

Pioneers force 2-2 draw with Bobcats

Written by LMC Sports Information
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The Lees-McRae College men's soccer team battled to a 2-2 draw with Tusculum College after two periods of extra time on Tuesday night, nearly ending proceedings on several occasions as the contest ended in a deadlock.

Lees-McRae (4-2-1) edged Tusculum (0-6-1) by a 15-13 margin in attempts on goal in the match, including a 3-1 advantage in extra time, as the Pioneers were forced to play a man short for the final 46 minutes of the contest.

Senior David Palmer (South Shields, England) and freshman Preston Shahdad (Charlotte, N.C.) tallied the goals for Lees-McRae on the night, as Luke Duffy (Wakefield, England) added an assist. Sophomore Thomas Rusling (Sheffield, England) made four key saves on the night for the Bobcats.

Sophomore Mason Fox and freshman Stephen McNeill provided the goals for Tusculum, as rookie Adam Kulbat notched a pair of assists to pace the Pioneers. Junior goalkeeper Andy Goellner made six saves, including several clutch stops, between the pipes to propel Tusculum to the draw.

The sides remained deadlocked at 0-0 through the first 45 minutes of play, with action confined to midfield for much of the half as the teams combined for six shots, including four attempts on frame by the Pioneers.

Palmer broke the deadlock just over one minute into the second half, receiving a long ball from Duffy and after treading his way into the area, left the Tusculum keeper rooted to his spot with a masterful curling finish into the far top corner to give Lees-McRae a 1-0 lead.

The Bobcats nearly doubled the advantage late in the 64th minute, when Luke Staats (Almere, Netherlands) sent a free kick just high of the bar from 23 yards distance after Scott Hudgins (Fort Myers, Fla.) was pulled down on a breakaway. Tusculum pulled level midway through the 63rd minute, when Kulbat threaded a pass through to Fox, putting the sophomore forward in perfect position to slot the finish through the Bobcat keeper's legs to knot the score at 1-1.

The entire complexion of the match seemed to change midway through the 65th minute, when Tusculum's Javier Portillo was sent off for a harsh challenge on the Bobcats' Ryan Gillespie (Holly Springs, N.C.) just past midfield, leaving the Pioneers with 10 men on the pitch for the remainder of the match.

Lees-McRae took full advantage in the 67th minute, when Shahdad delivered a highlight reel finish off the far post with a high looping shot from 35 yards distance to reclaim the one-goal lead for the Bobcats. Tusculum leveled proceedings once again in the 74th minute, when Kulbat pulled it off the end line and centered to McNeil in the six-yard box, leaving his teammate with an easy finish to knot the score at 2-2.

Staats nearly delivered the winner from the spot with just under two minutes left in regulation time, but was denied by the woodwork, sending the match into extra time knotted at 2-2.

Freshmen Scott Alford (Hillsborough, N.C.) and Andrew Shoemaker (Cary, N.C.) were denied by the woodwork in the first period of extra time, each missing an open net with the chance to send the Bobcats through to victory.

The Bobcats continued to press the attack in the second extra time period, sending a trio of splendid scoring chances on frame, only to be denied by Goellner. The junior netminder made

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perhaps his best save of the match at the death, denying a glorious chance by Palmer to preserve the deadlock.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Saturday when the Bobcats travel Misenheimer, N.C. to take on Pfeiffer University in Conference Carolinas play at 4 p.m.