

## Bobcats Surge Past Lions In Home Opener

Written by Whitney Noble

Thursday, 14 November 2013 09:29

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Senior Layana De Souza (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) poured in a game-high 22 points, as the Lees-McRae College women's basketball team outscored Mars Hill University by a 40-24 margin in the second half en route to a 82-68 victory in the Bobcats' home opener on Wednesday evening in Williams Gymnasium.

Lees-McRae (1-2) posted a field goal percentage of 47.5 percent on the night, including an even 50 percent in the first half, while holding Mars Hill (0-1) to a clip of 27.6 percent in the final period. The Lions edged the Bobcats by a 39-37 margin on the glass, including a 13-10 advantage on the offensive boards, as Lees-McRae scored 48 points in the paint.

De Souza led all scorers with 22 points on 8-of-11 shooting, as Lauren Lewis (Concord, N.C.) added 17 points and a game-high six assists to go along with three steals. Kerri Belcher (Roanoke, Va.) chipped in 12 points nine rebounds and five helpers, while tallying a game-high four steals. Tayler Collins (Fayetteville, N.C.) and Alyssa Munson (Greensboro, N.C.) recorded eight and seven points, respectively, as Natalija Cakarevic (Belgrade, Serbia) pulled down five boards off the bench.

Autumn Ward paced the Lions with 14 points on 5-of-9 shooting, as Kelsey Espinosa chipped in a double-double with 13 points and a game-high 10 rebounds. Ansley Ricker and Katie Stevens added 13 and 10 points, respectively, while Brittany Baker dished out a team-high four assists.

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The Bobcats got off to a strong start in the first half, opening the game with a 13-2 run before pushing the margin to 24-9 on back-to-back lay-ins by Lewis at the 13:08 mark. Mars Hill answered with a 20-5 surge, evening the tally at 29-29 with 5:37 left on the clock. The teams would trade the lead seven times over the final five minutes, including four ties, as Espinosa hit a last-second jumper to give the Lions a narrow 44-42 lead heading into the intermission.

Lees-McRae kicked off the second half with a 13-7 run, taking a 55-49 advantage with 15:15 to go on a nifty layup underneath by De Souza off a pass from Munson. Mars Hill would counter with a 10-4 spurt, knotting the score at 59-59 following a clutch triple from Ricker at the 13:18 mark.

The Bobcats quickly responded with a 15-5 surge, opening a 74-64 lead on a Munson layup with 4:03 remaining. Michele Williams' squad would hold on from there, closing out the victory with an 8-4 spurt that was capped by a pair of freebies from Lewis.

Lees-McRae returns to the court on Friday when the Bobcats make the short trip to Boone, N.C. to take on Appalachian State University in an exhibition contest at 6 p.m.

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**Photo Courtesy: Layana De Souza, LMC Athletics**