

Stampley's 21 Points Leads Redbirds Past Waterloo In Season-Opener

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON - "Getting the first one is always the hardest," Alton High School boys basketball head coach Dylan Dudley said following his team's 65-50 win over the Waterloo Bulldogs Monday night.

"I don't care who you're playing or where you're playing. It's just a different environment, so I'm very happy," he said.

The Redbirds opened their season in the BSN Sports Tip-Off Tournament hosted at AHS, winning their second straight home opener.

Last season, Alton defeated Carnahan 88-67 before proceeding to lose 10 straight. The Redbirds finished with a 6-25 record and never once won back-to-back games.

Dudley is pretty confident that won't be the case this season.

"We're playing a totally different style than we did last year," he said. "I think it's going to be a fun style to watch. I think we're going to be enjoyable. I think those kids try to play as hard as they can."

"We're not going to be perfect, but, this team, they truly get along with each other," Dudley continued.

"It is a genuine friendship, a genuine chemistry and you can see when they pass and move the ball and cheer for each other. We didn't have that last year. This team has a special chemistry and a special bond about them that is really really fun to be around."

It was fun to watch for Redbirds fans, especially since Alton led Monday night's game from beginning to end.

Junior forward Trai'Sean Sims put the first points on the board, followed by a three-pointer and another basket from sophomore guard Semaj Stampley to go on a quick 7-0 run to open the game.

The Redbirds were playing fast and hard defense, leading Waterloo to bonus free throws early on. They were able to keep within striking range but still trailed 13-12 after the first quarter.

The three-pointer was cold for the Redbirds in the first quarter, but they flicked a switch in the second. Alton made four threes in the second quarter and pushed the envelope to 31-24 at halftime.

By the end of the night, Alton had made 13 threes, five of which came from Stampley.

"I've always known that we can shoot," Dudley said. "I don't think Trai'Sean Sims made a three today. He can shoot. Ka'Nye can shoot. They can shoot. Now, are we going to make 13 threes every night like we did tonight? No. We're going to have to win some games where we only make two or three, we've got to get to that."

Never in any real danger in the second half, the Redbirds settled into the second half.

Waterloo's junior forward Alex Stell scored first in the second half but it was immediately answered with a Stampely three. Junior guard Kobe Taylor made a three and Stampely made another one to go up 48-37 after three quarters.

Alton kept that momentum going into the fourth. Junior forward Oliver Williams opened things up with a corner three followed by an emphatic dunk from Stampely. Sophomore guard Tyson Jones and Williams hit back-to-back threes and Alton went on an 11-1 run to kick off the final quarter.

"We talk about it all the time; when we press, we're trying to go on 4-0 runs, 6-0 runs," Dudley said. "Try to see how many of those you can put together and next thing you know, you look up and realize you're on an 11-0 run and sucked the life out of them. So, I think that's something we have to continue to work on."

Stampely led all scorers with 21 points while Taylor had nine, Williams had eight, and Jones and junior guard Alex Macias each scored six.

Waterloo had three double-digit scorers. Senior forward Rodrigo Lopez-Tercero scored 14 while Stell and senior guard Caleb Yochum each added 13 points.

For Alton, 10 of its 13 players were on the scoresheet.

"Our two strengths, number one is definitely our strength in numbers, that we have 10 or 11 guys that can legit play and wear you out, and two, knock on wood, we can shoot the ball, so you've got to guard us from the perimeter," Dudley said.

"Now, defensively, we've got to be way tougher. We've got to be way better on the glass, better on our post-defense, and we'll get there," he added.

"But man it feels good to win the first game," Dudley continued.

"I'm proud of those kids. They deserve this, they've worked a lot. Now we've got to get back to practice tomorrow and get better at it, continue to go forward the next couple of games."

The Redbirds continue tournament play on Wednesday against Lift for Life Academy and on Friday against Jennings. Both of those games are set to tip off at 7:30 p.m. at Alton High School.