

Proctor Leads With 19 Points, Lewis Adds 10, Alton Explodes To Big Start, O'Fallon Rallies, But Redbirds Hold Off Panthers

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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O'FALLON - Alton junior point guard Kiyoko Proctor led the way with 19 points, including a pair of clutch threes late, while senior forward Alyssa Lewis added 10 points as the Redbirds exploded out to as much as a 16-point lead at one point in a 55-50 win over the Panthers on Thursday night at the OTHS Panther Dome.

O'Fallon rallied to within one point early in the fourth, but the Redbirds notched a pair of clutch threes from Proctor, as well as timely free-throw shooting, to take the key Southwestern Conference victory. The game was fast-paced and very exciting and entertaining throughout.

The Redbird defense shut down O'Fallon star forward D'Myjah Bolds in the first half, holding her to only two points, but she and the Panthers came alive at the end of the third quarter and start of the fourth going on a 15-0 run to cut a 37-21 lead to 37-36. But a pair of clutch threes in the period by Proctor and more clutch shooting helped give Alton the win in an early season matchup between the two schools.

"Battling with the foul trouble was interesting," said Alton head coach Deserea Howard. "I think the girls who had to cover for them did a good job. I think we could have done better in that third quarter, but that's something we can learn from and we can take back. But overall, I'm glad we got out of here with a win."

Getting the win on the road against the defending IHSA Class 4A state champions is a big plus for Alton.

"Absolutely," Howard said. "Obviously, last time we left this gym, it wasn't so nice. But I expect more. I expect us to do what we're supposed to do, I expect to get up and stay up. So, we're going to keep pushing."





Howard knew what happened to cause O'Fallon to rally back the way they did, coming back to within one point before Alton came back to seal the win.

"Just lots of turnovers, lots of fouls," Howard said. "We had to go to some girls that we usually don't go to in these types of situations, but it was good for them to be in that. And for us, it just shows that we've got to be clean. We have to be clean. We lost about three starters there, due to foul trouble, and that'll cost you."

The bench players who came off did a great job of keeping the game under control, and showed the Redbirds' depth.

"And that's what we expect," Howard said. "We push our reserves hard, and we thought they could continue to push the lead for us, and then, we kind of got sloppy on defense. The calls were questionable, but like I said, I'm just glad we got out on top."

It was an important win for the Redbirds, keeping them undefeated, and much more importantly, a road win against a team that had eliminated Alton in last year's sectional semifinal on their way to the state championship.

The Panther Dome was packed and there was a tremendous atmosphere inside the Panther Dome for the game. O'Fallon head coach Nick Knolman was very appreciative of the fans' support.

"Yeah, what an atmosphere tonight," Knolman said. "The crowd was great, the rivalry's great. They came out on all cylinders, making lots of shots in the first quarter. It kind of shellshocked us in the beginning, but I was super proud of our girls, that we were able to battle back and hold them to three points in the second quarter. And then, it was just kind of gut-check time, and trying to eat away there in the third quarter. We got into the bonus really early, so we were in attack mode, trying to get to the rim and to the free-throw line. And super proud we were able to make an effort and cut it all the way back to one point there, almost at the end of the third quarter."

The Redbirds jumped out of the gate early, getting a pair of threes from Lewis and another from Proctor to take a 9-0 lead, forcing an O'Fallon time-out after 3:05 had been played. The teams traded baskets before Alton went on another run, led by Jarius Powers and Talia Norman to go up 19-4. Josie Christopher then scored the Panthers' next five points, but Proctor hit a clutch three at the buzzer to give Alton a 22-9 lead after the first.

Proctor hit a basket early in the second quarter, then hit a free throw to make it 25-11, but a basket from Williams and free throws from Haeli Tart and Williams cut the Alton lead to 25-15 at halftime. Norman scored to open the second half for the Redbirds, and

baskets from Powers and Kaylea Lacy started a 12-6 run that ended with a basket from Lewis that put Alton up 37-21.

The Panthers almost immediately started the 15-0 run to climb back into the game, with Bolds, Tart and Carolyn Foster leading the charge that got O'Fallon back to within 37-33 after the third quarter. Early in the fourth, Christopher's three on the side cut the Redbird lead to 37-36, sending the Panthers' supporters into dreamland. Alton responded with a driving basket by Lacey, a clutch three by Proctor and a free throw from Lewis to bring the lead back to 43-36,

A Christopher steal and score cut the lead back to 46-43, and in the end, clutch free throw shooting, along with another big three from Proctor with 1:30 left in regulation, allowed the Redbirds to go on to the 55-50 win.

To go along with Proctor's 19 points and Lewis' 10 points, Lacey had nine points for Alton, while Norman had eight points, Powers came up with seven and Kyridas Orr had two points.

The Panthers were led by Bolds, with 14 points, while Tart scored 11 points, Christopher came up with 10 points, Foster had nine points, Newman had three points and both Williams and Kennah Barringer had two points each.

The Redbirds remain undefeated at 8-0, and next play in the McKendree Shootout in Lebanon against Springfield Southeast on Saturday at 3:30 p.m., before playing at Belleville East on Dec. 14 and Belleville West on Dec. 19, both games at 7:30 p.m.



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)