

Davison's 67th Minute Goal Lifts Redbirds Past Quincy 2-1, Advances to Regional Final

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Justin Davison's goal in the 67th proved to be the winner as Alton defeated Quincy 2-1 in a very hard-fought IHSA Class 3A boys soccer regional semifinal match played Wednesday night at Edwardsville's Tiger Stadium.

The goal lifted the Redbirds to Friday afternoon's final, where they'll face the host Tigers for the third time this season. Edwardsville advanced with a 7-0 win over Granite City in the first semifinal earlier in the afternoon.

The winner was created off a very pretty passing play during an Alton counterattack. And it was all a part of a simple-minded mindset the Redbirds had in the match.

"Win or go home," said Alton head coach Nick Funk. "I mean, that's basically what we told them. We've got a lot of senior leaders this year, and it wasn't the prettiest of seasons, but we definitely have potential."

The Redbirds have struggled with finishing their attacks on goal this year, but got the goals when they needed them.

"We've struggled with finishing all year," Funk said. "And we've been in games with every team that we've played, I think, and we just couldn't finish. So tonight, when we're able to finish, that's what you see."

And the Redbirds were able to return the favor to the Blue Devils from last year's regional semifinal at Collinsville, where Quincy defeated Alton 1-0, getting a goal after the Redbirds lost a man due to a straight red card.

"Yeah, it's always sweet to get, I guess you would call, revenge, or to avenge a loss to the same team," Funk said, "especially in the same setting. So, you know, Quincy always plays hard, and they play well. They run some different formations on you, so it's hard for kids to kind of adjust. But we figured it out pretty early, so we were able to take it."

The Alton defense played a key role in the match as well, playing very stoutly, and allowing the only Quincy goal on a well-placed corner kick in the 32nd minute that drew the Blue Devils level.

"The goal, they pinned our keeper (Owen Macias) in," Funk said, "and he tried to fight his way through, but the kid hit a great ball to the back post. Can't do anything about that. We lost the toss, and had to into the wind first half, and so, when you have fresh legs, Quincy had fresh legs taking the wind with them, so we were chasing a lot of balls over the top, and that just kills your stamina. So I don't know if we really struggled with it, but it's definitely something that you have to watch out for. I think they really did a good job. They've done a good job all year. The scorelines don't really show that, but our defense has been pretty solid."

The Blue Devils frequently used a long ball strategy most of the way, and in the opening minute, put Macias to the test, which he knocked away easily. Alton also had a good chance early, but a shot from Brayden Decker went across the face of goal. Frank Heck, in goal for Quincy, came up with a couple of good early stops as well to keep the match goalless.

Later on, both Jake Lombardi and Braden Schrimpf had great chances, but both went over the top of goal. The Redbirds did get the breakthrough in the 26th minute when Adam Wong put a nice through ball onto the feet of a breaking Decker, who made no mistake in slotting it home to give the Redbirds the lead at 1-0.

The Alton defense did a nice job of protecting the lead, but Quincy managed to draw level in the 32nd minute when, off a corner kick, Bryant Alexandre placed a perfect ball onto the far post, and his kick went straight into the lower right-hand corner of the goal to tie the match 1-1. The equalizer seemed to fire up the Devils, and they had some good chances near the end of the half, but Macias was there to stop all the shots as the two teams went into halftime tied.

Macias was especially busy early on in the second half, as the Alton goalie was able to stop some good Quincy chances, while at the other end, Heck was just as busy, stopping some Alton opportunities. The best chance for the Blue Devils came in the 61st minute, when Andrew VanderMaiden broke in alone after getting a through pass, and had a teammate with him, but chipped the ball over a prone Macias. But an Alton defender was there to head the ball off the line, keeping the match level at 1-1.

The Redbirds were able to strike on their counterattack in the 67th minute, on the pretty passing play when Schrimpf and Davison worked a gorgeous one-two combination, with Davison clinically finishing, firing the ball into the back of the net to give Alton the lead back at 2-1.

From there, the Redbird defense took over, limiting Quincy opportunities, while creating some chances of their own. In the end, it was Alton who had the better of the play in the final minutes, keeping the ball down at the Blue Devil end most of the way as the Redbirds took the 2-1 win to advance to Friday's final.

The Redbirds and Tigers will meet in the regional final at Tiger Stadium Friday afternoon in a 4 p.m. kickoff, and Funk feels that his team will be ready to go against a familiar opponent.

"Yeah, you know, we've already seen them twice this year," Funk said, "which is a little different than normal, but, well, I guess not, because they've always been in our tournament. They got us both times, but like I said, we were in both games, I think, and I think Mark (Heiderscheid, the Edwardsville head coach) would tell you the same thing. We just couldn't finish our opportunities, so, if we're able to keep finishing like we did tonight, I think we'll be alright"

Funk agreed that it will be a tough match.

"Yeah, it'll be a tough one, for sure," Funk said. "Just proud of 'em. Especially coming off a season like they are, to be able to come out here and fight for a win like that is pretty outstanding."

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)