

By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Seward County experienced a rare moment of emotion Saturday at Brent Gould Field after earning a 1-0 win in the bottom of the ninth inning over Independence in the first round of the Region 6 baseball tournament.

But don't expect it to become a habit.

Seward coach Galen McSpadden's demeanor is the normal tone of the Saints, on the field and in the dugout, and it is an even-keel approach that has guided McSpadden and his teams to multiple titles and professional careers for his players.

"They reflect what they have witnessed all year, some of them two years," McSpadden said. "We treat this game as a railroad track, not a roller coaster. You have to keep on trucking. You don't experience too many highs or lows, and you don't let it show or over-react."

That is what McSpadden observed in his coaches, and that is what he tries to convey to his players.

"I didn't play for a rah-rah coach," McSpadden said. "He didn't allow a lot of crap out of the dugout. I always respected whoever I was playing, and I respect the game. There can be too much hoo-rah especially if it is poor timing."

He presses his team to provide a more professional approach to the game. While some dugouts

light up with chatter for a batter, that is not typical of the Saints dugout. For them, the batter knows his responsibility and is looking to perform the designated task, and that doesn't necessarily require an inflated adrenaline rush from constant banter from teammates.

"There is a business approach to the game," McSpadden said. "If I coached in high school, I would have taught them to win with respect and lose with respect, and to play on an even keel. If you want to get on to somebody, get on to yourself. Gee whiz, the other day, against Independence, in the first inning, there was a lot of chirping."

When the Saints reach Lawrence-Dumont Stadium to face Kansas City at 1 p.m. Friday, chances are the Saints dugout will again be the most subdued, but that shouldn't be mistaken for a lack of desire, simply a different approach to the game.

"Sometimes my family asks me, 'Just how alive are you?'" McSpadden said. "I don't get too high or too low."

For McSpadden, he is playing a chess match and Texas Hold 'Em as much as a baseball game, putting his pieces in the right place on the board, and not letting anyone know what the next move will be.

When an error occurs, or a batter misses a sign, or a pitcher hangs a curve, to McSpadden those are vocational mistakes that he works to correct, and it has been that approach that has the Saints ranked as the No. 1 seed in the tournament.