

Redbirds get off to good start of season with 69-46 win over Riverview

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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ALTON – Alton's boys basketball team got off to a good start for the 2017-18 season Monday night, getting a 15-point performance from Donovan Clay to lead the way for the Redbirds in a 69-46 win over Riverview Gardens in their opening game of the Alton Tipoff Classic tournament at The Redbird Nest.

The Redbirds went to 1-0 on the year, while the Rams went to 0-1; in the evening's curtain-raising game, Carbondale defeated Carnahan High of St. Louis city 76-50 to go to 1-0 in the tournament and the season.

“I thought it was a decent first night for us,” said Redbird coach Eric Smith. “You don't want to admit it, but we kind of expect you to not necessarily shoot the ball very well or have some careless turnovers – that kind of stuff happened a little bit, but the kids competed, they played hard until the horn went off; I told them there's some things that obviously we would like do a little bit better, but we've got practice for that.

“This is the first step; we tell them we complain about everything, but at the end of the night, a win's a win.”

If anything concerned Smith going into the start of the season, “it was our toughness,” Smith said. “We've got really athletic kids – we've got some really skilled kids and kids who can play, but I didn't necessarily know if we would have the toughness to sit down

on somebody and guard them for three or four passes in a possession, would we get a body on someone and box them out, would we fight for a rebound and dive for a loose ball?

“We took two charges tonight and it probably took us nine games last year to get a charge, so our kids competed. I was pleased with the way they did things.”

The Redbirds took a 9-4 lead at quarter time, but began to hit their stride in the second quarter, getting some good shots off and connecting from outside a few times to take a 32-17 lead into the long break before expanding the lead to 52-31 at the half; the Rams tried to mount a bit of a comeback in the final quarter, but the Redbirds kept Riverview at bay to get to get to as much as a 25-point lead at a couple of points in the period for the final margin of victory.

Nine different Redbirds were listed on the scoresheet at the end of the game; besides Clay's 15 points, Malik Smith had 14 points and Darrell Smith had 10 points to lead the way for AHS on the night; Kevin Caldwell added eight points and Charles Miller, Josh Rivers and Izeal Terrell each had six points on the night; the Rams were led by Christopher Robinson's 11 points on the night.

Tournament play continues Tuesday with Ritenour of north St. Louis County meeting O'Fallon at 6 p.m. tonight followed by Belleville Althoff taking on St. Mary's of south St. Louis city at 7:30 p.m.; four games are slated for Wednesday as Carnahan takes on Althoff at 3 p.m., O'Fallon meets Riverview at 4:30 p.m., St. Mary's meets Carnahan at 6 p.m. and the Redbirds clash with Ritenour in the feature game at 7:30 p.m.; the AHS Athletic Hall of Fame induction ceremony will take place at halftime of the Redbirds-Huskies game.

