

Bobcats Win On Senior Night

Written by Whitney Noble

Thursday, 31 October 2013 07:31

Junior Scott Alford (Hillsborough, N.C.) scored two goals, and senior goalkeeper Thomas Rusling (Sheffield, England) made a pair of clutch saves to lead the Lees-McRae College men's soccer team to a

3-2 upset of regionally-ranked Lincoln Memorial University to celebrate Senior Night Wednesday evening on Tate Field. The Railsplitters are ranked tenth in the Division II Southeast Regional Poll.

Lees-McRae (9-6-1) controlled the run of play for much of the match, outshooting Lincoln Memorial (9-6-1) by a 19-10 margin, including a 14-2 advantage in the second half. The Bobcats held a 4-1 edge in attempts from the corner in a physical battle that featured 29 fouls and a trio of cautions.

Prior to kickoff, the Bobcats honored graduating seniors Chris DeSanto (Greensboro, N.C.), Ryan Gillespie (Holly Springs, N.C.), and Rusling with their annual senior night ceremony, presenting senior awards to three of the program's hardest working and most beloved players before each made their final regular season start on Tate Field.

Alford paced the Bobcats with a pair of strikes, running his season total to six, as Jordan Wright (West Lothian, Scotland) tallied his 10th goal and third match-winner of the season late in the

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second half. Marvyn Rieger (Frankfurt, Germany) and Andrew Shoemaker (Raleigh, N.C.) each added an assist, as Rusling made two saves to earn his 33rd career victory.

Callum Home and Leonardo Da Silva each found the back of the net for Lincoln Memorial, as Mario Pinto added an assist and Marcel Barwanietz tallied eight saves. Da Silva paced the Railsplitters with five shots, as Pinto chipped in a trio of his own.

Alford got the Bobcats off to a flying start in the 12th minute, nodding home a long ball into the box by Rieger for his fifth goal of the season and a 1-0 lead for Lees-McRae. Lincoln Memorial leveled proceedings early in the 29th minute, knotting the score at 1-1 when Pinto settled the ball on the endline and fed Home for the one-touch finish from close range.

The Bobcats came out firing in the second half, pushing forward with relentless pressure before Alford rewarded their efforts in the 50th minute, netting his sixth goal of the season to give Lees-McRae a 2-1 lead. Alford took advantage of a defensive miscue by the Railsplitters, settling a free ball and catching the LMU keeper off his line with a chip into the back of the net from distance.

Rieger nearly pushed the margin to 3-1 two minutes later, ringing the woodwork with a header off a viscous corner by Matthew Cureton (Waxhaw, N.C.). Freshman Daniel Harris (Wilmington, N.C.) provided a stern test for Barwanietz just before the hour mark, whipping a shot targeted for the top corner from the flank, leaving the Railsplitter keeper little choice but to fist it over the

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Fortune continued to shine on the Bobcats late in the 84th minute, when the Railsplitter keeper was unable to corral Wright's long-distance blast after Shoemaker slipped a nifty through ball in to the 6-3, 200-pound forward.

Lincoln Memorial answered four minutes later, cutting the advantage to 3-2 when Da Silva bent the finish inside the far post from the top of the area just over two minutes from time. Da Silva's effort would prove to be the final attempt at goal for the Railsplitters in the match, as the Bobcats held on for the 3-2 victory heading into next week's Conference Carolinas Tournament.

Lees-McRae returns to the pitch on Tuesday evening when the fourth-seeded Bobcats host the as-yet-to-be-determined fifth seed in the quarterfinal round of this year's conference tournament at 7 p.m. on Tate Field.

Photo Courtesy: Scott Alford, LMC Athletics