

Bobcats Oust Trojans, 3-2 In OT

Written by Staff Reports

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Freshman James Smith (Eastbourne, England) scored midway through the 110th minute to lead the sixth-seeded Lees-McRae College men's soccer team to a 3-2 extra time win over third-seeded Anderson University in the opening round of the NCAA Division II men's soccer championship on Wednesday afternoon.

Lees-McRae (15-5-1) avenges a 4-0 setback at the hands of Anderson (17-4) earlier this season, advancing to the second round of the NCAA Tournament for the first time since the Bobcats' magical run to the national final in 2009. Anderson outshot the Bobcats by a 16-8 margin on the afternoon, including a 6-2 advantage in the second half, in a physical match that featured 32 fouls and six cautions.

Smith, James Galvani (High Wycombe, England), and Ryan Gillespie (Holly Springs, N.C.) each found the back of the net for the Bobcats, while TC Stephens (Fuquay-Varina, N.C.) added an assist. Thomas Rusling (Sheffield, England) played the full match between the pipes for the Bobcats, making five saves.

Kevin Butler and Ben Jones each tallied a goal for Anderson, as Ryan Messick and Jones both notched an assist.

Galvani got the Bobcats off to a flying start in the 16th minute, scoring from 15 yards out on a breakaway following a well-placed through ball from Stephens to give the Bobcats an early 1-0 lead. Gillespie doubled the advantage to 2-0 in the 32nd minute, slotting home the finish off a blocked free kick from 20 yards distance to send Lees-McRae into the interval with a two-goal lead.

Anderson came out of the interval hungry, halving the margin less than two minutes into the second half when Butler nodded home a corner from Jones to pull the Trojans back to within one at 2-1. Jones added the equalizer just before the 58-minute mark, heading in a cross from Messick to even the tally at 2-2 and level proceedings.

The match remained deadlocked through the remainder of regulation, with Anderson controlling the run of play with a narrow 3-1 advantage in shots over the final half hour. Anderson would outshoot the Bobcats by a 4-1 margin over the initial nine minutes of the first extra time period, before Smith found the back of the net with his fifth goal of the season at the 99:21 mark to send Lees-McRae into the second round.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Friday when the Bobcats travel to Hartsville, S.C. to take on No. 10 and second-seeded Flagler College in the second round of the NCAA Tournament at 4:30 p.m. on the campus of Coker College.