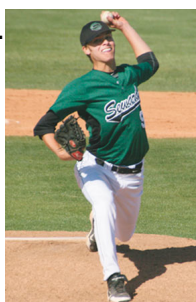


By ROY ALLEN

Seward assistant athletic director

Seward County lefty Hayden Howard may be a 19-year-old freshman, but he certainly hasn't pitched like it this season.



The Saints No. 2 man pitched one of the finest games in Seward County baseball history on Saturday to send the Saints on to the next round of the Region 6 Tournament and by doing so was named the NJCAA National Pitcher of the Week.

Howard was outstanding once again for Seward County on Saturday, throwing a three-hit shutout and striking out 12 in a 1-0 Saints win over Independence. Howard gutted out a 131-pitch performance and Seward needed every bit of it as they went scoreless until the ninth inning when the Saints won it in walk-off fashion, 1-0. His 12 strikeouts are the most by a Seward pitcher since the 2008 season when Tomas Cruz struck out 12 Butler batters in a game. Howard has not allowed a run in 17-2/3 innings and during that span has allowed just 4 hits while striking out 23. He is the first Seward pitcher to win the award since closer Willy Gustin did it in the opening week of the 2011 season.