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Daily Leader

Big time players, make big time plays, in big time games. Rachel Barnes made plays aplenty in the Lady Saints semi-final matchup with Cowley. Barnes scored a career high 41 points along with 16 rebounds, nine assists, and seven steals en rout to a 22-point-regional-semi-final win over Cowley, 86-64.

"I just knew we had to make it to the finals," Barnes said. "I knew I had to be on my game today. I started feeling it, and just kept playing."



Barnes put together a highlight reel in one game, hitting threes, scoring inside, forcing turnovers, getting the ball to open teammates, Barnes did it all.

The Seward post's freak performance began after Cowley jumped out to a 6-0 lead. Barnes then scored the Lady Saints first seven points to make it a 9-7 game with under 14 minutes to go in the first half.

Barnes scores 41, Lady Saints advance to championship

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The first half looked as though Cowley was going to push Seward to the brink up one 19-18 with eight minutes to play.

That is when the tide turned. The Lady Saints went on a 23-4 run to end the half, 10 of those 23 points came via Barnes. The run sent Seward into the break up 41-23 over the Lady Tigers.

In just the first half of play alone, Barnes had already recorded a double-double scoring 21 points and ripping down 12 boards, 10 of which were offensive rebounds.

Seward drew first blood in the second half off a Megan Lassley three from the wing and Seward was up 21, 44-23. From there Seward's lead never dropped below 13 after Cowley's Jasamyne Saunders scored six straight points off steals in the Lady Saints backcourt.

"That was very out of character for us," Lady Saints head coach Toby Wynn said. "Typically we get after and attack the press and get baskets in transition. We got back on track and got in transition and started making layups and we settled down after the timeout."

Seward began to escape the press seemingly with ease, scoring in transition and keeping the Lady Tigers out of reach with some strong defense of their own.

Seward forced 20 steals and 29 total turnovers in the contest, and were able to capitalize off the Lady Tiger mistakes, scoring 31 points off turnovers.

Barnes continued her dominance the second half as she scored 20 points, pulled down four boards, dished out six assists and came away with four steals, in the second half alone.

With the game winding down, and in the bag, Barnes went to the free-throw line to shoot two with 51.8 seconds on the clock. Barnes sunk both shots to record 41 total points before making her way to the Lady Saints bench and receiving a standing ovation from Saints fans in Charles Koch Arena.

"When I went to the line to just thought to myself, I got to sink these, " Barnes said. "After I made them I just started jumping and screaming 'Yes!,' in my head. Then I went to the sideline and saw how happy coach and the team were for me and it made me happy too. All these people here, the scouts, but most of all my dad and sister being here and to have a game like this in front of them, I know they were happy for me, and it feels good."

The win will move Seward to the Region VI Championship tomorrow night at at 6 p.m. in a highly anticipated rematch with Labette.

Labette defeated Seward County earlier in the season 69-67 in the Green House before celebrating at mid-court in front of the Seward County crowd.

"It just makes me want to beat them more," Barnes said. "It's our chance to get back at them, get some revenge and show who the better team is."

"They are a very talented team," Lady Saints head coach Toby Wynn said. "They took one from us at home, and it gives our girls a shot at some revenge. We have a lot of sophomores who got knocked out in this game last year, and we are going to try and make sure that doesn't happen this time around."

Seward and Labette will play at 6 p.m. Monday. The winner will advance to the NJCAA National Tournament.