

Seward Loses Championship 1-0

It was a tough way to end a hard fought weekend for the Seward County Lady Saints Sunday in Wichita. After battling their way through the Region VI Tournament bracket to advance yet again to the Championship game, Seward fell 1-0 in the 7th inning to #1 Butler to end their 2013 season two wins short of a Region VI Championship. Seward opened the tournament with a dominating 8-0 win over rival Garden City, but we bounced to the elimination bracket early on day two with a 6-1 loss to Butler. Seward survived the modified semifinal with a 6-4 win over Barton to advance to the first championship game, but after a 0-0 battle throughout, Butler scratched a run out in the 7th to win 1-0 to win the Region VI Title and end Seward's season.

In their first matchup of the weekend the Lady Saints took on Garden City. Seward had early traffic, getting a runner into scoring position in both of the first two innings, but couldn't push a run across as the game was scoreless after 2. Rachel Shockley and Stephanie Mark singled with one out in the 3rd to give the Lady Saints another scoring chance, but once again they would leave the ducks on the pond at innings end to remain deadlocked. The Seward 4th didn't start with a lot of promise as just six pitches in, they were already down to their last out with nobody on, but singles from Ashley Kirkes and Samantha Phelps set the table and a double from Marissa Chavez drove the pair in as the Lady Saints took the first lead of the game 2-0. Seward starting pitcher Brittney Sharkey cruised through the 4th inning and the Lady Saints gave her two more runs of support as doubles from Kirkes and Sierra Tadiarca drove runs home to make it a 4-0 game. The Lady Saints were back at it in the 6th as Michelle Duford drove home a run with a single and an error on the Busters added another to make it 6-0. Still batting in the inning, the Lady Saints tacked on their third run of the inning on an RBI single from Felisha Vogelaar and after 5 ½ it was Seward 7 and Garden City 0. Sharkey spun her second straight 1-2-3 inning in the bottom of the 6th and Seward added a run on three singles in the top of the 7th to push their lead to 8-0. With the big lead Sharkey had no problem silencing the Buster bats in their final at bats, mowing through the Garden hitters in order to finish up the 8-0 shutout win.

Seward dominated every facet of the game in this one, outpitching Garden City 16-2 in the game while making just 1 error to the Busters 5. Shockley paced the Seward offense with 4 hits in 5 chances while Mark had 3 hits in 5 trips to the plate. Chavez was 2 for 5 with 2 RBI's atop the Lady Saints lineup and Kirkes was 2 for 4 in the eighth hole. Sharkey was spectacular in her 15th win of the 2013 season. She retired the final 10 Garden City hitters she faced and didn't allow a hit past the 2nd inning. She tossed a 2 hit shutout and struck out 4 in the complete game win.

SEWARD COUNTY/GARDEN CITY QUARTERFINAL BOX SCORE

<http://174-136-6-33.static.directrouter.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6829:5413-vs-garden-city-region-vi-tournament-1st-round&catid=57:Softball&Itemid=199>

It was another rivalry game for the Lady Saints as they advanced to the winner's bracket semifinal on Sunday morning against the top seeded Butler Grizzlies. The Lady Saints got off to a rough start as Butler pounded out five hits and took advantage of a Seward error to take a 3-0 lead in the 1st inning. Seward answered back with their first run of the game as Becky Allen doubled with one out in the 2nd and scored on an error by Butler shortstop Ashley Malone to make it 3-1. The Lady Saints had another good scoring chance in the 3rd when Chavez and Shockley singled to put two on for the middle of the Lady Saints order, but a fly out ended the threat and kept it a 3-1 game. Butler added onto their lead in the 3rd, getting back to back home runs from Ashley Atwell and Kelsey Berlin to make it 5-1 and they made it a 6-1 game in the 4th on an RBI groundout from Kate James. Seward had no answer for Jayhawk West Player of the Year Maggie Ham in the final three innings. The Lady Saints managed just one baserunner over the final three innings and struck out six times, including the side in the top of the 7th to end the game and give Butler the 6-1 win.

The Lady Saints managed just 4 hits in the loss. Shockley had 2 hits in 3 trips to the plate while Chavez and Allen got Seward's other knocks in the loss. Sharkey was tagged with the loss, lasting just 1/3 of an inning and allowing 4 hits and 3 runs. Katelyn Craker went the rest of the way in relief, spinning 5 2/3 innings and allowing 5 hits and 3 runs.

SEWARD COUNTY/#1 BUTLER WINNERS BRACKET SEMIFINAL BOX SCORE

<http://scccsaints.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6830:5513-vs-1-butler-region-vi-tournament-semifinals&catid=57:Softball&Itemid=199>

In their first elimination game of the tournament the Lady Saints took on a Barton team who they beat all four times during the regular season. Seward got off to a good start as Mark, Allen, and Vogelaar each had RBI singles in the 1st inning to quickly put the Lady Saints out in front 3-0. Seward added to their lead in the 3rd with another RBI single from Vogelaar and a second from Samantha Phelps to make it 5-0. Barton got on the board in the top half of the 4th with a pair of two out hits against Sharkey to cut the Seward lead to 5-1 and got the score to 5-3 in the 5th with four singles to score a pair of runs. The Seward offense went ice cold through the middle innings and the Lady Saints saw just four pitches in their half of a 1-2-3 5th inning. Barton chased Sharkey from the game with a single and a double in the 6th to get to within one 5-4, but Craker stranded the inherited runner at second at the end of the inning to keep the Lady Saints on top by one. On the ropes, the Lady Saints managed to squeeze out a key insurance run thanks to a Barton error in the 6th to make it 6-4 and Craker did the rest from there. The freshman lefty retired Barton in order in the top of the 7th to close out the game and pick up her first save of the year in the Lady Saints 6-4 win.

Both teams had 11 hits in the contest. Leading the way for Seward was Vogelaar who had a pair of RBI singles and finished 2 for 3 with 2 RBI's. Allen was also 2 for 3 and scored a pair of runs while Mark finished 2 for 4 with an RBI and a run scored. Sharkey scattered 11 hits, yielding just 4 runs in 5 1/3 innings of work to earn the win while Craker picked up the save with 1 2/3 innings of perfect relief.

SEWARD COUNTY/BARTON ELIMINATION BRACKET SEMIFINAL BOX SCORE

<http://scccsaints.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6831:5513-vs-barton-region-vi-tournament-elimination-game&catid=57:Softball&Itemid=199>

The win for Seward advanced the Lady Saints to the tournament championship round where they squared off against Butler once again. The Lady Saints needed two straight wins against the #1 ranked Grizzlies to bring home the tournament title while Butler needed just one to win their third straight Region title. Both teams had their best scoring chances of the game early on as Butler stranded a pair of 1st inning baserunners against Craker and Seward couldn't take advantage of two baserunners in the bottom half against Creighton bound righthander Mac Millspaugh. Both pitchers settled down after the rough start and retired the side in order in the 2nd to keep it scoreless. The teams mirrored each other once again in the 3rd and 4th innings as a two out single was all for each team in the 3rd and nothing was going in the 4th as it remained a 0-0 game into the 5th. Craker had no problem with the high powered Butler bats in the top half of the 5th and neither did Millspaugh with the Seward swingers in the bottom half, each team going down in order to keep it 0-0. Butler looked like it had something going in the top of the 6th of the scoreless contest as a single and stolen base put a runner at second with nobody out. A sacrifice bunt moved the runner up 60 feet, but a good defensive play by the Lady Saints two pitches later cut down the runner trying to score and the game stayed scoreless. A Butler error to start the Seward 6th gave the Lady Saints some hope as the middle of their lineup came up with the go ahead run on base in the form of Chavez, but three straight outs ended the threat and sent the game to the 7th with the score still 0-0. A leadoff double in the 7th for Butler spelled trouble for Seward and after a sac bunt to move the runner to third, the Grizzlies were in the same spot they were in an inning earlier. A walk put runners on the corners and a fly ball to the outfield brought the run home to give the Lady Grizz' a 1-0 lead. Butler turned it over to Ham in the 7th and the Oklahoma bound righty finished things off, getting a pair of strikeouts and a groundout to finish things off and end Seward's season. Butler took the Region VI Championship home with a 1-0 victory to advance to district play where they will have to beat either Western Nebraska or Otero in a three game series to go to the National Tournament.

The Lady Saints offense was non-existent in the loss, managing just 2 hits, both singles. Shockley and Duford had the only Seward hits in the game as the 5-9 hitters in the Lady Saints lineup combined to go 0 for 13. Craker took the tough luck loss, throwing all 7 innings and allowing just 4 hits and 1 run to the Grizzlies.

SEWARD COUNTY/#1 BUTLER CHAMPIONSHIP GAME BOX SCORE

<http://scccsaints.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6832:5513-vs-1-butler-region-vi-championship-game&catid=57:Softball&Itemid=199>

Seward finishes the year 33-26 overall and are Region VI runners-up for the second time in three seasons to Butler. Butler wins their 25th straight game in the title matchup and is 48-2 overall on the year.

Roy Allen

SCCC/ATS Roy Allen