

By ROY ALLEN

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The Seward County Lady Saints fought against the elements on Saturday night in their final regular season road trip of the 2014 season against Cloud County.

Seward started slow after the six hour trip to Concordia and then early on lost one of their top players in Korina Chapman with an injury. Already thin on the inside with Chapman being out, Seward saw their other three forwards all battle foul trouble throughout the night and eventually went down 79-71 despite a valiant late game effort for their third loss in their last five games.



It looked like it was going to be a good night for Seward as they opened the game up 5-0 after Fabiana Monte hit a three to get things going and Shanise Brooks scored in the paint to give themselves the early advantage. From that point though, Seward went cold.

Cloud County went on an 11-2 run over the next 4:00 to build an 11-7 lead with 15:00 to go in the first half. The Lady T-Birds continued to have their way on the offensive end, and Seward continued to struggle.

Cloud stretched their lead to 27-13 midway through the first half when Rebekah Hatchard hit her second straight three-pointer to get the Lady Saints back to within 11 at 27-16. Seward connected on two more threes, but again couldn't stop Cloud on the other end as the Lady T-Birds remained up double digits at 34-24 with 5:00 left in the half.

Hatchard continued her hot shooting with her third three of the half, and Monte scored on a runner in the lane to get Seward back to within seven at 38-31 with under 3:00 to go in the half. The Lady Saints finished the half strong and despite a 13-2 Cloud run early in the half, Seward trailed by just four, 43-39 at the break.

Seward shot just 34 percent in the half while Cloud shot 46 percent in the period. Hatchard led Seward with 9 first half points while Brooks and Monte each had 8.

An early three point play from Kyndal Davis in the second got Seward to within a pair at 47-45 and a steal and ensuing three point play from Monte put the Lady Saints in front for the first time since the opening minutes at 48-47 with 16:00 to go.

After Cloud went back ahead, another huge three from Hatchard gave Seward a one point lead, but with just under 13:00 to go, all three of the Lady Saints active forwards had picked up their fourth foul, and the game started to unravel for the Lady Saints. Cloud went on an 11-2 run to take a seven-point lead and continued that run all the way to 19-2 to open a 68-53 lead on the Lady Saints. Hatchard continued her career night for Seward, cutting the Cloud lead to 10 at the 4:28 mark and with scores on their next two possessions, the Lady Saints made it a six point game, 71-65 with just under 4:00 left. Looking to get it to a one possession game, the Lady Saints were called for a big offensive foul to kill their momentum, but Seward stood tough, drawing it to a four point game moments later as Brooks scored in the lane with 50 seconds left to make it 75-71. However, that would be as close as the Lady Saints would get as Cloud iced the game away at the free throw line to come away with a 79-71 lead over 16th ranked Seward.

Seward shot just 31 percent from the field in the game and launched a season high 35 three's in the game, making just 9 of them. Hatchard led the way for the Lady Saints with a career high 17 while Monte scored 16 and had a career high 10 rebounds in her first double-double. Brooks finished with 15 points and 8 rebounds in her homecoming to North Central Kansas. Cloud's Jordyn Alexander finished with a game high 30 points as well as 10 rebounds, while Jayna Smith had her second straight career performance against the Lady Saints with 26.

Even with the bad news of the loss to drop Seward to 24-5 overall and 9-4 in Jayhawk West play, the Lady Saints wrapped up the #2 seed in the Jayhawk West for the upcoming Region VI Tournament as Garden City went down to Dodge City in a big Saturday night upset. Cloud improves to 16-12 on the year and is now in a mess at 7-6, tied with Garden City and Pratt for 3rd place with just one game to go.

The Lady Saints will wrap up the regular season at home on Wednesday night in the Greenhouse as they host the Pratt Lady Beavers on Sophomore Night in Liberal. The Lady Saints and Lady Beavers will tip at 6:00 with sophomore recognition events going on after the game. Free tickets are available courtesy of buyout sponsor Sharp, McQueen, PA, at their Liberal office, as well as at Pizza Hut, Community Bank, and Hutch's.