

# Panthers Pick Up Huge Early-Season SWC Victory Over Rival Redbirds

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
March 28 2023 9:47 PM



O'FALLON – In a pivotal early-season Southwestern Conference matchup the O'Fallon Panthers (4-0) hosted the Alton Redbirds (4-2) Tuesday night at O'Fallon Township High School.

It was OTHS with a 4-0 win to remain perfect on the season. Four games, and four shutouts for the Panthers.

“The group that we have takes a lot of pride in defending,” O’Fallon head coach Justin Judiscak said postgame. “We know that if we can defend well then opportunities are going to come.”

“The games are going to be close; they’re going to be tight games. We have a lot of competitive teams we play and if we can keep them out of our net, that’s a major goal of ours.”

Not only did the Panthers keep a clean sheet, but they did plenty of damage offensively as well.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> minute, senior midfielder Avery Taake broke the tie when a free kick was drilled her way. She received the ball and let a shot go past Alton’s senior keeper Peyton Baker.

Sophomore midfielder Claire Nieroda doubled the lead in the 25<sup>th</sup> minute after running onto a through ball in a wide position. She used speed to cut toward the middle of the field, beat a defender, and put it in the back of the net.

Sophomore defender Addison Baldus made it 3-0 before halftime in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute when she scored thanks to a corner kick landing at her feet.

Sophomore Allie Tredway finished the scoring in the 57<sup>th</sup> minute to make it 4-0.

Alton’s chances were few and far between Tuesday night as the Redbirds only registered two shots on net.

Alton’s best chance came in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute when sophomore midfielder Lyndsey Miller cracked a hard-hit shot toward goal, but O’Fallon’s goalie, junior Kendall Joggerst, came up with her best diving save of the night.

The Panthers could have made it 5-0 in the 64<sup>th</sup> minute, but Baker made an incredible save to stop a penalty kick. Baker stood on her head all night, recording an astonishing 20 saves to keep her team in it.

Alton head coach Gwen Sabo gave props to her goalkeeper saying that “she salvaged our dignity and kept that game from getting ugly. I wouldn’t expect anything less from her though.”

Sabo was not displeased with the way her team played in the first half. According to her O’Fallon just did a great job at exploiting her team’s weaknesses.

She added that O'Fallon is so good and dangerous because they get all 11 players involved in the attack, making it very tough to defend.

Another thing that makes the Panthers a quality team is the way they play when they have the lead. Once O'Fallon gets a lead, they play with such confidence.

"I know this group, when they see the ball go in the back of the net, they just start to envision that this game is ours," Judiscak said. "They start to really feel like they can take control of the game."

Take control of the game they did, as they have for four games now, including a 6-0 win over the Triad Knights in their season-opener.

With the win, the Panthers sit atop the Southwestern Conference at 2-0. Their other SWC win was over Edwardsville in a game that was called off at halftime due to continuous heavy rainfall.

As for the Redbirds, they fall to 1-1 in the SWC, with their win being a narrow one against Belleville West.

Alton won't have much time to think about what just happened because they'll be back in action immediately, March 29, when they head to Althoff (4-3) with a 6:30 p.m. kick-off.

As for O'Fallon, they're off until Saturday when they host Granite City. The Warriors come into the game looking dangerous as well with a perfect 4-0 record. That game is set to start at 12:30 p.m. at OTHS.