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Amherst Advances to NCAA Round of 16 on Late Goal by Downs

Submitted by Justin P. Long. Last edited on Sat, 2007-11-10 21:02.

AMHERST, MA – The Amherst College men's soccer team trailed visiting Western New England College 1-0 and 2-1 in the second half, but the Lord Jeffs were able to find the equalizer each time before senior tri-captain Taylor Downs (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY) netted the game-winner with just 21 seconds remaining in regulation. Amherst (15-2) advances to the NCAA Round of 16 and will take on an opponent to be determined this weekend, while the Golden Bears end their season at 15-6-2.

Amherst came out sharp and controlled the start of the game, but it was Western New England that had the first scoring chance of the night. Junior goaltender Jeff Grover (Framingham, MA) was forced to sprint off his line toward a loose ball, but a WNEC player beat him to the punch and lofted a shot high and toward the goal. The ball looked like it had a chance to fall in the net, but it continued to drift and made its way out of bounds.

With 15 minutes and 15 seconds remaining in the first half, junior Tony Rosa sent a corner kick in Grover's direction. The Amherst keeper was able to knock the ball away, but sophomore Ryan Nugent positioned himself perfectly and headed the rebound to the back of the net, as the Golden Bears jumped out to a 1-0 lead.

The Jeffs stormed right back and had their fans rise in anticipation when junior Nick Lynch (Kingston, Jamaica) sent a beautiful cross to the far post, where junior Jake Duker (Newton, MA) tried to one-time a shot past goalkeeper Steve Hennessey. Duker put a solid touch on the ball, but it sailed just high.

The game became heated when each team received a yellow card with 11 minutes remaining in the half, as there was a short stoppage of play to calm the players and coaches. The Golden Bears weren't fazed, as they



Junior Jake Duker came back from an injury to score two goals in the Jeffs' 3-2 win over WNEC.

had a great scoring chance less than three minutes later, but a hard low shot whizzed by the far post and resulted in an Amherst goal kick.

Western New England took its 1-0 lead into halftime, but it was Amherst that held a 10-5 advantage in shots. Grover made a pair of saves for the Jeffs, while Hennessey made three for the Golden Bears.



First-year Chris Skayne played an exceptional defensive game in Amherst's win.

Amherst began the second half knowing that scoring an early goal would be crucial, and it didn't take long for the Jeffs to do just that. Senior Kevin Dolan (Peabody, MA) settled a ball outside the 18-yard line and found senior tri-captain Ryan O'Donnell (Belchertown, MA), who lofted a pass to within five yards of the goal, allowing Duker to redeem himself by sneaking a shot past Hennessey to tie the game at 1-1 with 38 minutes to play in regulation.

Western New England regained the lead with 15

minutes remaining on the clock when Rosa pounded a bouncing ball to the back of the net after the Golden Bears dominated a five-minute stretch of play. The visiting fans began their celebration chants too early, however, as Duker once again found the back of the net after the ball had been bouncing within three yards of the goal with no defenders able to clear it away. Duker had missed a chunk of the season due to injury but he appeared to back in full form, as his second goal tied the game at 2-2.

It looked as though the game was headed for overtime when Amherst began its final push of the night. Despite hearing an absurd amount of jeers from the visiting fans, Lynch was able to string together his nicest sequence of fancy footwork and dribble past several Western New England defenders toward the end line before he chipped the ball toward a crowd of players. Downs ran onto the ball and scored what wasn't Amherst's prettiest goal of the season, but it certainly did the trick, as the Jeffs left the Golden Bears with minimal time to make a comeback.

The Jeffs out-shot the visitors 21 to 10 and won the corner kick battle, 7-3, as Hennessey finished with eight saves and Grover came up with two. **First-year defender Chris Skayne (Boxborough, MA) played an exceptional game for Amherst, particularly in the second half when the Jeffs needed it most.** With the win, Amherst avenged its loss to WNEC in the 2006 NCAA Round of 32.

BOX SCORE