

Alderman, AHS athletes building back long-time tradition of success

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Front row, left to right: Fa'Twan Lock, Nolan Rodgers, Justus Pedrero, Kareem Hamilton, LaVonte Hobbs, DeMonte' Wigfall, Josh Lovings and Deionte' Wheeler,

Second row: Robert Davis, Malik Williams, Christian Porter, Dalton Hamberg, Sam Spangler, Dane Hutson, Larry Calvin and Asa Collins.

Third row: Kenneth Burnett, Kentez Ratcliff, Qiante' Wagner, Jordan Ing, Ricco Gipson, Jeremiah Tandy, Jamarr Williams and Chris Edwards.

Fourth row: Keenan Stegall, Harrison Henderson, Darien Pierson, Travon Peoples, Jordan Smith, Andrew Goeken, Jaelyn Watkins and Kobe Warlick.

Fifth row: Jameyon Alexander, Simeon Brown, DeKarlos Haynes, Tre' Northern, Ronald Gilchrese, Drew Roberts and Alecquan Russell.

Sixth row: Brad Leonard, Cody Markle, Zach Edwards, Zach Llewellyn, Tahj Womack and Charlie Sholar.

Seventh row: Coach Eric Dickerson, Coach Jason Raffaele, Coach Scott Droste, Head Coach Jeff Alderman, Coach Wade Dobson, Coach Cameron Youngman and Coach David Abner.

Alton High School's boys and girls athletic program is on a definite upswing since Jeff Alderman took over as athletic director in 2012.

Alderman's varsity football Redbirds posted its first winning season since 2008 this year with a 5-4 mark and narrowly missed the playoffs. The athletic director has high hopes for the upcoming basketball season.

"The varsity boys basketball team was 22-6 last year and I know is looking to a positive season this year," Alderman said. "We had a nice fall. There has been improvement in our athletic programs across the board. All our programs are led by great coaches and have consistency."

The Alton High girls' volleyball team had a stellar season this fall, starting 19-1 and posted 25 victories.

The Alton coach said he was extremely proud of the way the varsity football team played this year.

"I am very proud of our seniors," he said. "They worked so hard and hung on every word we said to them. I wanted the coaches and players to experience the playoffs. It didn't happen and it is another lesson beyond the classroom to keep plugging away and don't get down on self."

Alderman said it is transition time for high school sports at every school.

"Bowling has started and girls basketball tryouts were Monday," he said. "The boys basketball team starts practice on Nov. 10 and wrestling also begins practices."

Alderman said to continue to coach and work in athletics in his mid 50's, it has to be a passion.

“Athletics are such a great extension of the classroom,” he said. “There are a lot of great things taught in gyms and fields that can’t be taught in a chemistry or math book.”

The Alton High athletic director/football coach said he and his family love the Alton/St. Louis area.

“My parents are graduates of Jerseyville High School and my grandparents lived in the area,” he said. “I have a lot of neat memories of this area from the past. I have bounced around a lot, but I have a good hometown feeling about this area.”

Alderman coached at Southwestern High School from fall 1994 to spring 1999, so he is very familiar with the region.

The Redbirds spread the ball around this football season and that was one of the keys to success.

“It made it really hard for the defense to key on one person,” he said. “There are a lot of good athletes at Alton High School. All the kids I have coached have been special, but I am very fond of this year’s senior class. Several of them played as sophomores when I first got here.”

With the breakout football season, Alderman said the program is starting to get there and he anticipates more success in the future.

“There is no doubt in my mind we will have a good year next year,” he said.