

Lady Redbirds pull off dramatic overtime victory against Collinsville

by John Hough, Sports Writer
December 15 2017 12:08 AM



ALTON - As she released the basketball from her hand, freshman Gernayia Wallace was convinced that her shot wasn't going in or hitting anything for that matter.

"I was nervous. There were two seconds left, and I thought it was going to be an airball. I just threw it up and did what I had to do" Wallace said. "That was exciting."

With the score at 59-56 in favor of Collinsville, the Alton Lady Redbirds needed a three-pointer to tie the game. After two straight misses, in a last-ditch effort, A'llurah Bowens-Robinson collected a rebound with seconds remaining and passed to Wallace who drained the three-pointer they needed at the buzzer to force overtime.

After getting stops and making free-throws, the Lady Redbirds held off the Lady Kahoks 64-60 in a dramatic Southwestern Conference game in Godfrey on Thursday night.

It's somewhat improbable that Wallace is on the team at this time, and playing in such a crucial moment late in the game.

Before this week started, she was playing on the JV team until she was promoted to the varsity.

"We just brought her up the last game, so she really doesn't have varsity experience, and I was a little nervous putting her in, but she nailed it," Alton head coach Tammy Talbert said.

With just over three minutes to play, Chr'shonna Hickman fouled out and had she not then Wallace probably doesn't take part in the final minutes of the game.



Ivoree Lacey led Alton in scoring with 14 points and was followed by Bowens-Robinson's 13. Hickman added 11 before fouling out, and Laila McNeal chipped in ten points.

Bria King paced Collinsville with 12 points, while Antoinette Buehne, Venise Govan, and Faith Liljegren all finished with 11.

Collinsville outscored Alton 20-13 in the second quarter and ended the first half on a 14-4 run, which saw them lead 37-26. However, the third quarter would belong to the Lady Redbirds.

“That was huge. We knew that was killing us. Nobody could stop her, and defensively we had too many easy looks for them, so we changed our defense,” Talbert said. “kids have never done a 3-2 before. I had these kids last year in JV, and we ran a 1-2-2 a lot so we trusted them that they could do it and that helped us a lot.”

With the defensive adjustments in place, Alton began getting loads of steals and turned most of them into points. That resulted in a 17-2 run and gave the Lady Redbirds a 43-39 lead. However, the Lady Kahoks put together a little 9-3 run of their own to take the lead back at 48-46 heading into the fourth quarter.

It was back-and-forth from there on out.

After Wallace hit the buzzer beater, the Lady Redbirds rejoiced with several players mobbing Wallace and dog-piling at center court, which caused Talbert and her staff to end it quickly because it looked like they were celebrating prematurely.

“I wasn’t sure whether they thought they had won or what the case had been,” Talbert laughingly said. “We had to get them calm again and remind them that they got four more minutes of basketball ahead of them. They did a fantastic job.”

In the overtime, King opened the overtime by putting Collinsville in front 61-59, but Wallace answered with yet another triple. However, King replied again with another basket. Moments later, Bowens-Robinson hit a two-pointer that ultimately was the decider and sank 3-of-6 free throws in the final minute, including the last two, which all but confirmed Alton’s victory.

The Lady Redbirds are now 2-3 in the SWC, 4-5 overall, and on a three-game winning streak.

“That’s huge for us,” Talbert said. “The kids are feeling good. enjoy this tonight, but we have to come back tomorrow and get prepared for Belleville East on Tuesday.”



