

Redbirds Fall To Undefeated Triad, Look Forward To OFallon Rematch

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – The Alton High School girls soccer team picked up only their second loss of the season Friday night (April 15). The 3-1 setback came from the undefeated (10-0) Triad Lady Knights. The Redbirds fall to 10-2 on the season.

While this game wasn't a conference matchup, it was still one that has been circled on the calendar for Alton. Head coach Gwen Sabo-Howland called Triad "probably the best team in this area right now." The Redbirds were looking for the upset.

Alton nearly took the lead in the 6th minute when junior forward Emily Baker crossed the ball in toward junior midfielder Maddie Cooke, but Triad's keeper was there to put it just out of Cooke's reach.

Things went back and forth for about 20 minutes or so and then the deadlock was broken.

In the 30th minute, Alton's goalie, junior Peyton Baker, made an incredible save to push the ball off the crossbar. Unfortunately for her, the rebound was collected by Triad's Laney Harshany and she put it in the back of the net to make it 1-0 a half-hour in.

Five minutes later Gabbie Wood doubled the lead for the Lady Knights and the game went into halftime 2-0.

The game definitely opened up during the second half as the temperature began to drop and the sun began to set.

Emily Baker nearly scored on a partial breakaway in the 41st minute but she was denied by Triad's keeper Kendall Chigas. She made seven saves on the night.

In the 52nd minute Triad nailed the crossbar, but the score remained the same.

That was until the 59th minute when Baker finally netted a goal for the Redbirds. She had a breakaway and slotted the ball around the keeper, but it initially hit the post. She stayed with the play to clean up her own rebound and cut Triad's lead in half.

She leads her team in goals as that one was her 22nd of the season.

At that point, Alton's fans, including the "Redbird Nest," erupted. There was quite a gathering to come to watch two of the best teams in the region square up against one another under the lights.

The momentum didn't last very long though as only two minutes later Triad made it 3-1. The goal came off the foot of Breanna Zurek and is her fourth of the season.

The Redbirds gave it their all the final 30 minutes, but truthfully, they were just gassed.

"This was our third game of the week, I thought we had heavy legs," Sabo-Howland said postgame.

"You know, I don't sub a whole lot, because I don't have a super deep bench. So, the same players are getting a lot of minutes."

Not only was it the third game this week, but the third game in just four days, including a double-overtime game against Belleville East back on Tuesday. Alton won that contest in penalty kicks.

Yesterday, they defeated Belleville West 9-2. The loss against Triad snapped a six-game winning streak for the Redbirds.

Alton will get some well-deserved rest over the Easter weekend and won't be back in action until Tuesday April 19th's rematch against the O'Fallon Panthers.

Coach Sabo-Howland already has her focus shifted toward that matchup.

“We were using tonight to get better and try some things because the focus is O’Fallon. We care about conference games and winning in the conference. We’re excited and all eyes are on Tuesday.”

The Panthers and Redbirds met on March 29. Both teams went into that game undefeated, but O’Fallon came out the other side with a 3-1 victory while it was Alton’s first of two losses on the season.

The much-anticipated game will kick off at 6:30 p.m. at O’Fallon High School.

