

Bobcats, Patriots Battle To 0-0 Tie

Written by Whitney Noble

Wednesday, 09 October 2013 07:58

The Lees-McRae College men's soccer team and visiting Francis Marion University battled to a scoreless draw in Southeast Region play on Tuesday evening, trading momentum and fighting for every ball on

Tate Field.

The match proved to be a tightly contested and physical tilt, as Lees-McRae (5-4-1) edged Francis Marion (5-1-3) by a 17-14 margin in attempts at goal, including a 5-2 advantage in extra time. Each team was awarded four corner kicks, as the two sides combined for 30 fouls and eight cautions in a hard-fought contest.

Lees-McRae netminder Thomas Rusling (Sheffield, England) turned in a solid performance once again, providing the backbone to another outstanding defensive effort for the Bobcats, stopping three shots to keep his fifth clean sheet of the season and 19th of his career. Scott Alford (Hillsborough, N.C.) paced the Bobcats with a match-high nine shots, including two on frame, as Ryan Gillespie (Holly Springs, N.C.) and Chris Mullins (Greensboro, N.C.) each took two shots.

Francis Marion goalkeeper Nick Stover, younger brother of the Bobcats' Travis Stover (Titusville, Fla.), made five saves to keep a clean sheet for the Patriots, as Cody Farrier made a

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team-high four attempts at goal.

The two combatants wasted little time putting a charge into proceedings, each side picking up an early caution as both attacking lines pushed forward and harried the opposing backline with an ever-increasing urgency throughout the first half. Perhaps the best scoring chance of the first half came in the final moments of the period, when Gillespie's effort narrowly missed the woodwork following a concerted push down the center by the Bobcats.

Francis Marion came out of the break with pace and determination, repeatedly making runs down the flank and stretching the Bobcat defense in hopes of finding the breakthrough. Alex Blandin nearly did just that in the early moments of the 58th minute, receiving a cross from Sven Ricke in open space and sending a driven effort just high of the bar.

Mullins answered with a glorious chance in the 59th, blasting a shot toward Nick Stover's goal off a corner from Yago Xavier (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Lukas Pousset came within inches of an opener in the 64th minute for the Patriots, just missing a driven cross by Jorgen Tesdal on the back post.

Nick Stover made a pair of outstanding saves down the stretch for the Patriots, robbing Alford on a headed try in the 67th minute before turning in perhaps the play of the match in the 80th, diving to his left to deny Isauro Estrada's (Newland, N.C.) curling effort from just outside the area.

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Rusling would be called upon twice in the final 10 minutes of regulation, making a pair of saves on Farrier and David Sheridan to preserve the deadlock and send the match into extra time. The Bobcats would control the run of play for the majority of the added periods, nearly snatching a late winner in the 104th minute, only to be denied when Alford's header was parried neatly by Nick Stover.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Saturday when the Bobcats travel to Bristol, Tenn. to resume their Conference Carolinas slate with a 3 p.m. matchup against King College.