

Bobcats Hold Off Highlanders In Four Sets

Written by Whitney Noble

Friday, 08 February 2013 07:52

Sophomore Joshua Jones (Christmas, Fla.) tallied eight kills and a match-high 10 blocks to lead the Lees-McRae College men's volleyball team to a 3-1 victory over New Jersey Institute of Technology in non-conference play on Thursday

evening. Lees-McRae (6-3) won the match by scores of 25-20, 25-12, 22-25, and 25-15, posting a .214 hitting percentage while limiting NJIT (2-7) to a .100 clip on the attack. The Bobcats tallied 14 blocks in the contest, while also recording 34 digs and 10 service aces.

Jones paced the Bobcats with eight kills on 14 swings, failing to record an error while posting a .571 clip on the attack. Javier Jimenez (San Sebastian, Puerto Rico) and Jose Ribas (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) added seven kills each, as Jones and Ribas posted 10 and seven blocks, respectively.

Ribas chipped in a match-high eight digs, while Jimenez, Efrain Negrón (Caguas, Puerto Rico) and Randy Ramirez (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) each dug out seven NJIT attacks. John Lucas (Cincinnati, Ohio) added three service aces, as Ribas chipped in a contest-best four aces.

Doug Battersby led the way for NJIT with a match-high 12 kills, posting a .556 hitting percentage, as Kevin Van Oss and Chris Kaepernick added nine and seven smashes, respectively. Kerman Kantushov chipped in team-highs of eight digs and three service aces, while Brady Smith dug out eight Bobcat attacks of his own.

The Bobcats jumped out to an early lead in the first set, claiming a narrow 9-7 advantage on back-to-back Jimenez kills, before pushing the margin to 20-15 following a Jones ace. The Highlanders countered with a 4-3 spurt, closing the gap to 23-19 before the Bobcats claimed the frame on an NJIT service error.

Lees-McRae carried the momentum into the second set, opening the frame with a 15-7 run that was capped by a kill from Conference Carolinas Player of the Week Matt Harpenau (Cincinnati, Ohio). The Bobcats would close out the set from there, taking a commanding 2-0 lead in the match with a 25-12 victory in the second frame.

The Highlanders battled back in the third, launching a 5-0 run to take an 8-3 lead following a Kaepernick kill. The Bobcats responded with a 6-4 spurt, closing the gap to 12-9 before NJIT countered with a 5-2 run, pushing the advantage to 17-11 on a Kantushov ace.

After Lees-McRae cut the margin to 17-15 with a Ribas smash, NJIT answered with a 7-4 spurt, stretching the lead to 24-19 on a Van Oss kill. The Bobcats would fight off a trio of set points before the Highlanders stopped the bleeding and closed out the frame, halving Lees-McRae's advantage in the match to 2-1.

The Bobcats responded in the fourth, opening the frame with an 11-5 run that was capped by consecutive aces from Lucas. Lees-McRae would push the advantage to 20-10 with a 9-5 spurt, putting the set and the match out of reach on a Ribas service ace. The teams traded points over the remainder of the frame, with the Bobcats clinching the victory following an emphatic block by Harpenau and Ramirez.

Lees-McRae returns to the court on Sunday when the Bobcats travel to Loretto, Pa. to take on Saint Francis University at 2 p.m. The Bobcats were previously scheduled to square off with Harvard University on Friday evening, but due to the threat of Winter Storm Nemo, the match has been cancelled.

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Photo Courtesy: Joshua Jones, LMC Athletics