

Kahoks make decisive runs to upend Alton volleyball girls 27-25, 25-20

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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COLLINSVILLE – Both Alton and Collinsville mounted enough of runs to trade leads in both games of their Southwestern Conference girls volleyball match Tuesday evening at Collinsville's Fletcher Gym.

In the end, however, the Kahoks had the decisive runs in each game to take a 27-25, 25-20 win over the Redbirds. The loss dropped the Redbirds to 9-9 on the year, 1-1 in the SWC; the Kahoks went to 3-7 overall, 3-1 in the league.

The reason for the loss was simple, Redbird coach Stacey Ferguson felt. “We just started playing more their game and stopped playing our game and doing what we do at the very end when the pressure was on,” Ferguson said. “Obviously, they're going to be better at what they do than we are, so we just had to continue to execute the game we practiced. We kind of let up – we let some calls get into our heads and affected the way we played, didn't go out there and earn those points.”

Momentum was especially a key part of Game 2; the Redbirds jumped out to leads of 5-1 and 7-3 before the Kahoks came roaring back. “We started off the right way and let them turn it around and let them get the momentum shifted one way,” Ferguson said. “Unfortunately, if it happens in the last points there to turn it around; they're always a good team, a strong, solid team – they know how to move the ball around and know how to catch us off. We had our moments where we did a nice job against them.”

“They made me a little nervous tonight,” said Kahok coach Tracy Plagemann of the Redbirds. “We tended to let them get ahead, then we'd get up, then we'd let them get ahead and we'd get up,” Plagemann said. “They played scrappy defense tonight; it's one of those things that, when you play scrappy defense, it's tough.

“The girls stepped up; we've been trying to focus on finishing games. We're still a work in progress and I'm happy with what they did.”

At one point in the second game, the Redbirds held a 13-7 lead – a lead they saw slip away when the Kahoks got on a run to tie it at 13-13. The teams then exchanged points in a stretch that saw the lead change hands twice before Collinsville got on a small run to take a 17-15 lead; Alton charged back to tie it at 17 before the Kahoks got on enough of a run to take control and close things out at 25-20.

Despite the shifts in momentum, Alton kept battling. “The fact that we didn't give up at any point,” Ferguson said when asked what she liked about the match. “I think they fell flat a couple of points in the match, but I would have liked to see them continue to play our game and keep hitting the ball; we're not a tipping team – we have no height. We're never going to win the tipping battle against height.

“I liked that when we were swinging, we were doing a good job making adjustments to things – we were hustling after the ball, so I'm proud of them for that and that they never gave up throughout the whole match.”

Next up for the Redbirds is a Sept. 27 home SWC match against Belleville East, followed by an Oct. 3 league home match against Granite City.

