

Redbirds dominate Carnahan in season-opening victory

by John Hough, Sports Writer
November 21 2018 1:03 AM





SEE VIDEO:

ALTON - The Alton Redbirds dazzled in their first game of the regular season defeating the Carnahan Cougars 78-33 in the Alton Tip-Off Classic on Tuesday night.

Malik Smith, who is the leading returning scorer for the Redbirds had a game-high 21 points including two three-pointers and three dunks. A total of 18 of his 21 points came in the first half, which gave his team a big lift.

“It was good. It gave momentum for the rest of the team,” Malik Smith said. “After I got going then everybody else got going. The lead just ran up from there.”

Donovan Clay followed with 19 points, and Josh Rivers added ten despite being limited with early foul trouble. Moory Woods chipped in nine points.

Jaidon Anthony-Head and Jathen Jones each tallied eight points for the Cougars who fell to 1-1.

The Redbirds, who never trailed, implemented a high-tempo, full-court press and continuously attempted to double-team Carnahan's guards in the backcourt. That helped them burst out to an 11-0 run and led 23-10 at the end of the first quarter. They never let the Cougars get to within single digits the rest of the way.

"We're athletic. We can get up and down the floor a little bit," Alton head coach Eric Smith said. "That's what we've emphasized and focused. The tempo of the game has to be a certain way for us to be as good as we think we can be. The kids did a fairly good job of forcing the issue tonight."

Alton showed off their depth by rotating in nine-to-ten players throughout most of the game allowing them to stay fresh and continue to press.

"We have a lot of kids that can play, and we think that if we play a certain way to utilize those kids then eventually we have the opportunity to wear some people down," Eric Smith said.

The Redbirds led 38-20 at halftime, but firmly put away Carnahan outscoring them 31-10 in the third quarter, which included forcing nine straight turnovers. The highlight of that was a two-handed alley-oop dunk by Clay.

Ultimately, Alton outscored the Cougars 40-13 in the second half.

"It's great showing that we can play as a team," Malik Smith said. "Our defense has really improved since last year, and everybody's been playing unselfishly and touching the ball. When we do things like that, we always play well."

Alton hosts the Althoff Crusaders, who defeated Ritenour 76-54, at 7:30 p.m. tonight.





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