

Bell Scores Twice In Third Period For Alton, Rotter Twice For Edwardsville, But Bell's Goal At Buzzer Earns Redbirds Hockey Tie

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EDWARDSVILLE - Both Lawson Bell for Alton and Ben Rotter for Edwardsville scored twice in the third period, but Bell's goal right at the final buzzer was the most important one of the night as the Redbirds got a 4-4 tie with the Tigers in the first-ever Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association game to be played at the RP Lumber Center in Edwardsville.

Bell's goal decided a very close game in which Alton took a 2-0 lead in the first period, only to see Edwardsville come back to tie the game in the second, get the lead back in the third on Bell's first goal, then Rotter scored twice, the second goal coming with 1:41 left in the game before Bell's heroics rescued the point for the Redbirds.

It was a kind of a game that the Redbirds were happy to get the point for the tie, but also could have played better.

"Not very satisfied," said Alton head coach Nick Boswell. "I think we came out flat, we could have played a full hour of hockey a lot better, it was very lackluster and I thought we didn't play the game we have here, kind of running around everywhere. I mean, a tie's better than a loss, but I was hoping for a better outcome. I think we were the better team and we've just got to come out and we've got to work harder than the other team and I just didn't think we had the energy needed to win."

It was still a decent effort for the Redbirds, who not only saw Bell score twice, but Talan Neely had a goal and an assist on the night.

"Anytime we're getting production from our top line, it's a good sign," Boswell said. "With Lawson with the goal to tie it up there with the last second remaining, that's awesome. It goes to show we have a lot of heart towards the end, but we gotta have that same energy the entire time, all three periods."

Boswell does feel that the Redbirds are still a fairly young team that's still learning and having its share of highs and lows early on, but he's also confident that the team's heading in the right direction.

"I think we've done some good things," Boswell said. "we've had some ups and downs, but we're still learning. We're a fairly young team and we're constantly learning, trying to get better and I think we're in the direction to have some success this year and kind of take off from where we left off last year."

The goal at the end of the regular season in February is to make the Class 2A playoffs and be able to compete with teams such as Collinsville and defending champion Granite City.

"Obviously, the goal is to be able to compete for a championship, always," Boswell said. "Varsity level, we want to win and we just hope to keep going and keep learning and hopefully, we'll have some success this year."





The Tigers played very well against the Redbirds in the MVCHA team's debut at Edwardsville's new home, unfortunately giving up the equalizer as time expired., overcoming a slow start to play a good game.

"I thought we played really well," said Edwardsville head coach Jason Walker. "I thought we got off to a slow start there and then, we were able to battle our way back. I thought we played really well in the first period and that was the message. After the first, it was 2-0, but we felt like it was if we kept continuing to play the way we were playing, we were going to like where we were at. We played a really good second and a really good third."

Although the Tigers gave up the final goal at the end, a point is still a point for the tie and Edwardsville will gladly take it.

"Yeah, our MVCHA team, being our second team, and to play a varsity team like Alton and play them like that, I thought we played really well," Walker said. "It's learning mistakes and we'll get better with it. But overall, I thought the way they played, the effort level that they showed was outstanding."

It's still early in the season, but Walker feels his team's chances are very good, indeed, and he looks forward to the remainder of the season.

"I think we've played well," Walker said. "As I said, we're going to have our growing pains. It's a team that is playing a tough schedule, considering we're playing teams' other varsity teams. They've played well, they're learning on the job and they've battled and they continue to battle."

Going through those growing pains in November will begin to pay big dividends in January and February for the Tigers.

"Yeah, it'll pay off later in the season," Walker said. "And certainly in the future for our program. They're getting a lot of experience at a high level and it's going to make us better down the road."

The Redbirds got the first goal early on when Neely took a pass from Tyler Morelli and scored at 1:38 to put Alton up 1-0, then, with Reed Wolfe off for slashing later in the period, it didn't take the Redbirds long to capitalize, as Hayden Sherman took a pass from Bell and scored at 7:59 to double the lead for Alton to 2-0 after the first period.

It stayed that way for much of the second period, with both teams having good chances but being turned away by the goaltenders. Late in the period, the Tigers struck with a pair of goals in 1:06, first with Brad Stone taking a pass from Reid Poettker at 11:51 to score and cut the Alton lead to 2-1, then at 12:57, with Landon Braundmeir off for roughing, Alex Fox scored on the power play to tie the game, with Wolfe and Ben Kusmierczak getting the assists. The period ended in a 2-2 stalemate.

Bell took a nice pass from Neely early in the third to score at 2:19 to give the Redbirds the lead back at 3-2, but Rotter score to retie the game at 3-3 with an unassisted goal at 6:50, then with both sides playing for a possible winner, Rotter got a pass from Kusmierczak and scored at 12:19 to put Edwardsville ahead 4-3. During a time-out in the final minute, the Redbirds pulled the goalie and went with six attackers, and off a scramble, Bell scored unassisted at 13:59, right before the buzzer sounded. After a brief discussion with his linesmen, the referee gave the goal, giving Alton the 4-4 tie.

The Tigers outshot the Redbirds in the game 28-21.

Edwardsville is now 0-2-1 on the young season and next plays Monday at East Alton against Bethalto in a 7:35 p.m. face-off, while Alton goes to 1-2-1 and also plays Monday at East Alton, going up against O'Fallon in a 9 p.m. start.





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