

# Redbirds earn semifinals spot in Centralia Tournament

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
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CENTRALIA - Head coach Eric Smith and Alton Redbirds liked their chances when they saw the bracket of the 76th Centralia Holiday Tournament.

“We thought we had a decent draw,” Smith said. “We expected to win a few games and continue on.”

For the second season in a row, the Redbirds have made it to the semifinals of the tournament. They defeated the Mundelein-Carmel Corsairs 51-45 at Trout Arena on the campus of Centralia High School on Friday night.

The Redbirds move their record to 8-5 and will face the No. 5 ranked team in Illinois, the Evanston Wildkits today at 2 p.m. The Wildkits (14-2) defeated the hosts Centralia convincingly 64-38.

Donovan Clay continued to demonstrate he’s one of the best all-around players in the Metro area. He poured in a game-high 24 points with 15 rebounds, three assists, and three blocked shots.

“We want to come out hard no matter who we play,” Clay said. “I just play hard, that’s all. My teammates got me the ball, and I scored.”

Moory Woods added 11 points for Alton. He was 4-for-4 from the field, including 3-for-3 from three-point range. He also added three assists and three steals.

As a team, the Redbirds shot 50-percent from the field and made 8-of-13 three-point shots.

The Corsairs were led by Kimahri Wilson who finished with 15 points, six rebounds, and three steals. Johnny Roeser followed with 13 points and seven rebounds while Damone Williams-Gray added ten points.

“tough-minded kids,” Smith said. “They’re physical and probably a little bit different style than what we’re accustomed to. They don’t make a ton of mistakes. They handle the ball; they rebound the ball, they run an offense, they make open shots. When you add and , they got a couple of kids who can play.”

Tonight was the first game back for the five suspended players from the brawl that involved Alton and Riverview Gardens back on November 23.

A player that made an impact was Charles Miller. Although he’s not a huge offensive threat, Coach Smith praises Miller for his overall skill-set and hard work ethic that he brings to the team.

“He’s one of those kids that doesn’t necessarily, as a basketball player, pass the eye test. But when you look at the stat sheet, he fills everything up,” Smith said about Miller. “He’s a tough-minded kid, plays with a lot of heart. He’s solid; he makes the right plays, which for us is a bonus. We’ve got enough scoring. We don’t need him to score a ton, but he finds a way to make baskets.”

Alton edged out in front early and then went on a 12-4 run that got them to a 17-9 lead. Carmel would come back and take the lead 23-22, but it would be brief as Woods drained a triple from the baseline that gave the Redbirds a slim 25-23 advantage at halftime.

The game was knotted at 30 midway through the third quarter, but the Redbirds would go on a critical 10-0 run. Woods knocked down back-to-back triples followed by a basket by Clay. The run was capped by a two-handed by from Malik Smith after receiving an alley-oop from Ky’Lun Rivers.

Carmel would fight back and trailed 43-39 heading to the fourth quarter. A bucket cut the deficit to 43-41, but Corsairs who shot 17-of-51 (33%) from the field and 5-of-18 (27%) threw up bricks on their next several possessions, including four when they had a chance to tie or take the lead.



Miller and Woods eventually broke Alton's scoring drought with back-to-back layups to get some separation, and the Redbirds ultimately held on.

















[Chris Rhodes also contributed to this story.](#)