

Mahar Powers Bobcats Over King

Written by Whitney Noble

Tuesday, 30 October 2012 04:53

Hurricane Sandy and near-blizzard conditions could not slow down the Lees-McRae College women's soccer team on Monday afternoon, as freshman Sarah Mahar (Jacksonville, Fla.) powered the top-seeded Bobcats to a 3-0 victory

over eighth-seeded King College with her first collegiate treble in the quarterfinal round of the Conference Carolinas Tournament on a snow-covered Tate Field.

Lees-McRae (12-5-1) controlled the run of play for much of the match, outshooting King (4-10-2) by a 39-5 margin as the two sides battled not only each other, but sub-freezing temperatures for 90 minutes.

Mahar paced the Bobcats with her first career hat trick, claiming the team-lead with her seventh, eighth, and ninth goals of the campaign. MaryBeth Sullivan (Greensboro, N.C.), Ally Titsworth (Holmes Beach, Fla.), and Rachael Nobbs (North Charleston, S.C.) all tallied an assist in the match, as Alicia Pierson (Brooksville, Fla.) and Kaitlyn Briggs (Oviedo, Fla.) each played a half to combine for a clean sheet.

Morgan Lawson turned in a strong performance between the pipes for the Tornado, making 12 saves. Jamie Grigsby paced King with two shots, both on frame, as Rachel Thorpe sent an attempt of her own at goal.

Lees-McRae got off to a flying start in the second minute, when a loose ball off a Kaitlyn Kerrigan (Lakewood Ranch, Fla.) corner fell to Mahar just inside the area, putting the freshman in perfect position to send a skillful finish inside the near post to give the Bobcats an early 1-0 advantage.

The Tornado nearly leveled in the 28th minute, when Grigsby played a ball over the top of the line for Thorpe, who's settling attempt took an unlucky bounce in the waiting arms of Pierson just outside the six-yard box.

Lees-McRae came within inches of doubling the advantage early in the 36th minute, when Sullivan played the ball in behind to Sam Arendt (Franklinton, N.C.), who beat the keeper and sent the finish just wide of the woodwork from 12 yards out.

The Bobcats carried the one-goal advantage and the momentum into the second half, forcing a trio of early saves by Lawson before Mahar pushed the lead to 2-0 midway through the 59th minute. Titsworth started the play near the halfway line, playing the ball to Sullivan on the flank who then curled a cross into the area that was punched clear by Lawson. The clearing effort would fall to Mahar at the top of the 18, where the freshman forward settled and delivered a clinical strike into the bottom corner.

Titsworth nearly found the back of the net herself two minutes later, ringing the bar from distance with her second shot of the half. Lawson kept the Tornado in the match with several saves over the next 20 minutes, making six saves in that span before Mahar completed the treble in the 84th minute, slamming home the rebound off a shot by Nobbs to equal the final margin of 3-0.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Thursday when the Bobcats host fourth-seeded Pfeiffer University in the semifinal round of the conference tournament at 4 p.m. on Tate Field.

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Photo Courtesy: Sarah Mahar, LMC Athletics