

# Alton Plays Well In Regional Softball Semifinal, But Loses Closes One 4-2 In Outstanding Game

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EDWARDSVILLE - Alton's softball team played very well in their IHSA Class 4A softball regional game against Collinsville, but in the end, couldn't take advantage of opportunities in losing to the Kahoks 4-2 in the second semifinal Tuesday evening at the Edwardsville District 7 Sports Complex.

Of more concern was the loss of Alaina Laslie, who suffered a sprained ankle when her spikes caught in the dirt on a ground ball advancing to second on a ball hit by Jordan Watsek.

"Alaina's doing fine," Redbird head coach Dan Carter said after the game. "She's twisted it up pretty good, she obviously couldn't finish, but that hurts us a little bit to lose somebody like that in the lineup. We battled through that and I thought we played a pretty good ball game all around. But hats off to Collinsville, they outplayed us tonight and they're going to be playing Friday night and we're not."

Alton's mindset going into the game was very positive and focused on something Carter talks with his team about constantly.

"Well, like we talk about all the time, let's be better tomorrow than we were today," Carter said, "and you know, that's what we've been talking about all season and I thought the girls had a pretty good season. We talked about that coming into today and I thought that we were just better than we've been in the last couple of games, we were going to be OK. We struggled a little bit at times, but I thought we did a pretty nice job out here tonight. We just weren't able to get that big hit when we needed it."

Collinsville pitcher Marissa Thomas threw a very good game against Alton, striking out five and winding up retiring nine straight batters, allowing only a seventh-inning single with two out in shutting down the Redbird lineup.

"She did a real nice job," Carter said. "Got some pop-ups in situations like that. We hit the ball well at times and a couple of times, we didn't. And we just weren't able to get that big hit with girls on a couple of times, but all-in-all, not a bad game for us."



The Redbirds got out of a big jam with the bases loaded in the top of the fifth and the Kahoks threatening to blow the game wide open, but Thomas was able to shut down the Alton batters.

"I thought we did a real nice job there," Carter said. "Defensively, we did a nice job; we had a couple of mistakes, but we worked around those for the most part. They were the better ball club; we played three times this season and every time we played, it was a good ball game. So my hat's off to them and if we played 10 times, it might be 5-5."

The Kahoks got on the board first in the opening inning, when Lexi Rafalowski was hit by a pitch and scored on a double by Young to make it 1-0. The Redbirds threatened to tie the game in the bottom of the inning on lead-off singles by Audrey Evola and Alissa Sauls, but left fielder Maddie Harris got off a great throw on a Reese Plont single to nail Evola at the plate to keep it a 1-0 game.

Collinsville made it 2-0 in the third on a walk and stolen base by Rafalowski, a walk to Young and a RBI single by Brylee Anderton. The Redbirds got the run back in the home half on single on Sauls and Laslie, with Sauls going to third. Watsek hit a ball sharply into right field to score Sauls, but Laslie was injured on the play and forced at second on the fielder's choice. A fly ball to center ended the inning.

The Kahoks made it 3-1 in the next inning on a double by Maya Clark, a single by Emma Hylton and a ground out by Katie Bardwell, with Hylton going to third on the throw to the plate. Sauls then made a big catch on a popped bunt by Harris and doubled off Hylton at third to end the inning.

A one-out single by Morgan Plummer and an RBI double by Evola brought the Redbirds to 3-2, and then Alton got out of a one-out bases-loaded jam in the top of the fifth on a single by Young, a walk to Anderton and an Allix Jakich single. Brianna Wellen struck out and Clark popped to second to end the threat.

The Kahoks added another run in the sixth on a walk and stolen base by Bardwell with one out, and one out later, back-to-back singles by Rafalowski and Young brought in Bardwell to make it 4-2. Thomas was brilliant in the circle, retiring nine in a row before a two-out, seventh-inning single by Sauls, getting the final out on a fly ball to right to win the game for Collinsville.



