

Mountaineers Cruise Past Lees-McRae

Written by Ryan Bower

Wednesday, 20 November 2013 10:13

Mike Neal (Greensboro, N.C./Oak Ridge Military) scored a game-high 21 points to lead five double-digit scorers in Appalachian State University men's basketball's 91-63 victory over Lees-McRae on Tuesday night at the Holmes Center.

Neal made 9-of-17 shots, including 3-of-5 from three-point range, to help lead Appalachian State (1-3) to its first win of the season. The junior point guard also added six assists and four steals (both game highs) in the triumph.

The Mountaineers dominated from the opening tip, racing out to a double-digit lead (18-7) just a little over seven minutes into contest (12:47).

After the Bobcats cut the deficit to eight points (22-14), Michael Obacha (Edo State, Nigeria/High Point Christian) put in a layup to extend the lead back to 10 points (24-14) and Appalachian never saw its lead drop below double digits the rest of the way.

App State led by as many as 16 points (33-17) when Obacha scored at the 7:57 mark and went into the locker room with a 47-33 halftime lead.

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The Mountaineers would push the lead to 20 points (68-48) when Tommy Spagnolo (West Jefferson, N.C./Radford) hit a layup with 11:09 left to play in the game en route to an emphatic win and its fifth-straight against Lees-McRae.

In addition to Neal's 21, Tab Hamilton (Winston-Salem, N.C./Fishburne Military) poured in 19 points, Mike Kobani (Bodo City, Nigeria/High Point Christian) added a career-high 12 and Obacha and Frank Eaves (Greensboro, N.C./Page) chipped in with 11 apiece to round out the Mountaineers' five scorers in double-figures. The frontcourt tandem of Kobani and Obacha combined to make 10-of-12 shots to pace Appalachian's 52.7-percent shooting effort as a team.

Obacha and Tevin Baskin (Stamford, Conn./Chipola College) led all rebounders with eight apiece as the Mountaineers finished with a 39-38 edge on the glass.

Lees-McRae was paced by a team-best 18 points from Mike Chambers while Darryl Bond added 13 and tied Raul Tutton with a team-high six rebounds.

The Mountaineers shot 52.7 percent (39-of-74) on the night while holding the Bobcats to 40.0 percent (22-of-55) and finished with 20 turnovers to Lees-McRae's 10. In addition, the Apps turned the ball over just seven times while forcing the Bobcats into 16 turnovers.

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Appalachian State returns to action at North Carolina Central on Friday night. The 7 p.m. contest is the fourth and final game for the Mountaineers in the Global Sports Shootout.

NOTES: Appalachian State improved to 5-0 all-time against the Bobcats... Neal's four steals matched a career-best while Obacha's three blocks were a new career-high... the Mountaineers scored 50 points in the paint... the 20 assists were the most since the Apps tallied 21 in a 91-88 overtime loss at Chattanooga on Jan. 17, 2013... the seven turnovers were the teams fewest since a 79-56 loss to Davidson on Jan. 26, 2013... Appalachian last had five players score in double figures in a 91-86 overtime win at Georgia Southern on Feb. 7, 2013... the last time five Mountaineers scored in double-digits in regulation was on Jan. 12, 2013 in an 80-70 win over Elon... Dustin Clarke (Newland, N.C./Hartford) and Mitch Purgason (High Point, N.C./Wesleyan Academy) each saw their first action for the Mountaineers.

ASU 91, LMC 66

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SCORE BY PERIODS 1 2 TOTAL

LEES-McRAE 33 30 - 63

APPALACHIAN STATE 47 44 - 91

LMC: HICKS 3, TUTTON 7 (6 REBOUNDS), BOND 13 (6 REBOUNDS), MOORE 6, SMITH 6 (4 ASSISTS), FALLS 2, CHAMBERS 18 (5 REBOUNDS), ARNOLD 6, MALBON 2. FG: 22-55, 3FG: 5-15, FT: 14-23. 38 REBOUNDS, 10 ASSISTS, 16 TURNOVERS.

ASU: BASKIN 8 (8 REBOUNDS), SPAGNOLO 2, HAMILTON 19, BURGESS 2, NEAL 21 (6 ASSISTS, 4 STEALS), KOBANI 12, OBACHA 11 (8 REBOUNDS), GILBERT 2, EAVES 11,

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TONEY 3. FG: 39-74, 3FG: 7-20, FT: 6-12. 39 REBOUNDS, 20 ASSISTS, 7 TURNOVERS.

Photo Courtesy: Mike Neal, ASU Athletics