



By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Rarely did the game clock in the Greenhouse run for more than a few seconds at a time before being interrupted by a whistle Friday night in a foul-laden game between Seward and Murray State.

By the time the final second ticked off, six players had fouled out, seven technical fouls were issued, and the Saints were able to pull away late for a 92-70 win.

Seward coach Bryan Zollinger didn't believe that the excessive whistles were necessary.

What did he see?

“Nothing,” he said. “There was nothing going on. Somebody was getting trigger happy.”

By halftime, Murray State’s Clement Bernardo had four fouls and three of his teammate had three.

Seward’s Niem Stevenson was the only Saint with three fouls in the first half.

The Saints took advantage of the foul-happy Aggies early by scoring five of their first 12 points at the free throw line. Malcolm Hill-Bey chipped in an early three-pointer, and the Saints jumped out to a 12-2 lead in the first five minutes.

Seward expanded the lead to 15 after a runner from Kevin Smith, and with 10:53 to play in the first half, the Saints stretched out to a 35-9 lead.

The domination continued until the final 2:36 of the half when Seward built an 18-point lead, 42-24, and had a chance to stretch it to 20, but Tyreke Sharp missed two free throws, and Murray State started to cut away at the Saints lead.

Murray State switched to a zone defense, and the Saints struggled to find shots.

The Aggies closed out the half on a 12-2 run to cut Seward’s lead to eight.

The Saints continued to struggle against the zone early in the second half, and the Aggies cut deeper into the Seward lead.

With 15:03 to play, Murray State’s Wyatt Smith nailed a three that tied the game, 49-49.

“We lost some intensity on defense that let them make a couple of runs,” Zollinger said. “And we took some quick shots that got us out of rhythm.”

Seward turned up the defensive pressure and found its rhythm.

The Saints put together an 8-0 run to take a 57-49 lead, and tempers started to flare after a relatively foul-free 10 minutes.

Twice both teams were called with double technicals, and four Aggies made the long walk to the bench after receiving their fifth foul. Murray State’s Eric Brown earned six fouls when he picked up a technical after committing his fifth foul.

Smith had the hot hand for the Saints that sparked the rally. He scored eight points in two minutes including a three-pointer that needed another Aggie run and extended the Seward lead to nine.

“I thought Kevin did a good job,” Zollinger said “Others pitched in with energy plays, but Kevin is a spark plug for us. He penetrated the zone.”

The Saints went on an 21-6 run over five minutes to extend the lead to 24, 86-62, and Seward cruised to the 92-70 win.

Smith led the Saints 23 points.

Seward (9-6) played OnPoint Academy late Saturday, and Zollinger said the game plan remained the same.

“The first challenge every night is be mentally prepared to perform at a high level,” he said. “Play with intensity on the defensive end, and on the offensive side execute and knock down a couple shots. Doing it is hard, but the formula is simple.”

BOX SCORE

MURRAY STATE (70)

Bornardo 1-3 3-6 5, Milidragovic 4-7 0-0 8, Fleurima 4-11 3-3 11, Danyliv 2-3 0-2 6, Guest 0-5 2-4 2, Golightly 6-11 3-8 17, Smith 5-9 3-4 15, Brown 1-3 0-0 3, Henderson 1-3 1-1 3

SEWARD COUNTY (92)

Bridgeforth 1-1 5-7 7, Purtue 2-5 3-5 7, Hill-Bey 4-5 2-4 11, Smith 7-18 6-7 23, Johnson 3-7 9-10 15, Stevenson 5-6 6-9 17, Allen 1-2 0-0 2, Mays 1-3 0-2 2, Sharp 2-5 0-1 5, Johnston 0-1 1-2 1, Benjamin 1-1 0-0 2