

Business As Usual: Lady Redbirds Win Season-Opener In Tip-Off Tournament

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – It was back to business Friday night for the Alton High School girls basketball team.

They kicked off the season by hosting the 28th Annual Lady Redbird Tip-Off Tournament, taking on the North Point Grizzlies from Wentzville, Mo.

Alton made easy work of its opponent, winning the season-opener 75-24. It was the seventh year in a row Alton won its first game of the season.

The Redbirds, who brought back most of their starting lineup from last year's 31-2 campaign, hit the ground running.

Alton started the game on a quick 9-0 run thanks to a few baskets from junior forward Jarius Powers and a three-pointer from junior point guard Kiyoko Proctor, forcing Northpoint into a timeout.



Shortly after, Alton head coach Deserea Howard took out her starters, giving everyone on the bench a little bit of time in front of a large crowd at Alton High School.

Freshman forward Madeline Ducey hit a buzzer-beater three at the end of the first quarter to go up 26-4.

The Redbirds kept up that pace leading 45-14 at half, and 66-19 after three.

The Redbirds put up 70-plus points in three games last season, including their home opener over Springfield Southeast, a 73-32 win.

“I was really happy with what I saw tonight,” Howard said after the win over North Point.

Powers led the Redbirds with 24 points while Proctor had 12.

“She was on fire tonight,” Howard said about Powers.



“I could have left her in the game for another 15 minutes and who knows what would have happened, but she’s a teammate. She wants to see everybody growing. And that’s what I tell them all the time, make your minutes matter, because you don’t have long.”

Other starters for Alton, senior point guard Alyssa Lewis added eight points, junior center Talia Norman had six, and sophomore forward Kaylea Lacey had five. Sophomore forward Kyridas Orr also scored five points off the bench.

Alton rosters 13 players on varsity; 11 of them scored against the Grizzlies, including the team’s three freshmen.

Ducey ended the night with six points while point guard Kourtnee Evans and shooting guard Allison Pruitt each scored two points.

“She’s quality, a quality freshman,” Howard said about Ducey. “She pays attention to details and plays with so much energy.”

Right now, Howard is trying to work out the details with her team.

“I’m just focused on working on things we need to work on,” she said. “I’m not really focused on how long people are playing. If you’re on the court and you’re doing great, you may come off because you’ve done it, or I want to see you work on more things.”

The Redbirds, who skyrocketed in popularity after last year’s success, played in front of a nice crowd Friday night, to the joy of coach Howard and the team.”

“It was more than I expected for the first night,” Howard said on the number of fans. “But like I said, Alton really supports us and that makes it fun to play here. A couple of the shots that you hit, and you hear the crowd go crazy. I think it’s going to be a fun ride.”

The Redbirds open the season to six straight home games, including the three in tournament play.

Alton continues the Tip-Off Tournament on Saturday, Nov. 18 with a doubleheader against Hazelwood West at 2:30 p.m. and against Lift for Life Academy at 7:30 p.m.

After the tourney, Alton hosts MICDS, Edwardsville, and East St. Louis.