

Alton falls to Jacksonville in Tip-Off Classic title match

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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GODFREY – Alton boys basketball coach **Eric Smith** didn't mince words Saturday night.

“They worked hard. We just gave in.”

That was how Smith summed up the **Redibrrds' 63-41 loss to Jacksonville** in the finale of the Alton Tipoff Classic. The win gave the **Crimsons** the tournament title, having

gone unbeaten in the three games they played. Alton finished second with a 2-1 mark, followed by Chatham Glenwood at 1-2 and Northwest Academy of St. Louis at 0-3.

“They did what they wanted to do, we let them and we played catch-up,” Smith said. “It was probably the first time in four years were out kids just gave up.”

It wasn't an easy game at all for Alton; they found themselves in foul trouble all game long, with **Maurice Edwards** fouling out in the final quarter after a **15-point night**. Smith refused, however, to use the foul trouble as an excuse. “That's just how we play,” Smith said. “We're going to get up and challenge people and we're going to pick up fouls that way. I don't think we've ever been in a game where we weren't in foul trouble of some sort.”

What disappointed Smith more was, the way he saw it, the effort on Saturday night compared to Friday night's win over Glenwood. “It's not a fun roller coaster to be on right now,” Smith said.

Something the Crimsons had on the Redbirds was an advantage in size; of those Crimsons who played, **Brandon McCombs** was the tallest at 6-7; the tallest Redbird on the roster is 6-2 Dereau Clay. “When you have a size advantage, you've got to be able to get the ball into them,” said Jacksonville coach Sean Taylor. “Our guards did a really good job of distributing the ball and playing towards the basket where our big were. I thought that was key because at times last night (a win over Northwest) we just played towards half-court; we didn't really look to get it to our posts.

“I think obviously our posts played well but our guards did a good job of getting them the ball.”

Edwards was the only Redbird in double figures; **Marcus Latham and Tre Smith each had eight points** for Alton, while **McCombs and Tyler Rose had 18 each to lead Jacksonville**, with Brady Hays adding 15 and James White 10.

Chatham got 15 points from Parker Allen to defeat Northwest 52-40 to claim third place. Will Hanlon added 13 points for the Titans, while Rayonte Child led the Hornets with 11 points.

Hays was voted the tournament Most Outstanding Player, with Edwards, Latham, Glenwood's Ethan Hunt and Rose and McCombs being named to the All-Tournament First Team; Northwest's Wilshon Warren Maurice Golden and Charles James, Allen and Alton's Kevin Caldwell were voted to the second team.

The Redbirds return to action with their Southwestern Conference opener Friday, and it's a stern road test when the Redbirds visit East St. Louis at 7:30 p.m.

