

## Bobcats Host Pfeiffer In Tournament Opener

Written by Whitney Noble

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The fourth-seeded Lees-McRae College men's soccer team will make a triumphant return to the Conference Carolinas Tournament on Tuesday

evening, hosting fifth-seeded Pfeiffer University in the quarterfinal round at 7 p.m. on Tate Field.

Lees-McRae (9-6-1, 5-3 CC) enters the conference tournament riding a three-match winning streak, including a 3-2 win over Lincoln Memorial University last Wednesday, which entered that contest ranked 10th in the NSCAA/Continental Tire NCAA Division II Southeast Region poll. The Bobcats earned a hard-fought 2-0 win their regular season matchup with Pfeiffer on October 3, as Alex Hasler (Browns Summit, N.C.) and Matthew Cureton (Waxhaw, N.C.) each tallied their first goal of the campaign.

Freshman Jordan Wright (West Lothian, Scotland) leads the attack for the Bobcats, entering the conference tournament with a team-high 10 goals and 23 points. The 6-3, 200-pound forward leads all freshman in the conference in scoring, having netted a trio of match-winners this season. Junior Scott Alford (Hillsborough, N.C.) has been a tremendous force in the attacking third for Lees-McRae as well, tallying six goals, three assists and three match-winners this fall.

Cureton and Andrew Shoemaker (Raleigh, N.C.) have played integral roles in the strong play of the midfield corps this season, combining for four goals and seven assists while controlling pace and directing traffic through the center of the park.

Seniors Thomas Rusling (Sheffield, England) and Ryan Gillespie (Holly Springs, N.C.) have been a tremendous part of the Bobcats' success as well, leading an otherwise youthful backline to seven clean sheets and allowing just six goals in conference play. Gillespie has played nearly every minute for the Bobcats, netting a pivotal goal in Lees-McRae's 3-2 extra time win over Milligan College on October 22.

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Pfeiffer (9-8-1, 3-5 CC) enters the conference tournament having won its last two matches in league play to secure the fifth seed. The Falcons field one of the highest-scoring attacking units in the conference this season, netting 38 goals in 18 matches with four players scoring at least four goals.

Nathan Regis leads the attack for the Falcons, scoring a team-high nine goals to go along with two assists and a pair of match-winners. Corey Davis and Simon Leslie have each tallied six strikes, combining for a trio of winners, while Aldo Ramirez has dished out 10 assists.

Junior defenders Luke James and Trevor Dean anchor the backline for Pfeiffer, leading the Falcons to five clean sheets while also contributing in the attacking third, combining for four goals and four assists. Freshman netminder Nicolas Dulac has put together a solid rookie season, making 66 saves while posting three shutouts.

Tonight's match promises to be a contentious battle between two of the deepest and hardest sides in the conference, with Lees-McRae and Pfeiffer combining for 65 goals and 18 wins this season. The Bobcats and Falcons will take the Tate Field pitch at 7 p.m. tonight with a spot in Friday's semifinal round on the line, each looking to control play and snatch an early lead in hopes of extending their season.

**Photo Courtesy: Thomas Rusling, LMC Athletics**