

Smith hits 'biggest shot' of his life

Thursday, 28 February 2013 12:17

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By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Seward County fans took an emotional roller coaster ride in the Green House Wednesday while the lead changed hands three times in the final four minutes, and with 11 seconds to play, the game was tied.

That's when Leslee Smith hit the biggest shot of his life that secured Seward's third consecutive Jayhawk West title by knocking off Hutchinson 62-60.

But for Smith, the play already happened in the huddle prior to his clutch bank-shot.

"Coach said get it in bounds," Smith said. "It was drew up perfectly. It was like it already happened before we actually did it. He told the guards if they help come and push the length of the floor. I was in the right place at the right time and happy to be a part of it."

The Blue Dragons wanted to keep the ball out of the hands of sophomore standout Kaheem

Ransom, and they double teamed him on the inbounds play.

Malcolm Hill-Bey streaked in to get the ball in bounds, and with time draining off the clock, he dashed past the in-bound pressure and was uncontested until he reached the lane.

Three Hutchinson defenders converged on Hill-Bey, and he dished the ball to a wide open Smith.

Smith leaped toward the basket and put the ball off the glass. When it passed through the hoop, the Green House erupted.

"That was the biggest shot I ever took," Smith said. "That was the best shot in my career. I have been playing for a long time, and this was the biggest moment. I just want to break down and cry."

Smith was somewhat of a gentle giant at the beginning of the season. He had the size, but his performance was not matching the potential.

But coach Bryan Zollinger never let up on his big freshman, and the light came on.

"It started in practice," Smith said. "Coach pushes us, he never eases off. We do hard drills every day, we have to believe in our drills, if we practice it, that means we are capable. It took me a while to understand that they believed in me, and I know it was getting closer to the time where we really needed to step up. My coaches, my teammates needed me to step up. I just had to be that person that everybody believes I am."

When the ball was in his hands and the game on the line, Smith delivered the shot of his life.

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