

By EARL WATT

• Daily Leader

Seward may have been the favorite Saturday night at the Green House, but the game against Cloud County was in doubt until the final five minutes when Seward stretched to a double digit lead and contained the Thunderbirds down the stretch for a 80-66 win and jump out to a 4-0 start to the Jayhawk West conference.



Despite the win, Seward coach Brian Zollinger wanted to see a better defensive effort.

"We turned the ball over way too much," he said. "Our defensive effort was extremely poor."

Seward committed 14 turnovers in the game, two less than Cloud.

The Saints have been playing shorthanded with a knee injury to Robert Sigala, and some of the miscues might be attributed to losing the team's most experienced guard.

Still, Zollinger expected the players on the court to get the job done.

Saints finish strong in 80-66 win over Cloud

Saturday, 16 January 2010 23:36

"It's always nice to win," he said. "But if you accept poor execution and lack of effort, it will get you at some point."

Seward had as high as a six point lead in the first half, but Cloud was able to erase the deficit early in the second half and take a one point lead.

Seward responded with a pair of baskets by Marcus James before a Cloud County three pointer tied the game, 44-44.

But that is as close as the T-Birds would get.

The Saints picked up the pace down the stretch and held the T-Birds to 32 percent shooting in the second half while hitting 61 percent of their own shots in the second half.

Tony Smith continued to impress with 23 points, seven rebounds and eight assists. Marky Nolen and Donte McCarter each scored 13, Marcus James had 12, and Latiq Agard scored 11.

"We had guys score," Zollinger said. "But I am furious about the defense."

Seward plays at Colby Wednesday.