

## Saints dismantle Midland defense, cruise to 67-48 win

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By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Seward struggled for the first four minutes against Midland Friday, and it appeared that the slow beginning to the season would continue for the Saints.

But a 20-2 run put Seward back on track, perhaps for the season, and the Saints never looked back in a 67-48 win.

Seward played solid defense early, but the inability to make shots allowed Midland to take a 5-0 lead with a basket from Herve Aholde and a three-pointer from Darren Williams.

And then the light came on.

Kevin Smith found his shot and scored six of Seward's first eight points, along with a basket from Niem Stevenson, and the Saints erased the five-point deficit to take an 8-5 lead with 14:14 to play in the first half.

Aholde made another basket in the pain for the Chaparrals to cut the Seward lead to one, but Midland didn't score again for almost five minutes.

Seward went on a tear during the Midland drought that included two three-point buckets from Malcolm Hill-Bey along with two baskets from Stevenson and a two-pointer from Brian Bridgeforth, and with 10:12 to play, the Saints had jumped out to a 20-7 lead.

Midland stopped the bleeding with a three-point basket from Aholde followed by a runner from Demetric Austin and a free throw from Williams to time Seward's lead to 20-13.

The Saints responded with an 11-1 run that included a three-pointer by Tyreke Sharp, a pair of free throws from Hill-Bey and another pair of three throws plus two baskets from Stevenson, and the Saints stretched out to a 31-14 lead.

Midland rallied to outscore the Saints 9-6 by half and cut the Seward lead to 13 early in the second half before Smith deflated the Chaparrals with a three-pointer followed by two free throws, and the Saints extended the lead to 42-26.

The Saint continued to push the ball with quick passes to reverse the ball to find the open shooter, and with 10:49 to play, the Saints opened up an 18-point lead after another three from Hill-Bey.

Midland never posed a serious threat in the final 10 minutes.

With 3:03 to play, the Saints reached their biggest lead of the night after a Smith basket gave the Saints a 62-43 lead. Midland added a three-pointer and a basket in the final two minutes, but Stevenson was able to put an exclamation on the night after Seward ran down the play clock with 5.8 seconds to play by nailing a three-pointer for the 67-48 final.

Smith led all scorers with 20 points. Stevenson scored 17 points and Hill-Bey added 13.

The win moved Seward to 3-2 after a tough start with losses to the Colorado Kings and a disappointing three-point loss on the road to No. 25 North Platte, 57-54.

Seward now has back-to-back wins for the first time this season after a win against Kingdom Prep and Friday's win over Midland.

The Saints had a chance for an early-season signature win Saturday night against No. 9 South Plains. See Monday's L&T for results.

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