

Alton Middle School Eighth Grade Girls Basketball Team Wins Twice At IESA State Tournament, Plays For Championship Thursday Night

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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MACON - The eighth-grade girls' basketball team at Alton Middle School will have the opportunity to do what the seventh-grade girls' team did this past Thursday night - win a state championship.

The eighth grade Junior Redbirds won their quarterfinal and semifinal games Saturday in the Illinois Elementary School Association state tournament at Macon Meridian High School, just south of Decatur, defeating Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School of Harvey 43-15 in the first quarterfinal game Saturday morning, then taking the first semifinal over Mokena 34-20 later that evening.

In the quarterfinal against Brooks Middle, the Junior Redbirds were never headed, going out to a 19-3 lead at the end of the first quarter, then extending the advantage at halftime to 31-9, and then taking a 40-13 lead after three quarters before going on to the win to advance.

Talia Norman led Alton in the quarterfinal with 17 points, while Kiyoko Proctor added 14 points, including four threes. Amani Leonard had five points, Jarius Powers scored four points, and Tayen Orr added three.

Brooks Middle had only three players score for them in the game. Kelley Lewis led with nine points, Alexis Jones had four points, and Kayla Johnson scored two.

In the semifinal win, Alton fell behind to Mokena, trailing 9-7 after the first quarter, but came back to lead at halftime 20-16, then took a 32-19 lead at the end of the third quarter, outscoring Mokena 2-1 to clinch the game and the berth in the final.

Proctor led the Junior Redbirds in the semifinal, with three threes and going three-of-four from the line in scoring 16 points to pace Alton. Powers added eight points, Norman scored four points, Orr had three, and Kaylee Lacey added two points.

Angelina Panos led Mokena with eight points, while Brittney Veugeler scored seven points, Mia Zenere had three points and Gianna Amadlo scored two.

The Junior Redbirds are now 24-1 on the season, and will look to complete the seventh grade-eighth grade double in the championship game on Thursday night. Alton will face Shorewood Troy, who defeated Arlington Heights Thomas in the quarterfinal 39-20, and Canton Ingersoll 49-38 in the second semifinal. The title match is set for a 7:30 p.m. tip-off.