

# **Alton's hockey team defeats Kahoks 5-2; plays Edwardsville tonight in championship series**

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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EAST ALTON – Much was on the line Monday night for both Alton and Collinsville's hockey teams, considering it was Game 3 of their best-of-three Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association Class 2A North Division semifinal series.

In the end, the Redbirds' Alex Rubin proved to be the difference, scoring three times as Alton bounced back from 1-0 down in the series to eliminate the Kahoks 5-2 at East Alton Ice Arena.

The win put Alton into the Class 2A North final against undefeated Edwardsville; the best-of-three set begins at 7:15 p.m. Tuesday at East Alton. It's a rematch of last season, with the roles reversed; the Redbirds went through the season unbeaten only to fall to the Tigers in the division final.

Alton dropped the opener to Collinsville – a team playing in its first year at the higher 2A level – 6-5, and they knew it was going to take a big effort to get back to win the series. “We were a bit complacent; we had defeated them pretty good in the regular season,” said Redbird coach Abram Henson, “but when you get to the postseason, it's a whole different level. I've seen teams upset favorites in the playoffs before, so we knew we had to work hard to get back into the series.

“We came out ready to go and played great, except for a couple of brief lapses. We knew Collinsville was a good team with plenty of pure talent, so we had to get at it early.”

That the Redbirds did, jumping out to a quick 2-0 lead in the first period on goals by Jake Bohn (assisted by Jordan Myer) and Rubin (from Ben Drake). Alton dominated the first period, putting constant pressure on Kahok goalie Caleb Nowicki, who did come up with some good saves to keep Collinsville in the game.

“Caleb played great,” said Kahok coach Brian Bednara. “None of the goals they got were cheap ones; every goal was a good goal.”



The Redbirds extended the lead early in the second when Rubin scored his second goal off an assist from Brandon Lang at 3:16, then seemingly got an early knockout blow when, seven seconds after Myer was sent off for holding, Kain Henson swooped in and beat Nowicki to the glove side at 4:30 to take the Redbird lead to 4-0.

The Kahoks got some measure of revenge on the power play, though, when Jason Sperry found Kodee Keys in the slot, with Keys scoring at 5:32 to cut the lead to 4-1, which is where it remained through two periods.

Rubin completed the hat trick at 3:33 of the third when Myer got him the puck on a goal-mouth scramble and Rubin knocked it home, which prompted the Redbirds' student supporters to toss their hats onto the ice in a traditional hat-trick celebration. Cory Sperry got a consolation goal for Collinsville, with assists to Nicholas Hager and Jason Sperry, with 1:21 to go.

“We weren't expecting to be down in the series, but we got complacent and lost the first game,” Rubin said. “We had a team meeting, talked about it and settled down.”

With the Tigers now in the Redbirds' sights, the division final could be a very tough series. "We were in their shoes last year," Rubin said. "We didn't lose a game until we played them in the playoffs and wound up losing. Now things are reversed and we can use what happened last year as motivation."

The Redbirds outshot the Kahoks 45-15; Collinsville didn't get into double figures in shots until early in the third period. Alton was 0-for-1 on the power play, while the Kahoks were 1-for-5.

As mentioned, Game 1 of the Redbirds-Tigers series is set for 7:15 p.m. Tuesday, with Game 2 scheduled for 8:45 p.m. Thursday. A third and deciding game, if necessary, would be played at 7:15 p.m. Feb. 23; all three games will be at East Alton. The winner will take on the Triad-O'Fallon winner for the Class 2A title, with the schedule for that series to be announced.



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