

Thornton, Ames Pace Bobcats

Written by Whitney Noble

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Sophomore forward Meagan Thornton (Millville, N.J.) scored midway through the 85th minute to notch her first goal of the season, and lead the Lees-McRae College women's soccer team to a 2-1 victory over Belmont Abbey College

in Conference Carolinas play on Wednesday afternoon. Lees-McRae (4-3-1, 3-1 CC) controlled the run of play for much of the match, outshooting Belmont Abbey (3-5, 2-1 CC) by an 18-6 margin, including a 13-2 advantage in the first half. The Bobcats also held a narrow 4-3 edge on corner kicks as Kaitlyn Briggs (Oviedo, Fla.) made three saves to record her 15th career victory, two shy of a tie for eighth on the program's all-time list.

Thornton and Molly Ames (Greensboro, N.C.) provided the offense for the Bobcats on the afternoon, each finding the back of the net as MaryBeth Sullivan (Greensboro, N.C.) tallied an assist. Sullivan paced Lees-McRae with four attempts at goal, and seven other Bobcats each took two shots.

Meghan Philip tallied the lone goal of the match for Belmont Abbey, capitalizing on her only shot of the afternoon as Ananada Gebreyesus paced the Abbey with two shots. Hannah Kohls made seven saves in the match for Belmont Abbey.

The Bobcats would push the tempo from start to finish, unleashing nine shots in the opening half hour, including a brilliant header by Sam Arendt (Franklinton, N.C.) that wrung off the woodwork in the 17th minute. Lees-McRae nearly took the early lead in the 42nd minute, when Ariana Smith's (Jackson, N.J.) attempt from the spot was denied by Kohls after the Abbey was issued a caution for a challenge in the area.

Ames would reward the Bobcats' first-half efforts three minutes later, snatching the breakthrough just before the interval with a text-book finish off a feed from Sullivan in the 45th minute. The strike, Ames' second of the season, gave the Bobcats a 1-0 advantage heading into the break.

The Bobcats maintained the one-goal margin throughout the first 40 minutes of the second half, relentlessly pushing forward in search of a second goal. Thornton would deliver the much sought after strike in the 85th minute, sending a brilliant finish into the back of the net from 20 yards out to give the Bobcats a 2-0 advantage.

Belmont Abbey countered four minutes later, halving the margin to 2-1 when Philip cleaned up a rebound and slotted it home from close range, cutting the lead to one goal with just over a minute remaining before full time. The Bobcats would hold on, denying the Crusaders a chance for an equalizer en route to their third conference win of the season.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Saturday when the Bobcats host Coker College in league play at 3 p.m. on Tate Field.

Strong Second Half Pushes Abbey Past Bobcats

The Belmont Abbey College men's soccer team broke a scoreless halftime deadlock with two goals in the second half Wednesday en route to a 2-0 victory over visiting Lees-McRae College in Conference Carolinas play.

Belmont Abbey (4-3, 2-1-1 CC) edged Lees-McRae (2-7, 1-2 CC) by an 11-8 margin in attempts at goal, including an 8-1 advantage in the second half after the Bobcats outshot the Abbey, 7-3, in the opening 45 minutes. Lees-McRae also held a narrow 8-6 advantage in corner kicks in the match.

Preston Shahdad (Charlotte, N.C.) paced the Bobcats with four attempts at goal, including two on frame, as James Galvani (High Wycombe, England) added two shots of his own. Thomas Rusling (Sheffield, England) made five saves for the Bobcats.

Jose Penalzoza and Declan McQuillan each found the back of the net for Belmont Abbey, as Ross Smith and Lucas Campoy both added an assist. McQuillan paced the Abbey with three shots, all on frame, while Phillip Bru made five saves to keep a clean sheet.

The Bobcats went on the attack fresh off the first whistle, forcing four saves from Bru in the opening half hour, including a pair of sensational stops on two Galvani efforts in the 25th and 29th minutes. McQuillan nearly gave Belmont Abbey the breakthrough in the 37th minute, only to be denied by Rusling as the junior goalkeeper made his first stop of the day to preserve the deadlock heading into the interval.

Belmont Abbey carried the momentum into the second half, snatching the breakthrough off McQuillan's foot in the closing moments of the 64th minute following a through ball from Smith. The Abbey would continue to press the attack over the next 20 minutes, forcing Rusling into back-to-back saves before Penalzoza doubled the advantage to 2-0 in the 83rd minute off a cross from Campoy.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Saturday when the Bobcats host Coker College in conference play at 5:30 p.m. on Tate Field.

Photo Courtesy: Meagan Thornton, LMC Athletics