College held off a late Bobcat rally en route to a 66-63 victory in

Conference Carolinas on Saturday evening in Williams Gymnasium.

Belmont Abbey (12-12, 11-9 CC) shot 41.9 percent from the floor in the contest, including a 48.1 percent clip in the first half, as Lees-McRae (9-14, 7-13 CC) posted a field goal percentage of 42.3 percent on the night. The Bobcats won the battle on the glass by a 37-33 margin, including a 25-20 advantage on the defensive boards, as the Abbey posted 14 second-chance points off of 13 offensive rebounds.

De Souza led the way for Lees-McRae with a game-high 23 points, going 8-for-9 from the floor and 6-for-6 at the free throw line, while grabbing five boards and dishing out a contest-best eight assists. Lauren Lewis (Concord, N.C.) added 13 points, as Kerri Belcher (Roanoke, Va.) and Kabrina Truesdale (Wilmington, N.C.) each added nine markers. Belcher chipped in a game-high eight boards, while Alyssa Munson (Summerfield, N.C.) and Truesdale both grabbed seven rebounds.

Kelsey Long paced the Abbey with 23 points on 8-of-17 shooting, dishing out five assists, as McKenzie Owen and Morgan Midkiff each added 13 markers. Candace Fox posted seven assists, while Melisa Foures and Owen both grabbed a team-high seven boards.

Lees-McRae jumped out to an early 12-6 lead before the Abbey responded with a 22-5 run, claiming a 28-17 advantage on a Long jumper with 4:19 left in the first half. After the Bobcats countered with a 4-0 spurt, Owen knocked down a late jump shot to send Belmont Abbey into the intermission with a 30-21 lead.

The Abbey carried the momentum into the second half, opening the period with a 16-9 run to push the advantage to 46-30 following a Midkiff triple with 12:51 to go. Lees-McRae battled back, cutting the lead to 57-52 with a 22-11 run that was capped by a Lewis jumper at the 5:19 mark.

After Long countered with a pair of freebies to widen the gap to 59-52, the Bobcats responded with a 9-4 run, evening the tally at 61-61 when Lewis knocked down a clutch three-pointer with 1:33 to play. Midkiff answered quickly with a triple of her own, giving the Abbey a 64-61 advantage at the 1:10 mark.

De Souza countered with a smooth layup to cut the lead to 64-63 with 21 seconds left, before Long converted a pair of free throws four ticks later to equal the final margin of 66-63.

Lees-McRae returns to the court on Tuesday when the Bobcats travel to Tigerville, S.C. to take on North Greenville University at 5:30 p.m. in league play.

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### **Belmont Abbey Hands Bobcats Fifth Straight Loss**

Belmont Abbey exploded for 54 points in the first half and cruised home by knocking off Lees-McRae 92-65 Saturday at Williams Gymnasium in Banner Elk, N.C. Jay Council led three players in double figures with 24 points. Tyshawn Good of Belmont Abbey (19-7 overall; 12-6 Conference Carolinas) added 21 points.

Di Brown was the only player for LMC (2-22; 2-16) in double figures. He finished with 13 points. The Bobcats only shot 37% from the floor and were out-rebounded 53-36. Daniel Sepokas finished with a season-low three points; Asad Lamot had four points. The Bobcats, mired in a five-game losing streak, travel to North Greenville Tuesday night.

**Photo Courtesy: Layana De Souza, LMC Athletics**