

Bobcats Set New Standard of Excellence

Written by Staff Reports

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The Lees-McRae College women's volleyball program has enjoyed a tremendous amount of success over the last three seasons, capturing both the Conference Carolinas regular season and tournament championship in each of those campaigns to mark one of the most successful

three-year periods in school history.

Lees-McRae continued to build on that success this fall, posting its second consecutive undefeated season in conference play to capture the program's 13th league title. The Bobcats have not lost a conference tilt dating back to the 2009 season, establishing a league-record 49-match winning streak in that span.

The Bobcats have excelled under the tutelage of head coach Wes Schneider, who arrived on the LMC campus prior to the 2009 season. With Schneider's help, the Bobcats have posted an impressive 81-23 record over the last three seasons, advancing to the NCAA Tournament in each of those campaigns as Schneider was honored as the Conference Carolinas Coach of the Year this fall.

Lees-McRae has featured some outstanding student-athletes over the past three seasons, including two-time Conference Carolinas Player of the Year Whitney Justice, who was also honored as a member of the AVCA NCAA Division II All-America team in 2009. The Connelly Springs, N.C. native established several program records over her tenure with the Bobcats, becoming the school's all-time kills leader as a senior in 2010.

The 2011 Bobcats posted the third undefeated conference record in school history, running the table in league play while featuring a balanced attack led by senior outside hitter Megan Epperson (St. John, Ind.), junior outside hitter Taylor Clendenin (Statesville, N.C.), and junior setter Megan Mitchell (Minden, Nev.).

Epperson capped a tremendous four-year career with a record-breaking season, eclipsing Justice's all-time kills mark while becoming the first player in program history to tally at least 1,000 kills and 1,000 digs in her career. The 2008 Conference Carolinas Freshman of the Year concludes her career as the program's all-time leader in kills (1,479), service aces (168), digs (1,237), and points (1,808.5).

The 2010 season saw the Bobcats post the second undefeated conference record in the program's history and the third since the formation of the league, as Lees-McRae went 18-0 against conference opponents en route to the school's 12th league title. Lees-McRae also captured the conference tournament title in 2010, advancing to the NCAA Tournament for the 11th time in school history while posting an overall record of 25-8.

Several Bobcats earned individual recognition during the 2010 campaign, including Justice, who was named the Conference Carolinas Player of the Year for the second straight season while also garnering the league's scholar athlete honors. Justice, Epperson and Mitchell each earned a spot on the all-conference first team, while sophomore Dana Oliver (Davie, Fla.) received a nod to the third team.

Lees-McRae put together one of the best seasons in program history in 2009, advancing to the NCAA Tournament after claiming both the conference's regular season and tournament titles. The Bobcats posted a 29-6 record that season, while nearly running the table in conference play with a 17-1 mark against league opponents.

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Justice headlined the awards season in 2009 for the Bobcats, garnering AVCA All-America honors for the first time in her career. The 6-0 middle blocker also earned the conference's player of the year honors in addition to a spot on both the AVCA and Daktronics all-Southeast Region teams. Freshman Luana Rocha was named to the AVCA all-Southeast Region First team, while also earning the program's fourth Conference Carolinas Freshman of the Year honors.