

By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

PARK CITY — Barton County took advantage of second-chance opportunities in the second half to overcome a five-point Seward County lead and upset the top-seeded Saints 70-64 in the Hartman Arena.

The Saints fell behind by as many as eight in the first half before mounting a comeback early in the second.



Seward took its first lead with 17:49 to play when Brian Bridgeforth grabbed a missed shot and slammed it home.

Edson Avila followed with a strong inside bucket, and the Saints had a three-point lead.

Seward's defense continued to force Barton into poor shot choices, and with 14:25 to play, Bridgeforth received an alley-oop pass and flushed another shot through the hoop to give the

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Saints a 48-43 lead.

With 12:52 to play, Malcolm Hill-Bey gave the Saints their biggest lead of the game with a three-point shot that gave the Saints a 51-45 advantage.

Barton switched to a zone defense and forced the Saints to connect from outside, and the Saints, who came in to the game as the best three-point shooting team in the Jayhawk Conference, never hit another three-point shot.

Barton's Andell Cumberbatch hit a shot, and Kevin Kuteyi nailed a three, and with 12:07 to play, Barton had Seward's lead down to one.

Leslee Smith and Bridgeforth combined for three free throws, and with 9:04 to play, Seward had a four-point lead.

With 5:34 to play, Seward built the lead back to five with an Avila basket.

But Seward would not score for the next four-and-a-half minutes while Barton went on an 11-0 run to erase Seward's lead and take a 66-60 lead with 1:05 to play.

Seward had chances to protect the lead by making Barton miss shots, but the Cougars were able to get offensive rebounds and make shots or get fouled.

Seward continued to struggle with long-range shots in the final minute, and Barton preserved the upset at the line.

The Saints made three of 18 three-point attempts and only made 38 percent of their shots.

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Ransom scored 14 points to lead the Saints, and 12 of those came in the first half. Malcolm Hill-Bey and Jabari Peters each scored 11.

“They played their game better than we played our game,” Seward coach Bryan Zollinger said. “Our top guys didn’t play as well as their top guys. It happens sometimes. They deserved to win, we didn’t.”

The offensive rebounds proved to be the difference.

“No question,” Zollinger said. “Every time we got them to miss on a big possession, they got a rebound or got a foul. We couldn’t attack the zone. We’ve been the leading three point shooting team in the league. We couldn’t break the zone because we couldn’t extend them.”

The loss ended the season, but the sophomores were able to rack up big numbers.

“Obviously they had great careers,” Zollinger said. “They won 56 games two conference championships, a Region 6 title, third in the nation. You can’t let one night undermine everything they accomplished.”