

# Alton wrestlers are young, but talented group in 2016-2017

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** – Alton wrestling coach **Eric Roberson** knew his team was going to be young heading into this season.

As things have turned out, it's been a process of learning for those younger wrestlers.

Through their meet Thursday night against Edwardsville, the Redbirds stand at 12-5 overall, 3-2 in the Southwestern Conference going into a triangular home meet against Quincy and Triad Wednesday night.

“I knew we were going to be young in some of the weights,” Roberson said. “Our freshmen are having some success at the lower levels, but they're not quite ready yet for a full varsity schedule. We have to acclimate them a little bit (to the rigors of varsity wrestling).”

“Coming into the season, I didn't have any real expectations; we just work every day with what we have to try to get better week to week. We expect to win – you work like you're going to win – and we deal with losses after it happens.”

It does set up a good way to learn about the sport for the younger wrestlers.

“Everything's a learning process,” Roberson said. “Even wins are a learning process; a lot of times, we find out what you're made of up there in your head.”

“You have to experience adversity and some stressful situations; sometimes, you're going to wrestle (a very good wrestler), but you have to be competitive. Our kids still need to be able to compete, no matter who they're wrestling.”

That's not to say the Redbirds haven't met success this season; at the recent Newbill Tournament in Geneva, nine Redbirds placed, with KeOntay Holmes (at 182) and Garrett Sims (at 113) taking championships in their weight classes. Christian Everedge finished third at 170, Keyondrick Russell fourth at 195, Courteney Wilson (at 145) and Ryan Kane (at 285) took fifths, Nolan Woszczyński (at 160) and Grady Womack (at 220) took sevenths and Hunter Hobbs finished eighth at 126.

At the William “Red” Schmitt Holiday Tournament in Granite City, Holmes finished fifth at 182, Woszczyński took sixth at 160, Russell was sixth at 195 and Wilson was seventh at 145; the JV team also did well at the Granite City JV Duals, finishing fourth. At the Mascoutah Invitational tournament in December, eight Redbirds placed, including three seconds (Sims, Wilson and Russell), two thirds (Everedge and Holmes), a fifth (Kane) and two sixths (Woszczyński and Hobbs).

Still, compared to where the Redbirds are now to where they were at the start of the season, Roberson said “we have some kids improving, but I think we have to make some quick improvements if we want to be in the thick of things (with the IHSA wrestling postseason quickly approaching) and get some kids out of the regional (in Granite City Feb. 4).

Dan Gable, one of the greatest wrestlers in American sporting history, once said about wrestling: “Once you've wrestled, everything else is easy.”

“It can be tough (wrestling), but any kid that can stick out a wrestling career, I have a lot of respect for,” Roberson said.