

# Edwards slams Alton past O'Fallon with 25-point performance

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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ALTON – Senior Night for Alton's basketball team was a particularly good one for the Redbirds.

Especially for Darrius Edwards.

The senior led all scorers with 25 points as Alton ran out to a big third-quarter lead and coasted home past O'Fallon 73-52 in a Southwestern Conference game at Alton's gym Friday night. In first quarter, he went airborne twice on slams that created lasting excitement in the Alton crowd.

It took awhile for the Redbirds to get started, though; they only held a 12-8 lead at quarter time, thanks in part to a couple of big dunks from Edwards that got the Redbird supporters going. “We were a bit sluggish at the start,” Redbird coach Eric Smith said, “but once we started guarding people full-court, it changed the dynamics of the game.

“We did things pretty well tonight; we're going to have to do those things pretty well once the postseason starts too.”

Panthers coach Rick Gibson knew his team was going to have his hands full with Edwards. “He's a pretty good player,” Gibson said. “But they have a lot of guys who can attack you both inside and outside. You try to take away the inside game, they can attack you from the perimeter; you take away the outside shots, they can pound the ball inside.”

The key to the game came in the third quarter, when the Redbirds, holding a 10-point lead, went on a big tear, going on a 13-0 run through the first 4:23 before the Panthers were able to score. The run eventually became a 19-3 run before O'Fallon caught fire and managed to cut 27-point lead down to 15 early in the final term.

That's as close as it got as the Redbirds re-asserted themselves and made the lead more comfortable, much to the delight of the AHS supporters and to Smith, who cleared the bench to thank his outgoing seniors for their efforts.

Carlos Anderson and Bryan Hudson each added nine points for the Redbirds (24-4 overall, 12-2 SWC); Donovan Franklin led the Panthers (17-9 overall, 9-5 SWC) with 19 points.

The Redbirds begin the IHSA Class 4A Boys Basketball Championship at 6 p.m. Tuesday when they face Granite City in an Edwardsville Regional semifinal; the winner of that game meets the Edwardsville-Quincy winner for the regional title at 7 p.m. Friday.