

Falcons Sweep Bobcats In Conference Semifinals

Written by Whitney Noble

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Joshua Jones (Christmas, Fla.) and John Lucas (Cincinnati, Ohio) each posted eight kills to pace the Lees-McRae College men's volleyball team on Wednesday evening, as second-seeded Pfeiffer University held on for a hard-fought three-set sweep over the third-seeded Bobcats in the semifinal round of the Conference Carolinas Tournament. Pfeiffer (16-8) won the match by scores of 25-18, 25-23, and 25-17, as the Falcons hit .400 in the contest while tallying 42 kills and eight service aces. Lees-McRae (18-13) posted a .284 hitting percentage on the night, while recording 32 smashes and 17 digs.

Jones paced the Bobcats with eight kills on 14 swings, attacking at a .571 clip, while Lucas tallied eight smashes. Jose Ribas (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) added six kills and two aces, as Matt Harpenau (Cincinnati, Ohio) posted a match-high three block assists. Randy Ramirez (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico) and Efrain Negron (Caguas, Puerto Rico) chipped in 30 assists and six digs, respectively.

Caleb Brophy led the way for Pfeiffer with a match-high 18 kills, attacking at a .517 clip as Kyle Mariano and Micah Bortner added eight and six smashes, respectively. David Specian posted contest-bests of 39 assists and five aces, while Mark Hess tallied a match-high nine digs.

The first set proved to be a tightly contested battle in the early going, with Lees-McRae claiming a narrow 10-9 lead on a kill by Javier Jimenez (San Sebastian, Puerto Rico), before the Falcons responded with a 4-0 spurt to claim a 13-10 advantage. Pfeiffer would push the margin to 23-16 with a 10-6 run, capping the stretch with a Brophy kill before Eric Edelman closed out the set with a smash of his own.

Lees-McRae responded in the second set, opening the frame with a 12-8 run before pushing the margin to 17-12 on a Lucas smash. Pfeiffer would answer with a 7-2 run, evening the tally at 19-19 following an ace from Brophy.

After the Bobcats countered with a 4-2 spurt to take a 23-11 lead on a kill by Jones, Pfeiffer battled back with four straight points, claiming the set and a 2-0 advantage in the match following a solo block from Brophy.

The Falcons carried the momentum into the third set, opening an early 7-4 lead before the Bobcats responded, trimming the margin to 13-12 on a Harpenau ace to cap an 8-6 spurt. Pfeiffer would answer with a 10-3 surge, pushing the advantage to 23-15 following a Specian ace before closing out the set and the match on a Bortner kill and a Bobcat miscue.

Lees-McRae caps one of the best seasons in program history, posting its highest win total since the 2009 campaign while setting a school record with 10 victories in conference play. The Bobcats are expected to return 12 letter-winners from this year's squad, including rising seniors Negron, Ramirez, Ribas, Lucas, Harpenau, Kevin Morrison (Norfolk, Va.), Sam Sheers (Centerville, Ohio), and Josh Cothron (Bradenton, Fla.).

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Photo Courtesy: Joshua Jones, LMC Athletics