

Trojans Rally For Five-set Victory

Written by Whitney Noble

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Lees-McRae College junior Jose Ribas (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) posted a match-high 15 kills to lead four players in double figures, as the Mount Olive College men's volleyball team rallied from 2-1 down for a thrilling five-set victory over the

Bobcats in Conference Carolinas play on Friday afternoon in Williams Gymnasium. Mount Olive (13-3, 11-0 CC) won the match by scores of 21-25, 25-18, 16-25, 25-20, and 15-10, snapping Lees-McRae's (11-4, 7-4 CC) six-match winning streak while posting a .243 hitting percentage. The Bobcats hit .271 in the contest, recording 60 kills, 33 digs, and 12 blocks.

Ribas led the way for the Bobcats with 15 kills, as freshman Brady Markle (York, Pa.) put together perhaps his best performance of the season with 13 smashes, five digs, and three block assists. John Lucas (Cincinnati, Ohio) nearly added a double-double with 11 kills and a match-high nine digs, while Joshua Jones (Christmas, Fla.) posted 11 smashes, three block assists, and a .500 hitting percentage.

Randy Ramirez (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) chipped in a strong performance with a match-high 52 assists, four kills, and five blocks (one solo, four assists), as Matt Harpenau (Cincinnati, Ohio) added a contest-best six blocks (one solo, two assists).

Adam Miracle paced the Trojans with 10 kills, while Angel Dache, Andreas Lengler, and Tim Ebbecke each added nine smashes. Richard Hesse chipped in eight kills and a .375 hitting percentage, as Dan Arnold posted a match-high nine digs.

The opening set proved to be a tightly contested and masterful offensive display by both teams, as the two squads combined for 25 kills and just five errors on 49 swings, which translates to a superb .408 hitting percentage.

Lees-McRae would snatch an early 13-11 lead on a Ramirez ace before Mount Olive answered with a 4-2 spurt, evening the tally at 15-15 following an Ebbecke kill. The Bobcats quickly countered with a 5-1 run, claiming a 20-16 advantage on an ace by Markle before pushing the Trojans to set point at 24-20 with a Lucas smash. Lees-McRae then claimed the frame on a Trojan miscue to take a 1-0 lead in the match.

Mount Olive responded in the second, opening the frame with a 10-6 run before pushing the advantage to 17-11 following a kill from Ben Casado. The Trojans would close out the set from there, evening the match at 1-1 on a smash by Lengler.

The Bobcats answered in the third frame, taking an early 10-6 lead on a Ribas smash before stretching the margin to 15-9 following a kill from Lucas. Lees-McRae then kicked it into gear, pushing the advantage to 24-14 with a 9-5 run that was capped by a Markle smash. Markle then closed out the set with a kill to give the Bobcats a 2-1 advantage in the contest.

Mount Olive responded in the fourth, battling back from an early 9-7 deficit to claim a 13-11 advantage following a Bobcat miscue. The Trojans would push the lead to 19-15 with a 6-4 spurt, stretching the margin further to 23-17 on a Bobcat attacking error. Lees-McRae countered with a 3-0 run, closing the gap to 23-20 before Mount Olive forced a deciding fifth set with a 25-20 victory in the fourth frame.

The Trojans carried the momentum into the fifth, claiming an early 6-4 advantage before the Bobcats battled back to take a narrow 8-7 lead following a smash by Markle. Mount Olive answered with a 5-0 run, taking a 12-8 lead on a kill from Miracle. The Bobcats would counter

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with back-to-back points, cutting the margin to 12-10 following a smash and a solo block from Ribas. Mount Olive responded with a 3-0 spurt of its own, claiming the set and the match on a stuff by Ebbecke and Lengler.

Lees-McRae returns to the court on Saturday when the Bobcats travel to Hartsville, S.C. to take on Coker College in league play at 4 p.m.

Photo Courtesy: Randy Ramirez, LMC Athletics