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Saints Clinch Home Playoff Birth with Win at Garden City

After having a six game win streak stopped on Wednesday against rival Hutchinson, the Seward County Lady Saints responded Saturday with a Jayhawk West Conference road win at Garden City to lock up home court advantage for the first round of the Region VI Tournament. The Lady Saints had to play from behind in the first set, but came back to win convincingly 25-16 and were able to hold on to 25-21 and 25-20 in the second and third sets to sweep the Busters 3-0.

The Lady Saints weren't quite ready to go in the first set of the Saturday matinee affair. Seward quickly found themselves in a 7-3 hole against Garden City while playing sloppy volleyball with six errors in the first ten points of the set. The Lady Saints woke up and went on an 8-3 run to tie things up and continued to push points, scoring four straight to take their first multi-point lead of the match at 15-11. Garden cut the Seward lead to three at 19-16, but the Lady Saints turned it on to close the set, getting back to back kills from Carolina Gasparini, an ace from Kelci Bedingfield, and a solo block from Morgan Riley to close it out and give themselves a 25-16 win. Seward outscored Garden City 15-5 in the final 20 points of the set to win by nine. Seward finished off 14 kills in the set and had just 1 error, hitting .481 as a team, their best set hitting percentage wise in conference play this season.

The second set was a competitive one throughout. Seward took a slight early advantage 5-3 after a pair of kills from Kristen Anderson and remained up by two later on at 10-8. The Lady Saints took their largest lead to that point in the set at 13-8 after back to back Garden City attack errors, but the Busters regrouped and cut the Lady Saints lead to just one moments later at 14-13. After going up by two, the Lady Saints used a Garden service error to take a three point advantage at 19-16. Seward continued to keep the Busters at bay, but couldn't pull away, still holding a three point lead, 22-19 late in the set. It was still a three point spread at 24-21 with set point coming up for the Lady Saints and Nacole Miller went to the outside and to the reigning Jayhawk West Player of the Week Gasparini to finish things off, which she did, to give Seward the 25-21 win.

Looking to close, Seward got off to a quick start in the third, taking a 5-2 advantage right off the bat with an ace from Kristen Anderson. The Busters kept fighting though and wouldn't let the Lady Saints out of the Perryman Center without a fight. Garden erased the Lady Saints lead and tied the set at 7, but Seward responded with a 4-1 run, including three more Gasparini kills to take the lead back 11-8. Garden City caught a bit of momentum midway through the set and took their first lead since the first set at 13-12 after back to back Seward attack errors, but once again the resilient Seward County squad wasn't going to let that last for long. The Lady Saints scored the next three points to take a 15-13 lead and kept on rolling, going up by four at 19-15 after an ace from libero Kari Anderson. The run seemed to have taken the wind out of the Busters sails and Garden City would not get close again. The Lady Saints cruised to the finish line, getting a kill from Annelise Sanchez to put an exclamation point on a 25-20 win to take the match 3-0.

Gasparini had another huge match for the Lady Saints, recording her 7th straight double-double with a match high 15 kills and 14 digs. Riley also came up big for Seward on the offensive end, finishing the match with 9 kills on 15 chances without an error to end the night hitting a cool .600. Sanchez also pitched in on the attack for the Lady Saints, tallying 9 kills for Seward in the win. Miller connected on 50% of her set attempts in the match, finishing with 33 assists while Kari Anderson tied Gasparini for the team lead with 14 digs for Seward.

The Lady Saints improve to 18-12 on the year and 8-3 in Jayhawk West action while Garden City falls to 5-16 and 3-8 in conference play. Next up for Seward is a key conference tilt against West leading Colby Tuesday. The Lady Saints will travel to the *Oasis on the Plains* for a

6:30 start in the Community Building in what essentially comes down to the Jayhawk West title match for the Lady Trojans.

The win assures the Lady Saints of a Region VI Tournament home match yet again on November 5th. Their opponent for that tournament match, yet to be determined.

Seward will then have a week off before returning to the court on October 22nd in the Greenhouse for Dig Pink Night against Dodge City.

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