

By ROY ALLEN

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Seward County freshmen Paula Lopez and Paula Coyos finished in third place at the 2013 ITA National Tournament Saturday morning in Fort Myers, Fla. The duo had a 2-1 record during the two day event.

After defeating third-seeded Mississippi Gulf Coast on day one of the tournament to reach the semifinals, Lopez and Coyos faced second-seeded Joanna Savva and Fausthyara Pietersz of Tyler Junior College.

The Lady Saints duo got off to a slow start, getting broken in each of their first serving opportunities to quickly fall behind 4-0. They responded by breaking Savva, and holding serve to get back to 4-2.

Momentum was on their side as they then broke Pietersz to get to within one game at 4-3.

The Apaches got their break back with a win in the eighth game to take a 5-3 lead. The teams traded the next two games, and the slow start proved fatal for the Lady Saints, as Savva and Pietersz took the first set 6-4.

The second set was even early on as the teams held serve to 3-3 before Tyler picked up the first break to take a 4-3 lead. The break seemed to be the one that broke the camel's back, or

the Lady Saints spirit in this case. Seward dropped the final two games after the break to fall 6-3, and end their championship run.

Despite the loss, they still had to face the tall task of competing in a third place match later that afternoon.

They took on another duo coming off of a disappointing loss in Olivia Erlandsson and Jazz Whittaker of St. Petersburg College. Lopez and Coyos got off to a good start, taking a 2-1 lead. They dropped the next two games to fall behind 3-2.

Seward earned two huge breaks to get themselves back on track and took the lead back 5-4, before Lopez served the set out with a win to take the first set 6-4.

The Lady Saints started the second set with an all-important break, and quickly went up 2-0 after holding serve. The Lady Saints continued to push, and held their two-game advantage to 4-2.

Neither the Lady Saints or Titans could break their opposing server in the final four games, and they traded games until Seward took the set 6-4 to win third place.

The third-place finish is the highest for any Seward duo since Alejandra Miranda Sanchez and Veronica Bansemer finished 2nd at the tournament in 2003.

Lopez and Coyos improve to 13-4 on the fall with just one tournament remaining, Oct. 25 and 26, at Tabor.