

Galvani Lifts Bobcats Over Cobras

Written by Whitney Noble

Sunday, 30 September 2012 08:41

Junior James Galvani (High Wycombe, England) scored three and a half minutes into extra time to lead the Lees-McRae College men's soccer team to a hard-fought 1-0 victory over reigning Conference Carolinas champion Coker College

on Saturday evening at Tate Field. Lees-McRae (3-7, 2-2 CC) outshot Coker (5-3, 2-1 CC) by a 13-8 margin in the match, including a 7-2 advantage in the first half, in a hard-fought contest that featured strong midfield play and vigorous attacking spurts by both squads. Coker held a 10-6 advantage in corner kicks on the night, as the Cobras' James Sweeney and Lees-McRae's Thomas Rusling (Sheffield, England) combined for seven saves.

Galvani paced the Bobcats with his fourth goal of the season, as Rusling added his team-leading third assist of the campaign. Scott Alford (Hillsborough, N.C.) and Galvani each paced the Bobcats with three attempts at goal, while Preston Shahdad (Charlotte, N.C.) and James Smith (Eastbourne, England) both tallied two shots. Rusling recorded two saves to keep a clean sheet, posting his 12th career shutout.

Alan Cuevas and Carlos Recinos led the way for Coker with two shots each, as Sweeney made five saves between the pipes.

The Bobcats pressed the attack from the first whistle, outshooting Coker by a 7-2 margin in the opening half as Lees-McRae forced Sweeney to make three key saves in the initial 45 minutes. Smith nearly proved the breakthrough for the Bobcats in the ninth minute, eliciting a superb save from Sweeney.

The second half proved to be a tightly contested affair, with Coker edging Lees-McRae by a 6-4 margin in shots as the Cobras' Daniel Jackson nearly put his team in front with a fantastic effort in the 57th minute, only to see his chance denied by Rusling. After Cuevas elicited a superb save from Rusling in the 74th minute, Alford broke free for an unmarked header a minute later, sending the effort sailing just over the bar as the teams remained deadlocked at 0-0.

Andrew Shoemaker (Cary, N.C.) delivered the final chance of regulation in the 89th minute, launching the effort just wide of the woodwork to send the match into extra time. Alford nearly netted the winner in the 92nd minute, sending a free header toward the bottom corner that was poked just wide of the post by Sweeney.

Galvani broke the deadlock two minutes later, settling a long ball from Rusling in the area and delivering the decisive finish into the back of the net off a Cobra defender to give the Bobcats a pivotal 1-0 victory with his ninth career match-winner.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Thursday, October 4 when the Bobcats travel to Due West, S.C. to take on Erskine College in league play at 7 p.m.

Bobcats Blank Cobras, 2-0

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Freshmen Sarah Mahar (Jacksonville, Fla.) and Erica Allen (Norton, Ohio) each found the back of the net, and MaryBeth Sullivan (Greensboro, N.C.) added two assists to lead the Lees-McRae College women's soccer team to a 2-0 win over Coker College in Conference Carolinas play on Saturday afternoon at Tate Field.

Lees-McRae (5-3-1, 4-1 CC) controlled the pace of play for start to finish, outshooting Coker (3-7-1, 1-3 CC) by a 38-1 margin, including an 18-1 advantage in the first half to move into a three-way tie atop the league standings with Limestone College and Pfeiffer University. The Bobcats held an 8-1 advantage in corner kicks in the match, as Coker goalkeeper Lizz Morris made 20 saves in a strong performance for the Cobras.

Mahar and Allen each came off the bench to find the back of the net for the Bobcats, both tallying their third goal of the season as Sullivan tallied her team-leading fifth and sixth assists of the campaign.

Kaitlyn Briggs (Oviedo, Fla.) stopped the only shot she faced on the afternoon, recording her 10th career shutout. Mahar paced the Bobcats with nine shots, including seven on frame, as Mallory Overholt (Grand Bend, Ontario, Canada) and Meagan Thornton (Millville, N.J.) added six and five attempts on goal, respectively.

The match remained scoreless until the 33rd minute, when Sullivan crossed a ball into Mahar who delivered a textbook finish into the bottom corner, giving the Bobcats an early 1-0 lead with her third goal of the season. Allen doubled the advantage nine minutes later, tallying her third goal of the campaign off a cross from Sullivan in the 42nd minute to send the Bobcats into the interval with a 2-0 lead.

Lees-McRae would continue to press the attack in the second half, nearly extending the margin to 3-0 less than a minute into the period when Overholt's effort from 12 yards wrung off the bar. Thornton narrowly missed opening her account for the day in the 58th minute, sending a driving strike from 25 yards distance just past the top corner.

The Bobcats sent seven shots toward goal in the final 15 minutes of the match, including a pair of consecutive efforts from Ariana Smith (Jackson, N.J.) following a free kick in the 85th minute. Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Thursday, October 4 when the Bobcats travel to Due West, S.C. to take on Erskine College in league play at 5 p.m.

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Photo  **Courtesy: James Galvani, LMC Athletics**