

High-intensity play pays for Alton in victory over Belleville West

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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BELLEVILLE – When you see **Alton's basketball team** perform, you know exactly what you're going to get.

A lot of high-intensity, high-pressure, up-and-down, fast-moving basketball.

All those elements were on display in Belleville Friday night as the Redbirds kept flooring the gas pedal and defeated **Belleville West** 73-58.

The game served as a bounce-back game for the Redbirds as well coming off a Southwestern Conference loss to Belleville East at home Tuesday night. “We're still 4-1 in the league,” **Redbird coach Eric Smith** said. “We're still in good position; we let a game slip away we probably had an opportunity to win, but our kids responded. We got a resilient group of kids and they showed tonight what we've been preaching to them, and they came back and did a nice job.”

One thing the Redbirds can do is shoot the ball; they connected on 10 three-pointers, with **Marcus Lathan and Maurice Edwards** combining for eight of them in the win; **Latham wound up with 25 points, Edwards 23.**

“That's been an emphasis for us the last couple of days,” Smith said. “We had a heart-to-heart with them about the types of shots we've been taking...at some point in time,

you've got to go to your strengths. I told the kids I'm not going to tell you not to shoot, but I'm going to tell you there's no reason to shoot that shot if we have as much success as we do putting the ball on the floor and driving to the basket.

“Shooting percentage-wise, I thought we took a lot of contested shots; they were 10-for-22 (from behind the arc), but how many of them were standing wide-open after a drive? That's what we do; when we've been successful, that's been the blueprint.”

It certainly wasn't what **Maroon coach Joe Muniz** was hoping for. “We were hoping that wasn't going to happen,” Muniz said. “We knew we had it in them to do that, but their shots that they made were all good shots. It was like a game of HORSE; that's how it kind of looked like.

“It looked like a game of HORSE out there and we just didn't do a very good job of anticipating and reacting to the ball and knowing where their shooters were; we had a hard time of keeping guys in front of us.”

One thing the Maroons had going for them was 6-7, 275-pound center **Tyler Dancy**; he led all scorers with 26 points, many of them coming inside. “When we got the ball down low (to Dancy), we scored,” Muniz said. “The problem was we'd score and they'd turn around and score. You can't trade baskets with Alton; you've got to be able to keep the game in a situation where they're playing against your half-court.”

“(Dancy is) a good player,” Smith said. “Even if we had a 6-9, 250-pound kid, he's still going to be a factor.”

In addition to Latham and Edwards, **Jordan Golley** had 11 points for Alton (8-5 overall, 5-1 SWC) and **Kevin Caldwell** 10. In addition to Dancy's points, the Maroons (4-9 overall, 1-5 SWC) had 15 points from EJ Liddell and six points from Elijah Powell.

Next week is a big week for the Redbirds; they host East St. Louis Tuesday night, then travel to Edwardsville next Friday. With two of the traditional top teams in the SWC on the horizon, Smith is looking forward to the challenge.

“Like we told the kids,” Smith said, “you can't ask for anything better. If you want to be a competitor and want to compete, next week's the week for you.”

