

Allen Signs With Bobcats

Written by Randy Broadwater
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Norton senior Erica Allen signed a National Letter of Intent to continue her academic and athletic career at Lees-McRae College. Allen will be playing soccer for the Bobcats while pursuing a degree in

Athletic Training. She chose Lees-McRae over other schools such as the University of Akron, Kent State University, Western Carolina and Catawba College after meeting Bobcats' coach Cally Morrill at a soccer camp she was attending at Western Carolina University.

"We were able to meet Erica last summer during a camp our coaching staff was working and Erica was attending. It was here that we had the opportunity to get to know the quality of character and competitive nature Erica holds. She will be a great fit with our current team and we cannot wait to have her arrive in August for pre-season," Coach Morrill said.

A campus visit to the school nestled in the Allen headed for the mountains Blue Ridge Mountains in the town of Banner Elk, N.C. followed, which Allen described as "very welcoming". She was also impressed with her future teammates and coaches, noting that she felt comfortable there.

Erica has no problem with attending school over 440 miles from home.

"I don't mind it, I find it kind of exciting. It's something new," said Allen. Her parents, Brad and Darlene Allen, are also in favor of the choice with her mother noting, "It's a safe campus, I feel it's safer there than if she was going somewhere close like Kent or Akron."

Erica will receive a partial athletic and partial academic scholarship to attend Lees-McRae. According to Erica, her future coach said she has a good chance of stepping right in as a starter at the forward position.

Allen, who has had a highly successful career, garnering multiple league honors and was an All-District pick after a 10-6-1 season, said she will miss playing for her high school team and recalled her favorite moment with the Lady Panthers.

"It was my freshman year and we were playing Kent. I scored four goals and we won 4-3."

Erica's talents are not just limited to soccer. This past season she was the place-kicker for the Norton football team, but that aspect of her athletic career has ended since Lees-McRae does not field a team in the sport.

"We are very excited to add Erica to our 2012 freshmen class. She is a proven goal scorer and has the ability to find her way on the field early next fall. She's a versatile athlete and has played for one of the top club teams in the state of Ohio with the Internationals Soccer Club." said Coach Morrill.

Erica's high school coach, Chris Chapman also sees a bright future for the star forward.

"Erica has tremendous talent and a great knowledge of the game. With a little improvement of her work ethic, I have no doubt that she will excel at the collegiate level," Chapman said.

Lees-McRae is an NCAA Division II school and plays in the Conference Carolinas. Last season the Bobcats finished at 13-5-3 under second-year Coach Morrill, a University of Alabama graduate who started four years for the Crimson Tide.

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Photo Courtesy: Erica Allen, LMC Athletics