

Fleet Sweeps Bobcats In League DH

Written by Whitney Noble
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Kristen Oakes (Lenoir, N.C.) and Jessica Smith (Gastonia, N.C.) each tallied three hits to pace the Lees-McRae College softball team on Thursday afternoon, as Erskine College plated nine runs on 21 base knocks to edge the Bobcats with a doubleheader sweep in Conference Carolinas play.

Erskine (13-17-2, 9-6-1 CC) won game one by a tally of 5-1, before claiming the night cap, 4-1. Lees-McRae (7-36, 2-14 CC) plated two runs on 10 hits in the twin-bill, battling hard throughout the afternoon against one of the top pitching staffs, and batting orders, in the conference. Oakes and Smith both posted three hits, as Smith, Lori Fulmer (Prosperity, S.C.), and Amanda Decker (Apex, N.C.) each stroked a double in the twin-bill. Fulmer and Oakes each scored a run, while Decker and Alison Armstrong (Bellingham, Mass.) both recorded an RBI. Oakes went the distance in the circle for the Bobcats, pitching two complete games while surrendering six earned runs and striking out seven.

Ashlyn Hicks led the way for Erskine with four hits, as Christine Long drove in three runs with a pair of doubles, and joined Whitney Brown, Larissa Shannon, and Ericka McCarson with three hits on the day. McCarson and Bailey Thornton each scored two runs, as McCarson and Brooke Benson drove in two tallies apiece.

Kelsey Spurrier took the ball in game one, tossing a three-hitter while allowing one run and striking out four. Kaitlyn White got the nod in the night cap, allowing one run in one and two-thirds innings of work before being relieved by Kat Mulzer, who surrendered three hits and struck out six through five and one third to pick up the win.

Game One: Erskine 5, Lees-McRae 1

Erskine threatened early in the top of the first, putting runners on second and third with two outs, only to be denied when Oakes forced an inning ending groundout to first. The Fleet would get on the board in the fourth, plating two runs to take a 2-0 lead on an RBI double by Long, followed by a run-scoring single from McCarson.

Benson doubled the advantage to 4-0 for the Fleet in the fifth, driving in two with a pinch-hit single up the middle with the bases loaded. Spurrier would hold the Bobcats without a hit until the bottom of the fifth, when Smith laced a two-out double down the left field line.

After Long doubled home a run in the sixth to stretch the lead to 5-0, the Bobcats answered in the last half of the inning, loading the bases and cutting the advantage to 5-1 when Fulmer scampered home on a grounder to first by Decker.

The Bobcats would threaten again in the seventh, getting a one-out single from Smith before Spurrier retired the final two batters of the inning, shutting the door and sealing the victory.

Game Two: Erskine 4, Lees-McRae 1

The Fleet opened the scoring in the top of the first, plating two runs to take an early 2-0 lead on a double by Shannon and a sacrifice fly by Long. The Bobcats nearly answered in the bottom of the inning, when the Erskine catcher put herself in perfect position to block the plate, and prevent Sadie Lagle (Harmony, N.C.) from scoring on a double to right center by Decker with two outs.

Lees-McRae got on the board in the second, halving the margin to 2-1 when Armstrong singled to left with runners on the corners, scoring Oakes from third. The Bobcats threatened in nearly every inning after that, putting runners in scoring position in the third and fourth, while reaching base in each frame but the sixth.

Erskine would weather the storm and add two late runs to cap the victory, receiving a pair of

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leadoff home runs from Colleen Gardner in the fifth and McCarson in the seventh to equal the final margin of 4-1.

Lees-McRae returns to the diamond on Saturday when the Bobcats host North Greenville University in league play at 2 p.m. at the Bobcat Softball Field.

Photo Courtesy: Amanda Decker, LMC Athletics