



# **Clay, Smith bring Alton to SWC win over East St. Louis 75-71**

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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ALTON – Alton's boys' basketball team found themselves down by as much as 15 points to East St. Louis Friday night at the Redbird Nest.

The Redbirds, however, behind Donovan Clay and Malik Smith's 16-point games, came from behind to take a 75-71 win over the Flyers in a Southwestern Conference clash. Alton improved to 5-1 overall, 3-1 in the SWC; the Flyers fell to 4-2 overall, 2-1 in the league.

“That we came back to win the game is a testament to our kids; they didn't give in and competed and battled,” said Redbird coach Eric Smith. “That's how they are; we always tell them that if they compete in every game, they have a chance to win.

“We struggled in some areas of the game, but we knew we had to get the job done or lose the game – they have two (NCAA Division I prospects) on their roster – and they just battled and fought all night.”

The Flyers held a 17-12 lead at quarter time and kept it at 35-27 at the half before Alton came back and got to a 52-52 tie at three-quarter time before managing to get ahead to the margin of victory in the final quarter.

“We got some stops and scores, but we never got an opportunity to chip away at the lead; we were hanging around being down 6-7 points before we started following some stops with scores,” Smith said. “We made good decisions and had some great plays.

“I'm very proud of the kids; it was a very big win for us tonight. It shows what we can accomplish if we compete and work hard.”

Ahmad Sandeers added 13 points for the Redbirds, with Darrell Smith picking up 11 points and Kevin Caldwell 10. The Flyers were led by Terrance Hargrove Jr. with 22 points and James Collins and Joe Reece with 14 each.

Next up for the Redbirds is a Dec. 15 game at home against Collinsville at 7:30 p.m., followed by Belleville East coming to Alton at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 19 before the Redbirds play in the 75<sup>th</sup> edition of the Centralia Holiday Tournament beginning Dec. 28 and running through Dec. 30; the Redbirds open at 10 a.m. Dec. 28 against Germantown, Tenn.









[Steven Spencer also contributed to this story.](#)