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By EARL WATT

- Leader & Times

The traditional fan clap in the final minute of a Lady Saints game had to wait until the final 11 seconds Friday. Seward only led by one point at the final minute, but Fabiana Monte's two free throws with 11.6 seconds to play finally allowed the Seward fans to breathe a collective sigh of relief in a 69-62 Lady Saints win.

Seward was challenged by the Lady Texans from the tip, but every time South Plains made a run to tie the game or take a slight lead, the Lady Saints responded.

Seward lost its rhythm with about seven minutes to play, and South Plains built its largest lead of the game, 54-51, with 5:53 to play after a basket inside from Rayvon Christian.

Payton Fleming responded for Seward with a drive through the lane and a basket while being fouled. But Fleming's missed free throw kept the Lady Saints chasing for the next minute.

The shorthanded Lady Saints focused on the defensive side of the floor and forced three straight stops, and with 4:38 to play, Korina Chapman had another chance for a three-point play with a penetrating drive for a basket and another South Plains foul. But she, too, missed the bonus shot, and Seward clung to a one-point lead, 55-54.

Chapman gave the Lady Saints a three-point lead on the next trip down the floor with a mid-range jumper.

South Plains' Alexius Dawn sliced the lead back to one with a pair of free throws, and the Lady Texans took a one-point lead with 3:22 to play with an open jumper from TeSheena Moore.

Brianna Scott followed with a bucket on Seward's next possession with a shot in the lane to see-saw the lead back to Seward, 59-58.

Monte added two more free throws with 2:16 to play for a three-point Seward lead.

But the Lady Texans pushed to the basket 12 seconds later, and Jasmine Brainard drew a foul and made both shots to cut the Lady Saints lead back to one with 2:04 to play.

Monte popped another jumper with 1:48 to play to extend the lead back to three, but South Plains again trimmed it back to one by driving to the basket and kicking the ball back out to the elbow for an open jumper from Dawn with 1:16 to play, and again the Lady Texans were within one of the 19th ranked Lady Saints, 61-60.

With the game in the balance in the final minute, the Lady Saints executed, and the Lady Texans faltered.

Scott started the push for Seward with a basket that gave the Lady Saints a three-point lead,

and this time, the Lady Saints didn't give it right back.

Seward rebounded a Lady Texan miss, and the ball was passed to Monte. The Lady Texans waited for a pass to Scott to commit a foul, but Scott was able to knock down both shots to build a 67-62 Seward lead with 29.8 seconds to play.

Another missed Lady Texans shot ended up in the hands of Monte, and this time the Lady Texans had no choice but to foul.

Monte knocked down both shots with 11.6 seconds to play, and Seward iced the game, 69-62.

Both teams struggled from the perimeter. Seward only made two of 11 three-point shots while the Lady Texans only made four of 25 attempts.

Monte led the Lady Saints with 17 points.

Shenice Brooks and Chapman each scored 12, and Scott added 10.

The Lady Saints edged out the Lady Texans in rebounds, 47-45, and the last two were critical in closing out the win.

The Lady Saints (4-0) faced Ft. Carson Saturday night in the Greenhouse.

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