

Johnson stars with 227 yards, Alton romps past Kahoks 35-6 Saturday

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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COLLINSVILLE – It took a bit longer than what Alton might have liked, but the Redbirds won their Southwestern Conference football opener over Collinsville Saturday afternoon.

Alton shook off Friday night's suspension of their game against the Kahoks because of stormy weather produced by the remnants of Tropical Storm Gordon and went on to post a 35-6 victory over Collinsville at Kahok Stadium to go to 2-1 on the season, 1-0 in the SWC, thanks to some big plays on both sides of the ball; Collinsville, playing their final football season in the league, fell to 1-2 overall, 0-1 in the SWC.

"It was spread out over a couple of days, but a win's a win and we'll take it," said Redbird coach Eric Dickerson. "You can't fight Mother Nature and if she wants that game to be stalled, she has that power."

The Redbird offense was certainly hitting on all cylinders; sophomore running back Tim Johnson ran for 227 yards for the game, 170 of them coming before the game was suspended Friday night. "Our offensive line does a great job of creating holes and Tim followed them," Dickerson said. "It was a tough battle; Collinsville fought to the end but our kids weren't going to give up – there was a lot of adversity out there, a lot of penalties that went against us, but they were able to stick through it and fight through it."

On the first play of the game following the resumption from the suspension, the snap on a punt attempt by Collinsville got away and the ball bounced into the end zone, where Alton's Tristan Underwood fell on the ball to give the Redbirds a quick 14-0 lead – they held a 7-0 lead at the point of suspension Friday night – and some momentum.

"That was quite a start today," Dickerson said of the fumbled snap that led to the sudden touchdown. "We were able to use that and build off of that; our offense was clicking and the defense stepped up."

What happened at the resumption was Kahok coach Mike Popovich's worst nightmare come true, he said. "I think that was my nightmare," Popovich said. "I think that was what I stayed up thinking about, what can not happen on that first play; we wanted to change the field position game. Last night, we went into spread punt with our quarterback (Chris Chi) – we had our kicker back this week and we've got a Division I long-snapper; it was just a perfect storm – it happens.

"I was proud of our kids for how they rebounded from that – between that and everything that happened after that when it dominoed, and for us to continue to battle, I was proud of them. It is what it is."

Alton had struck first blood during Friday night's portion of the game when Terrance Walker took a Andrew Jones handoff and took off for a 26-yard touchdown run on the Redbirds' first drive of the game; Alton had gotten close twice more but couldn't get it the ball over the goal line before Friday's suspension; once Underwood pounced on the loose ball at the resumption to put the Redbirds ahead, there was no looking back; AHS had a 14-0 lead at halftime and expanded it to 21-0 quickly after the start of the third quarter when Lonnie Tate took a short pass from Jones, found an opening and took it 42 yards to the end zone to expand the lead.

Collinsville answered when Chi called his own number and took off for a 38-yard touchdown run to cut the lead to 21-6 when the convert attempt failed, but Jones countered that right away when he capped off a Redbird drive with a 3-yard touchdown burst that made it 28-6 following the Jake Lombardi conversion. The final score of the day came when Izeal Terrell took a Jones handoff and crashed in from a yard out.

"We did well on offense, defense and special teams," Dickerson said. "It's a good team win and a great victory for us, a great way to start the conference (schedule) for us."

The Redbirds return to Public School Stadium for a 7 p.m. Friday league clash with Belleville West, who defeated Fort Zumwalt West 28-10 on the road in a Thursday night game, while the Kahoks head to O'Fallon for a league game, also at 7 p.m. Friday.



