

Ribas, Jimenez Pace Bobcats In Sweep Of Crusaders

Written by Whitney Noble
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Jose Ribas (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) and Javier Jimenez (San Sebastian, Puerto Rico) combined for 29 kills to lead the Lees-McRae College men's volleyball team to a straight-set victory over Belmont Abbey College in the quarterfinal round of the Conference Carolinas Tournament on Saturday evening in Williams Gymnasium. Lees-McRae (18-12) won the match by scores of 26-24, 25-23, and 26-24, posting a .277 hitting percentage as Belmont Abbey (11-20) attacked at a .267 clip in the contest. The Bobcats posted 44 kills and five blocks on the night, as the Crusaders recorded 39 smashes and four stuffs.

Ribas led the way for Lees-McRae with 15 kills on 28 attempts, attacking at a .393 clip, as Jimenez posted 14 smashes and an even hitting percentage of .500. Randy Ramirez (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) added six digs and a match-high 37 assists, while Efrain Negrón (Caguas, Puerto Rico) chipped in squad-best seven digs. John Lucas (Cincinnati, Ohio) and Matt Harpenau (Cincinnati, Ohio) each posted three block assists for the Bobcats.

Griffin O'Camb paced the Abbey with 12 kills and a .435 hitting percentage, as Nolan Albrecht and Brandon Kimbrell added nine and eight smashes, respectively. Aaron DeKalb posted a match-high 11 digs, while Derek Sullivan chipped in 31 assists. Antony Koyfman tallied a contest-best four blocks (one solo, three assists).

Belmont Abbey started off strong, opening an early 6-3 lead in the first set before the Bobcats responded, cutting the advantage to 13-12 with a 9-7 run that was capped by a Jimenez smash. The Crusaders would answer with a 9-6 spurt, opening a 22-18 margin following a Koyfman ace.

After Belmont Abbey pushed the Bobcats to set point at 24-21 with a Kimbrell smash, Lees-McRae answered with five straight markers, claiming the frame and a 1-0 lead in the match on a heads-up kill by Ramirez. The Bobcats carried the momentum into the second set, taking an early 7-4 lead following a smash by Lucas. After Belmont Abbey cut the advantage to 12-10 on an Albrecht kill, Lees-McRae answered with a 10-5 run, pushing the margin to 22-15. The Crusaders would storm back with an 8-2 spurt, fighting off five set points before Ribas quelled the rally, capping the frame with an emphatic smash to give the Bobcats a commanding 2-0 lead in the match. Belmont Abbey responded in the early moments of the third set, taking a 13-9 advantage on a block by Albrecht and Koyfman before the Bobcats answered with an 11-7 run, evening the tally at 20-20 following three straight kills by Ribas.

After the Crusaders countered with a Koyfman smash to reclaim the advantage, Lees-McRae answered with a 3-0 spurt, taking a 23-21 lead on a kill by Houston Callaway (Thurmond, N.C.). The Abbey fought back with a 3-1 run of its own, knotting the score at 24-24 following a kill from O'Camb before the Bobcats responded, closing out the set and the match with back-to-back points, including a smash by Jimenez.

Lees-McRae returns to the court on Wednesday when the Bobcats travel to Misenheimer, N.C. to take on second-seeded Pfeiffer University in the semifinal round of the Conference Carolinas Tournament at 7 p.m. The teams split the regular season series, each winning on their home court.

Photo Courtesy: Jose Ribas, LMC Athletics