

Redbirds open hot then hold off Chatham Glenwood

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer

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GODFREY – Alton certainly came out of the gates on fire Friday night.

The basketball Redbirds found plenty of open shots from behind the three-point arc and fired away, hitting five of them in the opening term and eight total in the first half to gain control of their **Alton Tipoff Classic** game against **Chatham Glenwood**.

But the Titans, undaunted, got on a 14-point run to get to 41-37 in the final quarter, only to see AHS regain control and hold off Chatham to take a **58-47 win** to set up a championship match against Jacksonville, who defeated Northwest Academy of St. Louis earlier in the evening, in the round-robin tournament. The Crimsons and Redbirds meet at 7:30 p.m.

That the Titans made a run at the Redbirds wasn't surprising to **Alton coach Eric Smith**. "They're good," Smith said. "They're really structured, they've got kids that play really hard and they do the right things. They're extremely well-coached; they are every year. That's them."

The Redbirds managed to get out to a big lead early because they were hitting on what Smith termed "wide-open shots".

"We talked about Wednesday (when the Redbirds defeated Northwest but Smith wasn't happy about the way his charges played)," Smith said. "That's what we see in practice, a drive, a paint touch, and Wednesday, it was someone would get a paint touch and try to shoot it up over their shoulder or shoot a contested jumper.

"Now all of a sudden, it's drive it, get to the guard and then kick it (out); it's a wide-open shot. It makes a world of difference."

Overall, Smith was happy with how his team played compared to Wednesday's effort. "We played with energy, for the most part," Smith said. "Third quarter, we had some breakdown of energy stuff; the second half, we didn't sub as much and we had guys kind of break down. They were tired."

The Redbirds are off to a 2-0 start on the season, and **junior guard Maurice Edwards (who finished with 20 points to lead Alton)** is happy with the way the team has gotten out of the gate – though with so many new players, there's still a learning curve.

"I like the way we're playing," Edwards said. "It's a learning process; we've got a lot of players where it's their first time on varsity. I'm trying to be more positive; I know they're going to make mistakes."

In addition to Edwards' game, **Marcus Latham** followed Wednesday's 21-point effort with a 13-point game, followed by Kevin Caldwell with 10 points. The Titans were led by Parker Allen's 22 points, followed by Ethan Hunt with 11 and Joel Alexander with seven.

In Friday's curtain-raiser, Brady Hays had 30 points as Jacksonville held off Northwest Academy 64-62. Riley Dugan added 14 points for the Crimsons and Tyler Rose had 11. Charles James led the Hornets with 14 points, with Jamarr Williams adding 12, Rayonte Childs 11 and Wilshon Warren 10.

The tournament concludes Saturday with Northwest meeting Chatham at 6 p.m. and Alton meeting Jacksonville at 7:30 p.m.; the Redbirds-Crimsons winner will claim the tournament championship.

See related video below: