

# Baker Scores Early, Stark Nets Game-Winner In 2-1 Win Over Eagles On Senior Night

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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ALTON – The Alton Redbirds were looking to snap a four-game losing streak Friday night as they hosted the Civic Memorial Eagles at Public School Stadium.

Alton had a little extra motivation being Senior Night.

It ended up being two seniors that scored for the Redbirds, a goal in each half en route to a 2-1 win over CM.

The result brings Alton to 9-6-1 while CM slips to 13-5.

“I thought we came out with a really good energy which I liked because of Senior Night,” Alton head coach Gwen Sabo said.

“You never know if it’s going to be an emotional game or if we were going to be locked in, and I felt we were in the beginning.”

The Redbirds certainly came ready to play, leading to a goal just two minutes in. Senior forward Emily Baker received a nice through ball from senior midfielder Katie Stark. Baker used her speed to gain plenty of separation and slot the ball home around the CM keeper for her 18<sup>th</sup> goal of the season.



The Eagles never put their heads down though. Immediately the other way senior midfielder Aubree Wallace’s shot barely went wide.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> minute, Wallace delivered a perfect over-the-top ball that landed right in the path of junior forward Abriana Garrett. She took a few touches toward net and put it just out of the reach of the diving senior keeper Peyton Baker to tie the game up at one.

“Garrett is very dangerous for them,” Sabo said. “She was able to get that goal and I feel like that kind of deflated us a little bit and we kind of put our heads down.”

It was Garrett’s 46<sup>th</sup> goal of the season, having now owned the single-season and all-time scoring records for CM. It was Wallace’s 23<sup>rd</sup> assist this year to go along with her 17 goals.



Each team had one more good chance when the Redbirds hit the crossbar in the 23<sup>rd</sup> minute and the Eagles had a free-kick opportunity in the 28<sup>th</sup> minute that went high.

The game went to halftime tied at 1-1.

Coming back onto the field it was mostly Alton in the opening 20 minutes. Going against the run of play though sophomore forward Avery Huddleston’s shot went wide by only inches for CM in the 64<sup>th</sup> minute.



But Alton would keep its foot on the gas.

Stark, the senior midfielder made something out of nothing as she beat a defender with a neat skill move, pushed the ball off to her left foot, and let a shot rip from right around the 18-yard box. With her weak foot, she smashed the ball into the upper corner of the net to regain the lead at 2-1.



“A 1-1 tie was definitely intense,” Stark said about the game. “In the second half we were looking for a win, Senior Night, and everyone wanted it. I was so happy when I hit it and saw it go in the corner.”

She couldn’t believe that she had just scored with her left foot.

“I was so excited. I hit it and the whole team just started yelling,” Stark said.

CM threw everything and the kitchen sink at Alton in the remaining eight or so minutes, but the Redbird defense prevailed.

“It wasn’t our greatest performance, but at this point with our schedule and the injuries, we’ll take it,” Sabo said.

“It was a really close game. CM has a really good team,” she added.

For the Eagles’ head coach Eric Zyung, he was happy with the way his team played against some of the toughest opposition his side will see non-conference this season.

“These are playoff-caliber games for us,” Zyung said.

“It’s going to prepare us for the postseason. I love playing teams like Alton, Granite , coming up, Triad, Mascoutah. Those are playoff-caliber teams that you have to beat to advance in the postseason.”

“Alton’s a great team, Senior Night, they had a lot of energy, and we didn’t match it at times. . . I thought we came out, maybe a little slow. But once we settled down, I thought we were fine,” Zyung added.

As he mentioned, it’s back to business in the now wide-open Mississippi Valley Conference for CM. The Eagles will be on the road at Triad (9-7-2) and Mascoutah (4-10) next week.

As for Alton, they host Glenwood (9-4-1) on Tuesday before wrapping up its Southwestern Conference schedule against Collinsville, Edwardsville, and Belleville East on the road.