

# Scrimmage gives Alton fans look at improved Redbirds

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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ALTON – Alton's football team began final preparations for its Aug. 25 season-opener at Highland Friday night with a scrimmage before some very enthusiastic Redbird supporters at Public School Stadium as the finale of the annual Meet the Redbirds night.

All the fall sports teams at AHS – the boys and girls cross-country, boys and girls golf, girls volleyball, boys soccer, football, cheerleading and dance teams – were introduced to Alton supporters during the evening, as well as a performance from the AHS Marching 100 band, in a traditional opener to the fall season.

The football Redbirds are hoping to bounce back from an 0-9 season in 2016, and if the scrimmage is any indication, there's potential for a big-play offense this year; Kevin Caldwell had two long touchdown receptions for the Alton offense, including one from the first play from scrimmage.

“A lot of good things happened tonight,” said Redbird coach Eric Dickerson. “We went on our offense against our defense and a lot of kids stepped up and made some big plays; it's great to see we have the capability of being a big-play, quick-strike offense. Along the same regards, our defense can step up and shut anybody down.

“I'm hoping we take the momentum from tonight and carry it over for this week of practice and get ready for Highland next week.”

Caldwell pleased Dickerson with the plays he made. “He's very good,” Dickerson said. “He's got a lot of speed; he's one of many weapons we have; we can put him out there with Johnathan Bumpers and Tony (Antonio Harrison) in the backfield; it's a formidable offense, I think; they've worked hard this summer. He's (Caldwell) got that breakaway speed; he's one of those special athletes.”

As far as what the Redbirds can take away from the scrimmage, Dickerson said “we'll have to go back and watch the film; we did a lot of good things, but there's also quite a few things we need to work on and shore up before Week 1 rolls around. Nothing's perfect, but I feel we're a little bit better than what we've been in the past few years as far as playing together and knowing the schemes.

“Keep your fingers crossed; I hope so,” Dickerson said when asked if the Redbirds could be a fun team to watch this season. “We're ready for the regular season; bring on (Highland).”

After the Redbirds' season opener at Highland, they'll host Quincy at 7 p.m. Sept. 1 before hosting Collinsville in their Southwestern Conference opener at 7 p.m. Sept. 8.



