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By ROY ALEN

- Seward assistant athletic director

The Seward County Lady Saints made short work of the Neosho County Panthers Saturday night in the Greenhouse as the Region VI Tournament opened on their home turf, taking a 48-12 lead into the half before blowing the Panthers away 90-36 to advance to the quarterfinal round of the Region VI Tournament on Wednesday where they will have their third matchup of the season with the Barton Lady Cougars.



The Neosho County Panthers already had the cards stacked against them for Saturday night's Region VI Tournament opener as they had to make the long trip from Chanute to Liberal to play a 25-5 Seward County squad, add on top of that that the Panthers had won just one game in the past month, and for the icing on the cake, they would be playing without their leading scorer Ashley Grant, and the makings were there for a very long night in the Greenhouse.

It didn't take long for Neosho's problems to start as Seward opened the game by scoring the first eight points of the contest including a three point play by Shanise Brooks inside to put them on top 8-0 three minutes in. The Panthers didn't score until the 15:25 mark of the half as they got a free throw to make it 9-1 and Fabiana Monte quickly answered with a three for Seward to give them a 12-1 advantage.

Monte rained in another three moments later before Neosho finally got their first field goal of the game at nearly the 14:00 mark of the half.

Seward continued to pour it on the hapless Panthers, going up 20-3 at the 12:00 mark and getting Monte's fourth three of the half to take a 30-7 lead with 8:02 to go in the half.

A pair of free throws from Alana Simon stretched the Seward lead to 36-9 and two more three's from Monte had Seward in front 42-9 with 3:18 to go in the period and Seward went to the half in front 48-12.

Seward shot 46 percent from the floor in the half and 47 percent from the three point line while Neosho struggled to just 3 first half field goals and 10 percent shooting in the period. The Panthers turned the ball over 17 times to Seward in the first 20 minutes while the Lady Saints were loose with the ball as well, turning it over 10 times. Monte led Seward with 18 first half points on 6 three's, outscoring Neosho's entire team by 6 in the half.

It didn't get any better for the Panthers as the second half began. Brianna Scott scored six straight early in the second half for Seward to put them up by 40 and steal and scores on three straight plays for the Lady Saints blew their lead open to 62-17 with 14:16 remaining. Then it was Kyndal Davis' turn to get going and a couple of steals and six straight points for her had the Lady Saints rolling, on top 70-17. Seward held Neosho without a field goal for seven minutes as they went on a 22-2 run to take a 72-18 lead at the second half media timeout. The Lady Saints slowed down a little bit from that point, going four minutes without a point and seven minutes without a field goal midway through the half, but turned it back up late to come away with a blowout 90-36 win to advance in the tournament.

The stat sheet as expected was all Seward at the end of the night. The Lady Saints shot 43 percent to Neosho's 19 percent in the game while forcing 34 Panther turnovers and outrebounding their Jayhawk East foes 54-43 in the game. Monte led Seward with 20 and with her 6 three's in the game, puts her in elite company as one of just six players in school history to do so in a game. Scott flirted with a triple-double in the win, finishing with 19 points, 8 rebounds, and 7 steals in 27 minutes of work while Payton Fleming finished with 16 points off the Seward bench and Janel Tammen grabbed 9 boards in a relief role for the Lady Saints.

No. 20 Seward improves to 26-5 with the win while Neosho's season ends at 11-20 after a forgettable end of the season for the Panthers. The Lady Saints advance on to the Region VI Quarterfinals once again where they will take on Barton for the third time this season on Wednesday at 5:00 in Koch Arena on the campus of Wichita State University.

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