

# Feeling 22 – Lady Redbirds Top Mater Dei To Move On To Highland Tourney Championship Game And Remain Undefeated

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HIGHLAND – Alton had only been held to 50 points or less twice this 22-game season. One of those times was to O’Fallon back on Dec. 8. The other time was when the Lady Redbirds played the Mater Dei Knights in their second game of the season.

Back on Nov. 19 the Redbirds hosted the Knights and beat them by a score of 49-36.

The two met again Wednesday night in the semifinals of the Highland Tournament and it was once again Alton coming out on top by a score of 45-34.

The Lady Redbirds remain a perfect 22-0 while the Knights fall to 16-4 on the season.

Kyoko Proctor led all scorers with 19 points on the night, 15 of which came in the first half. She started the game five-for-five from the floor with four three-pointers.

“You expect big things like that for Kiyoko,” Alton head coach Deserea Howard said postgame. “You never really know with these girls who’s going to pull it out because we push them all equally.”

Alyssa Lewis was the other Redbird in double digits with 11 points. Laila Blakeny had five and Jarius Powers had four. Kaylea Lacey, Tayen Orr, and Talia Norman each added two points for the Redbirds.

The first points of the game were scored by Mater Dei’s Alyssa Koerkenmeier to make it 3-0 after a basket and a foul shot. Powers picked up her second foul of the game early on and had to sit out for a little bit.

Proctor immediately went and scored her first three to tie the game. Thanks to her 12-point first quarter, Alton led 14-13.



The Knights opened the second quarter with a three-pointer from Madison Winkeler to take a 16-14 lead, but that would be the last time they led. Proctor once again made a three on the next possession to regain the Redbirds' lead at 17-16.

The Knights struggled to shoot the ball well in the second and Alton was able to run out to a 29-18 lead at the half.

After a not-very-productive third quarter from either team, Alton was still up 32-22.

The Knights did have a big fourth-quarter run in them. They cut the lead down to 34-31, but it was once again Proctor going the other way with a layup after a steal. Then Lewis made a three to make it 39-31 Alton with less than four minutes left.

The Redbirds managed to hang on for the win and will now play in the championship game on Saturday.

Coach Howard knew this game was going to be more of a defensive battle due to Mater Dei's height advantage. She didn't care if her team scored a lot, just that they scored more than the Knights.

“It forced us to play outside more than we usually would like to, but I was confident our girls could do it because we’ve lit up the three-point line before, so we weren’t really looking at the score, we were just trying to make sure we scored more than they do,” Howard said.

She prides herself in her team’s defense, and it’s the team’s defense that is the reason why they remain undefeated.

“We work on our defense more than our offense. We know we can score the ball, but defense is what’s going to take us,” she said. “Defense is what we hang our heads on. Even when your shot isn’t falling, we know we can fight four quarters in defense.”

Their shots weren’t exactly falling Wednesday night. As mentioned, it was just the third time this season that they had been held to below 50 points. Luckily for them, Mater Dei’s offense wasn’t firing on all cylinders either.

Koerkenmeier led their scoring with 12 points, followed by Maris Zurliene and Amelia Beer with seven points each.





Alton, the second-best Class 4A team in the state according to the Associated Press's latest rankings, tied the program's record for most wins in a single season and has done so against some stiff competition.

That's why they love playing in challenging tournaments like the Mascoutah Holiday Classic and now the Highland tourney. They are almost like practice postseason runs.

"These tournaments are really like being in a private school environment. Everything is pushing at us. It's showing me what my girls are made of but more importantly, it's showing them. Their confidence is so high right now and they're playing as a team. And so, I like the big games, I like these tough games that pull it out of us, especially getting closer and closer to the playoffs," Howard said.

Mater Dei also made the AP rankings coming in at No. 9 in Class 2A.

The Redbirds will play in the championship game on Saturday at 2:30 p.m. at Highland. They will take on the winner of Thursday night's semifinal between O'Fallon and Okawville.

It would be Alton's third meeting with O'Fallon this season after a 40-36 win in their first conference game and a narrow 52-51 win in the Mascoutah Holiday Classic championship. If it were to be Okawville, it would be the second meeting between the two this season after Alton won that game 58-53, also in the Mascoutah tournament.

O'Fallon is ranked No. 8 in Class 4A while Okawville is ranked No. 3 in Class 1A by the Associated Press.

For Howard and the team, it doesn't matter which school they see.

"Honestly we're ready for whoever shows up Saturday."