

Redbirds drop 71-63 Chick-fil-A decision to Crusaders

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
January 19 2018 11:38 AM



BELLEVILLE – Alton’s Malik Smith led all scorers with 22 points in the Redbirds’ 71-63 loss to Belleville Althoff in a consolation semifinal game of the Belleville East Chick-fil-A Classic Thursday night.

The loss sent AHS to the seventh-place game at noon Saturday against Columbia; the Redbirds fell to 10-7 on the season with the loss while the Crusaders improved to 4-14.

Malik Smith's game was a good thing about the loss, but Redbird coach Eric Smith was not pleased with the Redbirds' overall effort.

"I think we had some kids who thought tonight was going to be my night to pad up some stats and they got hit in the mouth," Smith said.

"There are no excuses; it's bad. I've got a few of my opinions (about what happened); we'll have a conversation about it tomorrow when we watch the film. They're not bigger than us, they're not more athletic than us – that's a hungry four-win team now and we're not a very hungry 10-win team right now."

The game started out fairly even, both teams trading the lead and baskets back-and-forth, with the Crusaders holding a 19-17 lead at quarter time; from there, Althoff took control, expanding the lead to 34-26 at the half and to 48-38 at three-quarter time.

Althoff found ways to keep Alton at bay. "We're in certain defenses and we've got kids standing at half-court; the focus wasn't there and we didn't do the right things, we didn't line up in the right defense – it was just a calamity of errors," Smith said.

"They started out in a triangle-and-two (defense); we had kids moving (early in the game). We made some passes, kids got to the basket; then all of a sudden, we decided we had four Steph Currys out there and we missed the next 23 (shots). That's not who we are."

Besides Malik Smith's points, Donovan Clay added 15 and Darrell Smith 13 on the night; the Crusaders were led by Khalifah Muhammad's 18 points, with Greg Wells and Melvin Brock adding 11 points each for the game.

