

# Young Lady Rebirds beat Calhoun in return of Coach Tammy Talbert

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
November 15 2017 2:27 PM



ALTON - Maybe it was the 7:30 p.m. home game. Maybe it was learning from a 3-23 season. Or maybe it was the fact that the Alton Lady Redbirds were done with practicing for so long.

"The kids were tired of practicing, to be honest. They were ready to play and excited," Alton head coach Tammy Talbert said.

Alton came out strong forcing turnovers in a high-pressure defense and rode to a 51-38 victory over the Calhoun Lady Warriors in the first round of the Alton Tip-Off Classic. The Lady Redbirds advance to play Breese Central in the semifinals on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. Calhoun will play Springfield Lanphier in the consolation semifinals in the game before at 6 p.m. Alton led for the entire game.

This is also a return for Talbert who coached Alton from 2002-to-2008 where she posted a 41-114 record. A year ago she was an assistant coach on the staff that saw Bob Rickman resign. In early May, Jon Marston was named the new head coach, but he resigned on July 31, to add to the coaching turmoil. Despite all of the hysteria in the offseason, Talbert has Alton off to a bright start.

“I’m excited for them because the past couple years has been a struggle for them. They’ve matured over the last few years, and we’ve got some good leadership on the court now.”



Junior Cri’shonna Hickman led Alton with 13 points, while sophomore Rayn Talley added 10 points. In the second half, sophomore center Ivoree Lacey poured in 12 points and pulled in seven rebounds to spearhead the Lady Redbirds.

“She was huge,” Talbert said. “I knew that she would be able to do it. The thing about her is, she’s really a game player. She did a great job rebounding this summer and scoring under the basket. She had a huge game for us. I’m sure she’s going to get a lot of playing time.”

One story of the game was Alton’s ability to cause turnovers and create points.

“That’s what we’ve been concentrating on. We knew that we have quick guards and if we put those guards in the right position then we could force a lot of turnovers,” Talbert said.

Another was Calhoun’s free throw shooting as the Lady Warriors went 10-for-34 from the charity stripe, plus Lady Redbirds height advantage to haul in offensive rebounds.

“Three things that we can correct: turnovers, gave up a lot of offensive rebounds, and free throws. You’re not going to win many games what you do what we did tonight,” Calhoun head coach Mark Hillen said. “Tip the cap to Alton, they played really hard, and they deserve that win. We can’t duplicate that speed and size when it comes to scrimmaging with our older players against our younger players. We’re going to get better.”

Calhoun’s Junie Zirkelbach led all scorers with 16 points and her teammate Emily Baalman added 11.

The Lady Redbirds held a slim 9-8 lead after the first quarter, but they started to score off of the turnovers they created, outscored Calhoun 13-5 and led 22-13 at halftime. In the second half, both offenses came alive at first, but Alton would eventually lead by as many as 17 points in the third quarter. The Lady Warriors would eventually get the score back to single digits and trailed by eight early in the fourth quarter, but ultimately Alton, led by Lacey proved to be too much to overcome down the stretch.





