

Redbirds Capture First Regional Crown In 38 Years, Crush Quincy 58-31

by Nathan Tucker

February 17 2023 10:03 AM





ALTON - It was 4A Girls Basketball Regional Finals night at Alton High School on Thursday. A final that the Lady Redbirds had the privilege of hosting, they faced the Lady Blue Devils of Quincy, and took the Regional Championship by a 58-31 score.

The Lady Redbirds got off to a flying start Thursday night, opening up a 20-2 lead after just one-quarter of play. Alton only allowed eight Quincy points in the first half of action, led by a stout team defensive effort, forcing the Lady Blue Devils into loose passes and turnovers early and often.

“We’ve needed to turn up our defensive pressure,” said Alton girls' head coach Deserea Howard following Thursday’s Regional Final. “I think we took our foot off the pedal a little too soon, that’s okay though, that’s something we can come back and fix.”



Quincy fought to the very end but just couldn't create enough offensively to keep pace with the Alton attack. Junior forward Taylor Fohey led all scorers on the evening, with 20 points of her own. Fohey was the focal point for the Lady Blue Devils offense, converting mostly around the basket.

It wasn't just a night of team celebration in Alton, it was a night where Lady Redbirds standout guard Laila Blakeny crossed over the thousand-point plateau for her high school career. Blakeny led Alton with 14 points on the evening, draining three shots from beyond the arc to contribute to the total. Kiyoko Proctor and Jarius Powers had 11 points each and Alyssa Lewis had nine points for the Redbirds.

"I mean, she's our leader, she's our captain," Howard said, after the post-game celebrations for Blakeny and the team. "She sets the pace out there. When I need someone to be that coach on the floor, I look to her. She's been stepping up for us in a major way, and I expect that to continue as we make our trip going downstate."

As Howard alludes to, Alton now prepares for their next contest where they face the one team that managed to beat them this season, the Panthers of O'Fallon. Both teams will come into the clash ranked in the top ten in the state, and both will have hopes to see their season continue further.

The Panthers will be led by Shannon Dowell, who averaged over 20 points per game in the regular season. The Lady Redbirds were able to contain Dowell to 12 points in their January defeat to O'Fallon and will be up for the challenge to contain Dowell again in Sectional play.

“It’s just another game to us,” said Lady Redbirds head coach Deserea Howard Thursday night. “This is what we’ve been working for. We set ourselves up with an amazing season to make sure we get the seed that we want, we were able to play at home in front of our home crowd and bring home a championship.”

“But obviously,” Howard added. “We want that sectional championship. So we’re going to prepare for it, the same way we prepare for everything else.”





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