

# O'Fallon nips Alton 3-2 in girls regional softball championship contest

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
May 29 2016 8:15 AM





**COLLINSVILLE** – One play.

One key play.

The difference between winning and losing. That's what softball games sometimes come down to.

In this case, that key play came in the bottom of the fourth, with **O'Fallon** holding a 3-2 lead on **Alton** in the IHSA Class 4A Collinsville Regional final at Collinsville Sports Complex.

**Rachel McCoy** had singled with two out and was heading to third when **Bronte Fencel** stroked a hard-hit ball heading into the gap in left-center. McCoy was charging hard for third when the ball was cut off by Panther center fielder Courtney Keller, who turned a fired a strike to third baseman Abbey Johnson.

McCoy didn't have a chance.

The strike cut the heart out of the Redbird chances to take the lead and it proved to be huge as the Panthers, on the strength of a first-inning three-run homer from winning pitcher Addison Barnouski, eliminated the Redbirds 3-2 and moved into the Class 4A

Normal Community Sectional, where OTHS will face Edwardsville, 7-3 come-from-behind winners over Belleville East in the Edwardsville Regional final, at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday at Collinsville Sports Complex; the winner advances to the June 4 championship game with a trip to the Normal Supersectional at Illinois State University on the line.

“They did a nice job,” said **Redbird coach Dan Carter**. “We were going two bases all the way on that; you obviously don't want to make a third out at third, but we're going two on two – with two outs, we're going after two bases. Our girl (McCoy) didn't hesitate, she went hard all the way.

“Unfortunately for us, they made a great play; she picked it up and made a great strike. We had our fastest runner running out there; we put the ball right where it needed to be. We put a little pressure on them and they responded.”

“She's (Keller) a very, very talented outfielder,” said Panther coach Kelly Paproth, “and we've been working hard with her the last two years and she works hard; she worked hard on that play and it paid off well.”

Keller and Allison Underwood had one-out singles in the top of the first to bring up Barnouski, who launched a Brittany Roady offering over the fence in left-center to put the Panthers up 3-0. The Redbirds countered in their half of the first Tami Wong got a one-out single and stole second; Savannah Fisher singled in Wong to cut the lead to 3-1 and after Tomi Dublo struck out, Miranda Hudson got ahold of a Barnouski offering and singled in Fisher to cut the lead to 3-2.

Barnouski went on to strike out five Redbirds in succession while Roady kept the Panther at bay. Alton's best chance to tie the game came in that fateful fourth inning, but in the bottom of the sixth, Dublo opened with a walk and went to second on a Hudson single, putting runners on with no one out. Barnouski got Sydney Hartman to pop back to the circle, but Barnouski saw Hudson had drifted too far off the bag and fired to first to double off Hudson, cutting the heart out of a potential Redbird rally. Barnouski then got McCoy to ground to third to end the inning before retiring the side in order in the seventh to win the game.

The Panthers moved into the sectional at 20-7, while the Redbirds were eliminated at 25-8.



