

Alton High Head Boys Basketball Coach McCrary Excited For Players After Recording Win In Collinsville Holiday Classic

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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COLLINSVILLE - Roger Elliott's 14 points, along with 10 points each from both Ihzel Brown and Byron Stampley, Jr., Helped Alton win their first game in nearly two years with a 61-31 win over Wasilla, Alaska in the 15th place game of the 37th Prairie Farms Collinsville Holiday Classic basketball tournament Wednesday morning at the Collinsville High School auxiliary gym.

The loss ended a 28-game losing streak for the Redbirds, who last won at the Redbirds Nest on February 22, 2020, over Taylorville 66-61 and first-year head coach Eric McCrary was extremely happy for his players in the wake of the victory.

"I'm very happy for the kids," McCrary said. "It's well deserved."

That the win snapped the losing streak has lifted a big burden on the players as well.

"Oh my gosh, I can't imagine what kind of weight the kids had off their backs," McCrary said. "We've worked hard all season, and had some breaks go against us. And now, the weight is off the kids' backs. A great win as well for the kids. I'm proud of them, proud of the team, and they're so much fun to be around. I'm just proud and happy for them."

McCrary is also happy to get his first win as Alton head coach as well, and coming before the end of 2021 helps the team tremendously in more ways than one.

"It's nice to get that one before the calendar year ended," McCrary said. "It's a perfect example to learn how to win. The best way to learn to win is with experience, and the great thing about this group is they come to work every day. They're very coachable and great to be around. They enjoy coming to practice every day and they really enjoy being around each other.

And as the calendar changes to 2022, you can expect the Redbirds to keep working hard and build upon their first win. And become a team that will be difficult to play against down the road.

"We'll keep working to get better every day," McCrary said. "And as long as the kids keep improving and working, we'll let the chips fall where they may."



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