

## Saints rally to force overtime, get 1-point win

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By EARL WATT

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After leading the entire second half until the final 34 seconds, Seward found themselves trailing by four with only 14.5 seconds to play Saturday in the Greenhouse. Somehow, the Saints found a way to force overtime and survive the extra period with a late put-back shot from Quentin Purtue for an 84-83 win to stay tied at the top of the Jayhawk West.

The Saints had as much as a nine-point lead in the second half, but Dodge City kept the game close, and with 33.8 seconds to play, Brett O'Neill hit a three-pointer that gave Dodge a 77-75 lead.



Seward could not convert on its next possession, and the Saints fouled George Brock with 14.5 seconds to play. Brock stepped up to the line and drained both shots to give the Conquistadors a 77-73 lead.

Malcolm Hill-Bey streaked coast to coast to cut the deficit in half with 9.9 seconds to play, and after Dodge City inbounded to Brock, Seward fouled him, and he returned to the line.

This time, Brock missed both shots, and with 4.3 seconds to play, Niem Stevenson hit a shot for the Saints to tie the game, 77-77. Doge City couldn't make a last-second three, and the game

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went to overtime.

Stevenson put Seward ahead by two, but three Dodge City free throws later, Seward trailed 80-79.

Hill-Bey had a chance to give the Saints a lead after he was fouled, but he only made one of two to tie the game, 80-80.

Brock gave the Conqs an 82-80 lead with a basket, and again the Saints answered with a one-for-two performance at the free throw line, this time from Evan Allen, and Seward trailed by one, 82-81.

With 2:02 to play, Hill-Bey again had a chance to give the Saints a lead at the free throw line, but he only made one of two to tie the game, 82-82.

With 24 seconds to play, Dalton Haist hit one of two free throws for Dodge, and the Conqs had an 83-82 lead.

Seward had a shot in the final five seconds that missed, but Purtue grabbed the rebound and put a shot off the glass that dropped for an 84-83 Seward lead with 2.1 seconds to play. Dodge City tried to push to halfcourt but a desperation shot sailed wide left, and the Greenhouse erupted.

While the Saints were battling Dodge City in overtime, Hutchinson had to survive in overtime against 88-85 over Pratt, and Cloud knocked off Garden City 76-69 in overtime.

Seward coach Bryan Zollinger wasn't happy about simply surviving in a game he believed his team should have been able to win without overtime.

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“I thought we found about 75 ways to try to give the game away,” he said. “We were lucky to win, it had nothing to do with skill. Unless we grow enough guts to make free throws and play basic defense and stuff like that, we will lose against better teams.”

Seward only made 21 of 44 free throw attempts in the game for 48 percent while the Conquistadors made 22 of 30 attempts for 73 percent.

The struggles at the line provided Zollinger with an opportunity to compare the Saints to characters from the Wizard of Oz.

“The Tin Man and the lion found out the Wizard couldn’t give them courage and heart,” he said. “They had to find it within. Our guys haven’t figured that out yet. They are waiting for someone else to give it to them. They have to find it within.”

Would the overtime win provide a building block for the Saints who remain tied for the Jayhawk West lead?

“We got lucky,” Zollinger said.

Stevenson led the Saints with 20 points. Hill-Bey scored 15, Secan Johnson had 14, Brian Bridgeforth had a double double with 12 rebounds and 11 points, Purtue scored 11, and Evan Allen added 10.

Seward (14-7, 4-1) will return to the Greenhouse Wednesday to host Cloud (10-11, 2-3). Free tickets are available at First National Bank locations.