**By Pastor Vince Carrig**
*Sports Writer*

Sean Keenan's steal and dunk served the Plainsmen notice that North Platte St. Pat's could steamroll them; a 16-4 start led to a 53-39 win that dropped Perkins County into the SPVA tournament's third-place game bracket last Thursday night (Jan. 17) in North Platte.

The 6-foot-1 Keenan hung in the air while finishing an "alley-oop" pass in the first quarter run, defying gravity and eluding defenders. Keenan and reserve power forward Alex Harms led all scorers with 14 points apiece.

"That is a sign of a good team—when you start the game and never let the [other] team back in the game," Plainsmen Head Coach Shawn Cole said after the game. "We did a good job after we let them get the start on us; we never let them get too far ahead but gave ourselves a chance to come back a bit. "

Senior guard Elliot Carlson's second triple of the third quarter bounded in off the back iron, but only drew Perkins County to within 13 points of the lead at 39-26.

Sixth man Alex Harms forced his way to the basket and the foul line in the third quarter, taking a feed from Mark Mayfield and converting it to an "and one" to go along with two other trips to the line for seven points in the period. Thanks to Harms, North Platte–St. Pat's led 42-26 with 1:01 left in the third period.

Keenan broke an Irish scoring drought with back-to-back three-point shots to give St. Pat's a 28-12 second quarter lead. He punctuated his performance with an unbelievable twisting layup after a steal later in the game.

Scoring in every quarter, Plainsman forward Alex Johnston went up hard to put away his own rebound in the fourth quarter, but St. Pat's still led 44-30 after Johnston scored two of his 10 points.

Guard Quinton Hite's left-hand, underhanded scoop after slicing through three defenders coupled with Alex Johnston's high-speed cut through the middle came the closest to mounting a Plainsmen rally, pulling them to within 10 points (46-36) with 4:30 left.

Ahead 20-11 with 5:03 until halftime, St. Pat's made five "dry runs" up the floor, but limited Perkins County to just a free throw before Keenan resumed production from behind the arc.

Forward Joseph Clinch punished the Plainsmen by darting through open lane space for back-to-back buckets in St. Pat's 10-0 first quarter run. Clinch victimized PC for 13 points.

Johnston's left-handed and underhanded layup at the right side moved Perkins County to nine behind at 18-9 early in the second quarter. His Plainsmen spent most of the game trailing by 10 points or more, however.

The length and quickness of the Irish shut down scoring lanes on the Plainsmen, and St. Pat's athleticism and ball movement kept them in the lead for the entire game.

"That was their plan, to keep us out of the lane," Coach Cole said. "We did get some shots, but as a team, we need to be more aggressive on the offensive end of the floor. It will take all four quarters of good defense and offense to beat St Pat's."

Senior center Mark Mayfield scored on two inbounds plays and helped the Irish to a 36-23 rebounding advantage.

St. Pat's won the final three quarters by a combined score of 35-32; their scorching early run and handfuls of missed Plainsmen shots allowed the Irish to cruise to the first place game on Saturday.

**P.C. 39, NPSP 53**

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| Perkins Co. | 7 | 9 | 12 | 11–39 |
| NPSP | 18 | 10 | 14 | 11–53 |

Scoring leaders–Perkins County: Johnston 5FG–10; Carlson 1 (2[x3]) 1/2FT–9; Poppe 3 2/2–8; Hite 3–6; North Platte–St. Pat's: Keenan 4 (2) 0/3–14; Harms 4 6/8–14; Clinch 5 3/5–13; Mayfield 3–6.