

Bears Nip Bobcats In OT

Written by Whitney Noble

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The Lees-McRae College men's soccer team dropped a heartbreaker in the season opener on Thursday

evening, falling to Lenoir-Rhyne University by a score of 2-1 in extra time after rallying to force the additional period late in the second half.

Lees-McRae (0-1) outshot Lenoir-Rhyne (1-0) by a 22-19 margin in a hard-fought battle, edging the Bears 11-9 in the first half while holding a 4-2 advantage in corner kicks. James Galvani (High Wycombe, England) provided the scoring for the Bobcats, opening his account for the campaign with his 26th career goal and moving into a tie for eighth on the program's all-time list. Yago Xavier (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) tallied his first career point in the match with an assist on Galvani's second-half strike, as Thomas Rusling (Sheffield, England) kicked off the season with five saves. Galvani paced the squad with 10 shots, including four on frame, as freshman Jordan Wright (Winchburgh, West Lothian, Scotland) added six attempts at goal.

Ben Jones and Daniel Delderfield found the back of the net for the Bears on the night, as goalkeeper Stefan Dill added an assist to go along with seven saves. Jones led the way with five attempts at goal as Delderfield and Tyree Clarke chipped in four and three shots, respectively.

The match remained scoreless until the opening moments of the second half, with Lenoir-Rhyne taking a 1-0 lead when Dill launched a clearing ball from the back, and found Jones for a delicate one-touch finish over the keeper.

Lees-McRae wasted little time on its heels, peppering the Bears goal with half a dozen shots over the next few minutes. The Bobcats would draw even late in the 69th minute, when Galvani delivered a one-touch finish into the back of the net off a driven cross from Xavier to level proceedings at 1-1.

Both goalkeepers made key saves in the final 20 minutes of regulation, combining for three stops in that span to send the contest into extra time. Xavier nearly delivered the winner fresh off the restart, sending a glorious chance toward goal that was turned aside by Dill.

The Bears would capitalize on a critical miscue midway through the 98th minute, earning a chance from the penalty spot after a foul in the Bobcats' defensive area. Delderfield stepped to the ball and converted the opportunity, finding the back of the net to give the Bears' a narrow 2-1 win.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Saturday when the Bobcats travel to Greenwood, S.C. to take on No. 15 Lander University in non-conference play at 7 p.m.

Photo Courtesy: James Galvani, LMC Athletics