

# Double-Edged Lancer Attack Downs Redbirds

by Nathan Tucker

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ALTON - If you would have asked Alton Redbirds head coach David Parker before kickoff, he would have loved to force a high-powered Belleville East attack to rely on the ground game at Public School Stadium.



But on Friday the visiting Lancers came up to Alton and reliably moved the ball on the ground on their way to a convincing 33-14 victory. Belleville East broke away from their standard game plan and went with an entirely run-first offense, often running quick pitch plays and inside handoffs out of a single back set. This was much different than the quick run/pass option offense the Lancers have utilized frequently throughout the first half of the season.

“We knew that they were a passing team, and worked all week on the pass,” Redbird head coach Parker said following his Redbird team’s 33-14 defeat. “We worked on the run too, but when they come out on that first drive and punch you in the mouth, you can just tell with the guys sometimes that it’s demoralizing.”

“Demoralized” correctly summed up the atmosphere at Public School Stadium through the first three-quarters of play, where Belleville East scored 33 unanswered points. The Lancers were led by the dual-pronged rushing attack of seniors Markevious Curiton and Moisey Trimble, both of whom had two touchdowns in the ballgame.

“That was textbook right there,” said Parker, noting how the Lancers were able to control the clock and succeed with the run. “Last week against Belleville West, we were able to take the last nine minutes of the fourth quarter, and tonight they (Belleville East) did that to us.” “It’s demoralizing after a while, we’d get to third downs on defense and they’d keep converting.” continued Parker postgame.

“We just have to find a way to get off the field on third down, and eliminate the penalties. Those penalties killed us.” The first half was a bit of a workout for the referees, with plenty of penalty flags being thrown against both sides, but primarily against the Alton Redbirds. Tough penalties against Alton gifted field position to Belleville East on drives where they were steadily moving the football on the ground. Alton’s best chance to get on the scoreboard in the first half was a long drive that saw the Redbirds infiltrate the Lancer red zone, but Alton quarterback Graham McAfoos threw an interception in the endzone.

Belleville East scored on their resulting drive, and the game was all but out of reach before half. The hometown Redbirds found the endzone twice in the fourth quarter, and started to find their rhythm offensively albeit too late to meaningfully impact the football game.

An athletic 20-yard touchdown run from senior running back Keith Gilchrese, and a deep connection between Graham McAfoos and his favorite wideout target, Byron Stampley Jr., gave the home fans something to cheer for, and might give the Redbirds a bit of confidence heading into a week of practice.

“I hope and pray that it carries over this week in practice,” said Parker. “We have a tough game coming up against Edwardsville, but like I told the team, anyone can win in the game of football, any given Friday night.”

The 1-4 Alton Redbirds host the Edwardsville Tigers at Public School Stadium on Friday, September 30, with kickoff at 7 p.m. The Tigers come into that contest at 4-1, following an incredibly convincing 70-0 win against Belleville West on Friday night.