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By SHAWN YORKS

• *Daily Leader*

Last week's loss at Colby made life difficult for the Seward County Community College Lady Saints. Now, if the Lady Saints want to host a first round playoff match next week, they have to be perfect in their last two matches and hope Pratt (16-15, 11-2) beats Colby (26-13, 8-5) tonight.



Seward County took the first step in that direction Monday night with a 3-1 win over Barton Community College in The Greenhouse.

The 25-18, 23-25, 25-17, 25-21 win gives the Lady Saints a 17-17 overall record and 8-5 mark in the Jayhawk West. Seward is in a 3-way tie for third with Barton and Colby.

"This is probably the most important win for us all year," said Seward County head coach Bert Luallen.

If Seward wins tomorrow and Pratt wins tonight, the Lady Saints will likely host Hutchinson on Nov. 2 in a play-in match for the Region VI tournament.

With Barton (21-7, 8-5) focusing on KJCC player of the week Sheina Fernandes (Soph./Porto Alegre, Brazil), it allowed outside hitters Courtney Geesing (Frosh./Montrose, Colo.), Isabela Silva (Frosh./Belo Horizonte, Brazil) and Daiane Souza (Frosh./Santa Isabel, Brazil) to take control.

"She's just been solid all year long," Luallen said of Fernandes. "They were really focusing on her, our setters realized they were focusing on Sheina and they just put the ball to the outside more. Because of that, Daiane and Courtney were getting a lot more swings.

"But that's what you want that go-to player to do, draw that attention."

Seward took the first set of the match 25-18, but played from behind early on as Barton took as much as a 12-8 advantage.

But Seward went on a 7-2 run to regain the lead, and never let it go.

"We had three straight service errors, and that just kind of killed momentum," Luallen said. "We fought through that, and didn't really have that issue the rest of the night.

"We did a better job of not making a lot of mistakes to hurt ourselves."

The second set was a see-saw battle that saw the Lady Cougars eventually pull out a 25-23 win to tie the match 1-all.

The match featured 24 ties and lead changes, but the Lady Saints pulled out briefly to a 20-17 lead before Barton went on a 8-3 run to win it.

"I think we just kind of relaxed a little too much," Luallen said.

The Lady Saints regrouped in the third set to win 25-17, but Barton battled for the first half of the set.

Down 9-6, the Lady Cougars tied it, Fernandes blocked it to give Seward a 10-9 lead, then got a kill to give Seward a 12-11 lead, which it would never relinquish.

In game five's 25-21 win, the Lady Saints built a 22-17 lead, and Barton made a last-minute surge. But Seward held them off for the win. The difference was the defense.

Lady Saints win key Jayhawk West match

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“We talked about staying focused on what we need to do,” Luallen said. “I thought the girls executed really, really well. We played really good defense and I thought our passing was great, much, much better than it had been for awhile.”

•This was the fifth time Fernandes was named KJCC player of the week. Her career-high 24-kill performance last week against Dodge City and a 9-kill, 9-dig effort at Colby earned the sophomore the honor.

She had a hitting percentage of .416 in those two matches.

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