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Beavers Chop Saints Down to Size

There was certainly no fear in the eyes of the Pratt Beavers Saturday night as the Seward County Saints came to town to wrap up round one of the Jayhawk West Conference schedule. Pratt was the aggressors early and often, grabbing an early lead before taking a 16 point lead into the half and cruising to an 85-75 win over the three time defending Jayhawk West Champs to drop Seward from 1st to 3rd place in the league standings at nights end.

Seward started strong, getting an early three from Niem Stevenson and a runner from Quentin Purtue to take an early 5-4 lead. Their lead was short lived though as Pratt scored the next six points to go up 10-5 before stretching their advantage to 15-6 with 13:51 to go in the first. The Saints found themselves down 20-10 before another Purtue bucket cut their deficit to 8 at the media timeout, but Pratt continued to have their way with the ball, pushing their lead to 34-19 in no time and carrying a 43-27 lead into the half.

Pratt couldn't miss in the first 20 minutes, shooting 62% from the field and 57% from three point land while Seward shot just 32% from the field in the half.

The Saints started to work their way back into the game, cutting the Pratt lead to 13 five minutes into the half before a pair of Stevenson scores drew them to within 11 at 52-41 with 13:24 remaining in the contest. A left wing three from Malcolm Hill-Bey drew Seward to within single digits for the first time since early in the game at 54-45, but Pratt quickly answered, pushing their lead back to 66-50 by the six minute mark and hanging on to a sizable lead at 70-56 with under 4:00 to go. The Saints drew to within a dozen and a pair of Brian Bridgeforth free throws made it a 10 point game and fighting both the clock and the Beavers, Seward cut the Pratt lead to eight at 72-64 as Hill-Bey slashed to the basket and scored with 1:22 remaining. A wing three from Tyreke Sharp got the Saints to within seven with 50 seconds left, but that was as close as Seward would get as Pratt knocked down free throws down the stretch to hang on to win 85-75.

Pratt finished the game shooting 52% from the field and the Beavers hit on 78% of their free throw attempts on the night. The Saints shot 37% from the field and finished on 29 of their 41 free throw attempts in the contest. Hill-Bey led the Saints with a game high 22 points while Stevenson scored 14 and Bridgeforth had 12.

Seward falls to 15-8 overall and 5-2 in Jayhawk West play, dropping from 1st to 3rd as the first round of conference action comes to a close. Pratt is also 15-8 overall and 5-2 in league action, holding the tie breaker against the Saints for a surprising 2nd place perch.

The Saints return home Wednesday when they take on Colby in the Greenhouse at 8:00. Free tickets are available courtesy of our buyout sponsor Holiday Inn, at their Liberal location as well as at North Hutch's.

SEWARD COUNTY/PRATT BOX SCORE<http://www.sewardsaints.com/sports/mbkb/2013-14/files/SewardPrattM.htm>

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