

Miller's Free Kick Saves The Day For Redbirds – Alton Sneaks By Lancers In Regional Semifinals

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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O'FALLON – The Alton High girl's soccer team won a close postseason affair against Belleville East Tuesday night at O'Fallon Township High School.

The Redbirds beat the Lancers by a score of 1-0 in an IHSA Class 3A Regional Semifinal. They will now move on to play O'Fallon (15-3-1), who beat Belleville West 8-0 in its semifinal in the game prior.

Alton had just spoiled the Lancers' Senior Night back on May 11 by a score of 3-0 in both teams' final regular season game.

Tuesday night did not feel the same.

"It definitely just felt like a different game," Redbirds head coach Gwen Sabo said.

"From the get-go, looked like a different team in a much better way. I felt like my girls didn't really have that energy, we didn't match that to start."

The game was a typical, tense postseason opener for both teams, neither one really able to create anything offensively in the game's first hour.

The rare glimpse toward goal mainly came from set pieces, and it was a set piece that decided the game.

Senior forward Emily Baker was fouled right outside the box in the 48th minute. In Alton's first shot on goal, sophomore Lyndsey Miller drilled the free kick that forced a nice save from Belleville East freshman keeper Abbie House to keep the game level.



At the 60-minute mark, Alton received another free kick in a similar area, this one somewhere between 25 and 30 yards out. Miller was set to try her luck again.

This time, she beat the wall and the keeper as the ball went straight into the back of the net to make it 1-0.

“She struck it hard enough and struck it low. Good for her,” Sabo said. “I’m glad it didn’t go to overtime; we needed that one.”

The Lancers did not go without their chances in the second half.

A few minutes after Miller’s goal, they received a free kick in a dangerous area, but the shot attempt went well high. Sophomore forward Annabel Seneczyn’s header went just wide from a corner kick in the 73rd minute, but that still wasn’t East’s last gasp.

That came in the 78th minute when they nearly scored off a fast break, getting around Alton’s senior keeper Peyton Baker, but the Alton defense saved the day with a near goal-line clearance.

Sabo expected a close game and warned her team of what could happen.

“In games like this, like I tried to explain to them, the longer it stays tied, the more it could go either way,” she said.

“It just gives the other team more momentum. The longer it goes 0-0, it can really go to either team. In those situations when we should be scoring goals and we’re not, it takes one counterattack for to get one.”

The counterattack never came, and the Redbirds were able to hold out for the 1-0 win.

It was Miller’s seventh goal of the season and fourth game-winner. Peyton Baker and company earned the seventh shutout of the season.

Sabo and the Redbirds now look ahead to Friday for what will definitely be a tough game against the O’Fallon Panthers, on their home turf.

In the two regular-season meetings between Alton and O’Fallon this season, O-Town won both by scores of 4-0 back on March 28th and 7-1 on April 18th.

The Panthers will be looking for a repeat of the 2021 season in which they won a Class 3A state title while the Redbirds seek to reclaim a Regional Title for the first time since 2011.

O’Fallon will host the Redbirds in the Regional Finals at 6 p.m. on Friday, May 19.