

## Seward holds keys to Kingdom Prep, earn 111-79 win

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By EARL WATT

- Leader & Times

Seward needed less than seven minutes Saturday to build a 20-point lead against Kingdom Prep and cruised th a 111-79 win in the Greenhouse.

Five Saints scored in the 25-4 run before Kingdom Prep was able to keep pace with Seward.

Seward dominated the glass, out-rebounding Kingdom Prep 54-34, and they were able to turn the rebounds into fast breaks.

Brian Bridgeforth completed one fast break with a highlight-reel dunk where he put his empty hand behind his head as he flushed the ball through the uncontested hoop.

The pattern was familiar throughout the night.

Just before the half ended, Niem Stevenson received an outlet pass and jammed the ball home as the buzzer sounded for a 61-41 Seward lead.

Malcolm Hill-Bey drained a three with 15:53 to play that gave the Saints a 75-45 lead, and with 1:37 to go, Raoul Mentor gave the Saints their biggest lead of the game with a basket that put Seward up by 39.

Secan Johnson led seven Saints in double digits with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Quentin Purtue also had a double double with 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Brian Bridgeforth scored 18, Kevin Smith had 13, Hill-Bey contributed 11, Mentor scored 10 and Tyreke Sharp also scored 10.

Seward shot 55 percent for the game while holding Kingdom Prep to 37 percent, but Seward's free throws struggles continued. Seward only made four of 20 attempts.

But finishing possessions with points was a welcome sight for Seward coach Bryan Zollinger.

"We are trying to get more consistent in our execution," he said. "We want to open up the floor to take advantage of our quickness. I think we are making strides. More guys are starting to figure it out."

Seward evened up their record at 6-6, but the Saints had a brutal schedule to start the season. No. 13 Northeast Colorado, No. 2 South Plains and No. 12 North Platte all defeated the Saints, and they are all still undefeated.

“We played some rugged teams early on,” Zollinger said. “In the long run it will pay off, it wasn’t easy for our guys to get through some of that.”

But Zollinger is no stranger at building a winner. Seward is the three-time defending Jayhawk West champions, and he makes sure his team knows that winning titles is a process.

“I tell them trust me,” he said. “I’ve been doing this for 25 years. We won a lot of games here. Trust the process, the coaching staff, come to work every day, persevere and things will turn out all right.”

Seward travels to Garden City to face God’s Academy Friday.

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