

# Redbirds Win Season Opener Over Bethalto In Front Of Packed House

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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**EAST ALTON** - After leading 3-0 after the first period, the Alton Redbirds hockey team fought off Bethalto and held on to a 6-4 win Monday night in front of a large crowd at East Alton Ice Arena in both teams' season opener.

Sophomore Keller Jacobs broke the game open scoring an unassisted goal at 9:46 in the first period, followed quickly by another goal from freshman Wyatt Salters, assisted by senior Bradley Bower.

After Bethalto sophomore Brock Greene was sent to the penalty box for slashing, the Redbirds went to work on the power play. Just 23 seconds into the man advantage, Jacobs found the back of the net again, this time assisted by freshman Caden Clark and senior captain Lawson Bell.

Just 10 seconds later, Bethalto got one back. The Eagles won the face-off and sent it down the ice quickly to junior Carson Landolt, assisted by freshman Jackson Albright to cut the deficit to 3-1 after the first period.

It wasn't for lack of trying on Bethalto's part. They outshot Alton 20-7 in the first. Three of those seven shots just so happened to find the back of the net for the Redbirds.

Early on in the second, Bethalto senior Vincent Newton was sent to the box. Clark scored from Lawson 25 seconds into the power play and made it 4-1 at 10:33.

Once again, Bethalto stayed in striking distance thanks to Landolt's unassisted goal at 9:12 to make it 4-2.

Bell scored unassisted at 7:54 to grow the advantage before Clark scored again to go up 6-2. Clark was penalized for roughing but made up for it immediately. He came out of the penalty box right as the Redbirds won possession of the puck.

Freshman Ethan Taul shoveled it to Clark who was waiting at center ice. Clark had a clear breakaway chance and made no mistake to make it 6-2 at 1:20.

Bethalto wouldn't go quietly into the night. Albright scored with 58 seconds remaining in the period to get it to 6-3.

After the Redbirds failed to take advantage of a double minor for Newton's high-sticking infringement, Bethalto gained some momentum in the final minutes of the game, leading to Albright's unassisted goal at 1:32 to get to the final scoreline of 6-4.

Bethalto outshot Alton 38-23. Alton goalie Logan Seymour made 34 saves.

"A little disappointed to be honest," newly appointed Alton head coach Bryan Clark said after the game. "I thought we gave up way too many shots, had to do a lot of work in our defensive zone. A 6-4 win is a win though."

After his team went two for six on the power play, squandering a four-minute double minor at the end, he had mixed emotions.

"We've got a pretty nice power play, definitely some nice supporting players on that," he stated. "Extremely disappointed with that four-minute (double minor) at the end. I don't know if we just ran out of gas or what, but we'd like to clean that up hopefully."

This season there are a lot of new faces in the program. New coaching staff in Clark and assistant coach Steve Hejna, as well as 10 rostered freshmen.

Coach Clark mentioned that it's a little bit of a learning curve with the situation.

"Something we haven't had to deal with in past seasons is a big roster," he said. "I actually have to scratch some players on a game-to-game basis, but that gives the opportunity for kids to work hard in practice."

"It's a good problem to have," Clark said with a smile.

After a second-round exit in last year's playoffs to Columbia, Alton returns a lot of key pieces and had many contributive freshmen in Monday night's season-opener.

"As far as expectations, the ceiling is always high for me," Clark said. "I think we've got a good group, the sky's the limit, we just have to put in the work to get there."