

Golden Bulls rally for 78-73 win over Bobcats

Written by Whitney Noble

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The Johnson C. Smith University men's basketball team overcame a 43-34 halftime deficit with a 17-5 run over the final seven minutes, rallying for a 78-73 come-from-behind victory over Lees-McRae College in the last game of the Johnson C. Smith Tip-off Classic on Saturday evening.

Johnson C. Smith (4-0) posted a field goal percentage of 44.1 percent in the contest, including an even 50 percent in the second half, while holding Lees-McRae (3-2) to a mark of 39.7 percent. The Bobcats knocked down 58.6 percent of their attempts in the first 20 minutes, and won the battle on the glass by a 46-41 margin, including a 23-16 advantage on the offensive boards.

Mike Chambers (Winston-Salem, N.C.) paced the Bobcats with 17 points and three assists, knocking down a trio of three-pointers, while Jacquise Moore (Concord, N.C.) and Raul Tutton (Memphis, Tenn.) added 13 and 12 points, respectively. Darryl Bond (Nashville, Tenn.) chipped in a team-high eight boards, as Moore tallied a contest-best four steals. Darius Smith (Woodbridge, Va.) turned in a solid all-around performance with eight points, six rebounds, three assists and three steals.

LaMarquis Letchaw led the way for Johnson C. Smith with game-highs of 20 points and five assists, as Antwan Wilkerson added a double-double with 13 points and a contest-best 15 rebounds. Robert Williams chipped in 11 points.

The Golden Bulls jumped out to an early 9-4 lead before the Bobcats responded, countering with a 19-4 run, taking a 21-13 advantage following a steal and a dunk by Moore at the 12:48 mark. Johnson C. Smith then closed the gap to 26-22 with a 9-5 spurt, capping the stretch with a Williams throw down with 8:29 left in the half.

Lees-McRae answered once again, stringing together a 15-8 run over the next four minutes to push the margin to 41-30 on a long-range dagger by Darius Malbon (Hickory, N.C.) at the 4:16 mark. The Golden Bulls would net four of the half's final seven points, trimming the advantage to 43-34 heading into the intermission.

Johnson C. Smith carried the momentum into the second half, cutting the lead to 51-47 with a 13-8 run that was capped by a Williams lay-in at the 14:36 mark. Lees-McRae kept the Golden Bulls at arm's length over the next several minutes, stretching the margin to 68-61 on a Moore triple with 7:59 to play.

The Golden Bulls would slowly chip away over the subsequent four minutes, evening the tally at 69-69 on a pair of free throws by Letchaw with 3:31 left on the clock. Johnson C. Smith then took the lead for the first time since the 17:05 mark of the first half, claiming a narrow 71-70 advantage following a Wilkerson layup with 3:27 to go.

Wilkerson and the Golden Bulls would hold the Bobcats to just three points over the final three minutes, capping the come-from-behind victory with some clutch free throw shooting in the

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closing seconds to equal the final margin of 78-73.

Lees-McRae returns to the court on Tuesday when the Bobcats make the short trip to Boone, N.C. to take on NCAA Division I Appalachian State University in an exhibition contest at 7 p.m. in the Holmes Convocation Center.

Photo Courtesy: Jacquise Moore, LMC Athletics