

Alton topples Granite City to move to regional championship game

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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IHSA CLASS 4A EDWARDSVILLE REGIONAL SEMIFINAL

EDWARDSVILLE – Alton's boys basketball team lived up to its' top seeding in the IHSA Class 4A Edwardsville Regional Tuesday night.

Granite City, though, did all it could to make the Redbird sweat things out.

The Warriors, who played many teams very close this season, refused to go away and stayed the game almost to the very end, with only a late run down the stretch assuring AHS of advancing to Friday's championship game as the Redbirds prevailed 59-44 at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

Alton (25-4) will take on host Edwardsville for the title and a berth in the Pekin Sectional at 7 p.m. Friday; the Tigers held off Quincy in the nightcap Tuesday.

"They can play," Redbird coach Eric Smith said. "I'm just happy the season's not a month longer; once they figure out how to win, they're gonna be good. They aren't a bad team at all; they got guys who can shoot the ball and that gives them a chance."

That the Warriors played the Redbirds so close wasn't surprising, given how the two Southwestern Conference rivals' games played out this season.

"Alton's good for a reason," said Warrior coach Steve Roustio, "but we've really played them well this season. This wasn't one of our better games tonight, but we did some good things out there and kept it close."

One turning point of the game may have come in the third quarter, when the Warriors, trailing 29-25, went down the floor and nearly cut the Redbird lead to two when a shot went off the mark. The Redbirds grabbed the ball, charged downcourt and got a three-point shot from Maurice Edwards to make it 32-25, a five-point swing that may have proved crucial.

"If we make that layup, we're down two and who knows what might have happened," Roustio said. "It's not the reason why we lost the game, but it does stick out."

Still, the Warriors hung with the Redbirds all night, Alton only having a 11-4 lead at quarter time and 32-27 lead at the half.

"We talked about it at halftime," Smith said, "and we did shoot the ball better in the second half. We've had stretches when we've struggled, but we're not known as a three-point shooting team; we have to be stubborn and get the ball inside."

"We've got some really competitive kids, though, and we know what we have to do."

Alton's Bryan Hudson led all scorers with 16 points, many of them on third- and fourth-chance follows. "That's the best he's played against us in two years," Roustio said of the Redbirds' 6-7 senior. "He was following his shots two and three times and he's got a presence there."

Maurice Edwards followed with 15 points, with Darius Edwards getting 12 and Carlos Anderson 10. For the Warriors, Darrell Miller led with 14 points, with Kenny Berry getting 11 and Traron Allen eight.



