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By EARL WATT

- Leader & Times

Basketball and March go together like Cinderella at the big dance, and it is impossible to look at the end-of-season tournaments without finding a team that has defied the odds to make it to a higher level.

But for Kaheem Ransom, getting a chance to play basketball at the collegiate level was a long-shot.

What he did with the opportunity made him one of the all-time greats to ever wear Seward County green.

So far, Ransom has scored 1,001 points as a Saint, only the 10th player in school history ever to break the milestone.

He has two Jayhawk West championships under his belt to go along with a Region 6 title and a third place national finish.

Not bad for a player who drew little attention in high school.

"It's pretty amazing for a guy that few people recruited," Seward coach Bryan Zollinger said. "We may have been the only scholarship offer."

Ransom's parents died when he was young, and the Wichitan had to face a difficult road that few his age travel.

But Ransom drew the attention of Zollinger, and he found a place on the high plains, traveling to Liberal and fitting in with the Saints.

Ransom found a comfort in the Green House and the serene Southwest Kansas setting.

"It's meant a lot," Ransom said of his time at Seward. "We've been very successful, and that's good. I like it here. It's quiet, I don't get distracted a lot."

With his focus on his school work and basketball, Ransom carved a niche as an effective guard, handling the ball and guiding the offense while being a persistent defender at the point.

Saturday, Ransom eclipsed the 1,000 point mark, but he didn't glow in the moment.

As Public Address announcer, Delvin Kinser announced the milestone, Ransom was already headed to the locker room and gave a half-hearted wave as the crowd cheered his accomplishment.

"I want to thank my teammates," he said. "They trust me with the ball. It feels good to be in that

elite club, but I don't want it to stop here. I want it to keep going."

Ransom knew that Seward didn't play a complete game Saturday after jumping out to a 24-point lead. Seward won by 18, but Ransom said that the rest of the season has no room for mental lapses.

"We lost focus on the defensive end," Ransom said. "A couple guys were getting frustrated. We can't let that happen. Against a good team you can slip up and lose a game if your not focused."

And that was his message for his team the rest of the way.

"No slip-ups," Ransom said. "You never know when your last night will be. You have to be focused and take care of business."

It's that dedication that has Ransom and the Saints poised to reach the Final Four of the Region 6 tournament if they can defeat Independence in the Green House tonight.

Despite the outcome, Ransom has become one of the elite Saints of all time, and it could be that Cinderella attitude that will have him dancing his way back to the national tournament.

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