

Saints and Lady Saints Play Nail Biting Opener

For fans who stuck around on a long, drawn out, opening night of Seward County basketball Friday, they got their money's worth. Both the Lady Saints and Saints took tie games into the final minutes of their contests with the Seward women coming out on top and the Seward men falling in a shocker.

In a rematch of the 2002 NJCAA National Championship Game, the Lady Saints took on Northeastern Oklahoma A&M in their 2013-2014 opener. Following an emotional moment of silence for longtime supporter Charles Brownlee, the Lady Saints got off to a good start, taking an early 8-7 lead on the Lady Norse. Seward controlled the pace much of the first despite battling not only a short bench, but also foul trouble to both of their post players who picked up 3 fouls each in the first 20 minutes. The Lady Saints clinged to an 18-17 lead midway through the half and took a 38-34 advantage into the locker rooms. Shanise Brooks led the way with 14 first half points for Seward while Fabiana Monte added 10.

The Lady Saints weren't able to pull away, but remained on top 47-45 with 13:30 left in the game. As the clock began to wind down, the Lady Saints, who dressed just eight players for the game, started to look like fatigue was setting in as they now trailed for the first time in the half 65-62 with 4:48 remaining. A pair of free throws got Seward to within one and a drive and score by freshman Brianna Scott ignited the Greenhouse crowd and put the Lady Saints back in front 69-68 with 2:47 left. The score was deadlocked at 71 with under a minute to go until Seward cashed in a pair of free throws and NEO went one for two in their chance to give the Lady Saints a 73-72 lead. Needing a defensive stop, Seward came up huge as Monte picked up a steal at half court and Alana Simon finished a wide open layup to put the gals in green in front 75-72 with just 17 seconds left. The Lady Norse got a look at a three on their final possession, but they couldn't knock down their 11th three of the night and the Lady Saints held on to win 75-72.

All eight Lady Saints had multiple points and multiple rebounds in the victory. Brooks led the way with 18 points as well as on the glass with 9 for Seward. Monte chipped in 16 and dished out a game high 5 assists while Scott and Kyndal Davis combined for 21 for Seward.

The Lady Saints will be back at it Saturday night and things won't get any easier as they take on a Murray State squad that trounced fellow Jayhawk West foe Garden City 71-43 in the early game Friday. The Lady Saints and Lady Aggies will tip at 6:00 in the Greenhouse.

SEWARD COUNTY/NORTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA A&M BOX

SCORE-<http://secesaints.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7187:11113-garden-city-vs-murray-state-pepsi-classic&catid=59:W%20Basketball&Itemid=211>

In the late game, and with the first three games of the Pepsi Classic dragging on past their scheduled times, that meant nearly a 9:00 start for the Saints opening tussle with the veteran Southern Colorado Kings. It was a defensive battle early on as Seward led just 14-12 midway through the first half. Seward began to break away and had their largest lead of the night at 25-19 with 4:28 left in the half. Just when it looked like the Saints were on their way to a nice cushion into the locker rooms, the Kings closed the final 4:30 on a 16-5 run to erase the Saints lead and give themselves a 35-30 advantage at the break.

A 7-0 run to start the second half, including a three from Kevin Smith, put the Saints back in front 37-35 with 16:26 remaining. Seward looked like they were starting to wear down the Kings, who feature a 40 year old point guard in Peron Austin, as they extended their lead to 49-41 with under 10 minutes to go in the contest. But once again, as the Saints have seen year after year, the Kings would just not go away. Southern Colorado crept back into it by forcing Seward into a pair of turnovers and cut the Saints lead to 55-54 with 5:27 to go. The game was deadlocked at 58 with 2:57 remaining and it remained a nip and tuck battle the rest of the way. Seward was able to grab a 68-66 lead with under a minute to go but Darius Pope nailed a three from the wing with 9 seconds remaining to put the Kings in front 69-68. On their ensuing possession, a Seward drive to the basket was tied up and with the possession arrow pointing towards the Kings, it was Southern Colorado ball. After a foul and two free throws made by the Kings the score moved to 71-68 and a last ditch effort to tie it from Malcolm Hill-Bey at the buzzer changed off the backboard as the Saints went down by the final of 71-68.

The Saints were just 1 for 11 from three point land in the loss. Seward also turned the ball over an uncharacteristic 23 times in the defeat. Niem Stevenson turned in a solid effort despite the loss, scoring a game high 27 and pulling down 7 in his Seward County debut. His 27 points marked the most by a Saint in their first game since Latiq Agard scored 28 against Sterling's JV to open the 2008-2009 season. Smith was the only other Saint in double figures as he finished with 14 points.

Seward falls to the Kings for the second time in the past three seasons and will look to rebound Saturday, in an even stiffer test against Northwest Kansas Tech. The Mustangs allowed 90 points in a 90-80 loss to Northern Oklahoma earlier Friday afternoon. The Saints and 'Stangs will tip off at 8:00 in the Greenhouse with free tickets still available, courtesy of our buyout sponsor Pepsi at Billy's, Pizza Hut, First National Bank, and Hutch's.

SEWARD COUNTY/SOUTHERN COLORADO KINGS BOX

SCORE-<[http://secesaints.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7189:11113-northwest-kansas-tech-vs-northern-oklahoma-enid&catid=58:M%20Basketball&Itemid=175](http://secesaints.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7189:11113-northwest-kansas-tech-vs-northern-oklahoma-enid&catid=58:M%20Basketball&Itemid=175>Lady)>Lady

SCCC/ATS Roy Allen