

Redbirds qualify as team in IHSA bowling sectional, Bertoletti, Gardner, share individual title, Jersey's Vanost advances

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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ALTON – Chris Duke had a six-game series of 1,248, while Matt Engdale had a 1,245 series to help the Alton boys' bowling team qualify for this weekend's IHSA state tournament as the Redbirds finished fifth with a team score of 5,840 in their own sectional tournament Monday morning and afternoon at Bowl Haven Lanes.

Columbia won the team title in the tournament, postponed from Saturday due to the threat of Winter Storm Harper, with a 6,299, with Collinsville the runner-up, having a team score of 6,133. Belleville East was third with a score of 5,988, Roxana was fourth

with 5,965, and Freeburg gained the last team qualifying spot, finishing sixth with a score of 5.765.

Civic Memorial was eighth with a score of 5,721 and didn't advance to the state meet.

"Everything is good," said Alton head coach Dave Meyer. "It was a little bit of a tough afternoon, but we made it."

Engdale had the day's best game, a 279, while Duke and Jared Cochran, who had a six-game set of 1,170, were all singled out by Meyer.

"Matt had a good morning, with a 699 series," Meyer said, "and his afternoon was a little tough, but he kept working through it. Jared had a great afternoon, and Chris had a good day. It was a tough afternoon for him, and I think he could have done a little bit better, but I'm proud of him as well."

The big story individually was that two bowlers – Roxana's Christian Bertoletti and Ethan Gardner of Collinsville – tied for the individual championship, with each having a score of 1,382.

"It was real good competition all day," Meyer said. "That's the first time I can remember this (the tie) ever happening."

Gardner's series led the Kahoks to the runner-up spot, while Ryan Warner was next, with a 1,280 series. Cole Budde threw a 1,267 six-game set, Elijah Hay was next with 1,117, Nathan Hay threw a 716 series, and Bryson Hartman had a 371.

The Lancers were led by Brandon Lacy's 1,253 series, with Connor McGibney tossing a 1,234, Austin Steiger a 1,206, Alex Koester a 1,159 and Chace Behn rolled a 1,106 series.

Bertoletti's series led the Shells, with Jake Weigel was next at 1,186, followed by Blake Adams with a 1,179, Ethan Baumgartner had a 1,111, and Logan Wonders bowled a 1,107.

Besides the Redbirds' top three bowlers, Trevor Vallow threw a 936, Gavin Taylor rolled a 743, Danny Laslie, Jr. had a 343 series, and Bryce Summers had one game of 164.

Jeremy Vanost of Jersey, qualified for the state meet as an individual, rolling a 1,274 series to advance.

Meyer is happy with how his team worked hard to advance to the state meet and knows that the bowlers will have to do the same in order to advance to the final day on Saturday.

“Overall, the kids worked hard,” said Meyer, “and now, we’ve got to work hard again this weekend, Make some spares. The goal is to make it to Saturday, and we have to make the top 12 to advance to Saturday. Then, we have to continue working hard.”

The state tournament is set for Friday and Saturday at St. Clair Bowl in Fairview Heights, the only state finals that are held in both Metro-East and southern Illinois. Meyer is remaining optimistic that the Redbirds will finish in the top 12 on Friday and compete for the championship on Saturday.

“I want to stay positive that our chances will be good,” Meyer said. “It’s all a matter of how bad do the kids want it. Friday will be the key.”