

No.10 Bears Hold Off Bobcats, 2-1

Written by Whitney Noble

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The No. 10 Lenoir-Rhyne University women's soccer team edged Lees-McRae College by a narrow 2-1 margin on Friday evening, converting two of its five attempts on frame in a match that was largely dictated by the Bobcats.

Lees-McRae (0-1) outworked Lenoir-Rhyne (1-0) for much of the match, placing 12 of its 16 shots on frame while holding the Bears to just five. The Bobcats held a narrow 7-6 edge in attempts at goal in the first half, while Lenoir-Rhyne outshot Lees-McRae, 12-9, in the second 45 minutes.

Meagan Thornton (Millville, N.J.) provided the scoring for the Bobcats in the contest, connecting on her only shot for her 15th career goal and first of the season. MaryBeth Sullivan (Greensboro, N.C.), Mallory Overholt (Grand Bend, Ontario, Canada), and Sarah Mahar (Jacksonville, Fla.) each tallied three shots in the match, as Kaitlyn Briggs (Oviedo, Fla.) made three saves.

Garcelle Alequine had a hand in both goals for the Bears, assisting on the first and scoring the second, as Hallie Hilliard tallied the opening strike for Lenoir-Rhyne. Hanna Kiebel added a match-high six attempts at goal, while Andrea Leano made 11 saves between the pipes. The Bobcats nearly got off to a flying start in the 17th minute, when Sullivan's secondary effort sailed just north of the bar after Kaitlyn Kerrigan (Lakewood Ranch, Fla.) rung the woodwork with the initial strike.

After Molly Ames (Greensboro, N.C.), Erica Allen (Norton, Ohio), and Sullivan forced a trio of stops by Leano, the Bears broke the deadlock early in the 42nd minute when Hilliard nodded home a cross by Alequine to send Lenoir-Rhyne into the interval with a narrow one-goal advantage.

The Bears pressed the issue in the opening moments of the second half but the Bobcat defense were equal to the task, turning away five early attempts before turning the tables with a concerted push of their own, forcing Leano into several key saves.

Lenoir-Rhyne would double the advantage to 2-0 midway through the 75th minute, when Alequine gained control in the Bobcats' half and chipped the keeper for her first tally of the season. The Bobcats quickly responded, pushing forward with greater purpose over the next several minutes.

Their perseverance was rewarded in the closing stages of the 85th minute, as Thornton broke free in the attacking third off a Bear miscue before tickling the twine to halve the margin to 2-1. Lenoir-Rhyne would hold on over the five minutes, denying the Bobcats a chance at the equalizer before closing out the one-goal victory.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Sunday when the Bobcats square off with Newberry College in Hickory, N.C. on the final day of the Lenoir-Rhyne Classic. Kickoff is slated for 12 p.m.

Photo Courtesy: Meagan Thornton, LMC Athletics