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By EARL WATT

Daily Leader

After falling behind 10-1 in the first the minutes, the Saints battled back to earn a 33-28 halftime lead.

Seward was whistled for four offensive fouls in the first eight minutes of the game.

Latiq Agard scored 14 points in the first half. Marky Nolen had seven. Agard and Nolen each had two fouls in the first half.

Kansas City rallied in the second half and took a 52-49 lead.

The Saints battled back to 55-53, and Robert Sigala found the ball in his hands underneath the basket after a loose ball bounced from a Saint to a Devil and back. Sigala tied the game with a lay-in, and Agard put the Saints ahead for good at 57-55.

The Saints completed an 8-0 run for a 61-55 lead, and after the Devils squeezed the lead to 61-59, the Saints put a final run together for the distance they would need to earn the win.

A three-pointer, two free throws and a couple of lay-ups put the Saints ahead 72-63.

Kansas City tried to foul to get back in the game, but the Saints hit nine of 12 down the stretch while the Devils couldn't make up the difference in the 85-66 Saints win.

"I thought we were uptight at the beginning of the game," Seward coach Brian Zollinger said. "Maybe we let pressure get to us instead of embracing the challenge."

Early in the game, the Saints struggled with offensive fouls. Zollinger explained some basketball fundamentals during halftime.

"One of the rules of the game of basketball is you can't run over a guy who has established defensive position," he said. "We ran right over the guy. It wasn't a bad call. We just didn't have good awareness on the court. At halftime, I told them you can't run over the guy."

The game might have been further out of reach, but Kansas City was able to connect on eight three-pointers. There were times when Zollinger was not pleased with his perimeter defense.

"Part of our plan was to be aware of where their three point shooters were before they got in the catch and shoot motion," Zollinger said. "Several times Marcus (James) and Jon (Tassin) lost track of them. I told them they had to have better awareness."

But the well eventually ran dry for the Devils, and Seward was able to get rebounds after missed Kansas City shots and extended their lead.

"I felt like if we could ever get the lead to about 10 we could put some distance between us," Zollinger said. "They are a good team, and we expected a good game. It went about like I thought it would."

With the first-round victory, the Saints advanced to Wichita for a 5 p.m. game Friday.

"We have a playoff game under our belt," Zollinger said. "Hopefully we will settle down, play hard and win a game in Koch."

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