

Alton Boys Get First Back-To-Back Wins, First Southwestern Conference Win Since 2020 With 55-39 Victory At Home Over Belleville West

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ALTON - The Alton High School boys basketball team broke a 28-game losing streak on Dec. 29 at the Prairie Farms Collinsville Holiday Classic with a 61-31 win over Wasilla, Alaska. On Tuesday night, the Redbirds made it back-to-back wins for the first

time since Feb. 21-22, 2020, with a win over Belleville West 55-39 at the Redbirds Nest, taking their record to 2-12 on the season.

It was a historic win for a number of other reasons as well. It was the first SWC win for the Redbirds since a 69-46 win over Edwardsville on Feb. 21, 2020, the first home win since a 66-61 victory over Taylorville the next night, and the first win over an Illinois opponent since the win over the Tornadoes.

Add everything up, and it makes Alton head coach Eric McCrary a very happy guy.

"I'm proud of the kids," McCrary said during a phone interview. "They keep getting better every day and just taking it one day at a time. Last night, I was so proud of the kids, always playing hard and executing the game plan very well. Just so proud of them."

The win was very important as well, with the Omicron variant of COVID-19 going through everywhere in the country, Alton High has been particularly hit hard. The girls' basketball team, currently 12-3, has had their season interrupted with COVID going through the school, having their first five games after the holidays either postponed or canceled. The outbreak has yet to affect the boys' team, and McCrary is well aware of what is currently happening.

"Absolutely, and it's a tough time at this, with COVID acting the way it is," McCrary said. "We've had a very weird week after the Collinsville tournament, we've had a number of scares. But I'm really proud of the way our guys have managed everything and kept it ongoing."

Adrian Elliott, Jr. led the way for the Redbirds with 19 points in the win over the Maroons, while Byron Stampley added 13 points, Ihzel Brown came up with 10 points, Roger Elliott had seven points and both Alex Macias and Jeremiah Van Zandt had three points each.

McCrary feels that the team is on message right now, and that message is a very simple one.

"I just tell the kids to keep on doing the right things," McCrary said, "and we can control only the things we can control. We're just doing everything one day at a time, both basketball and COVID related."

It's definitely a work in progress for the Redbirds and the players, and the progress is being measured slowly, surely, and steadily.

"It's just a situation that's ever-developing," McCrary said, "and we've just got to be ready and roll with the punches when it happens. They've been flexible and doing all the things we've asked them to do."

Alton will now prepare for their next game at home against Triad Saturday night at 7:30 p.m., and both McCrary and his players will continue to take things day-to-day.

"We practice today," McCrary said, "get better today and make our preparations one day at a time."

