

# Alton Rings The Bell Twice In Comeback Win Over Ragin' Bulldogs

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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**EAST ALTON** – The Alton Redbirds hockey team is undefeated this year.

After trailing 2-0 after the first period to the Waterloo/Freeburg Ragin' Bulldogs Monday night at East Alton Ice Arena, the Redbirds stormed back to win the game 4-2.

“Call it cliché, call it what you want, but I said, ‘Hey, we’re undefeated this year so far.’ That was awesome, definitely a good start,” Alton head coach Bryan Clark said after the come-from-behind win.

Alton let two power plays get the best of them in the first period. The team’s captain, and later the game’s hero, Lawson Bell was sent to the box for roughing at 5:12 and it took just 16 seconds into the man advantage for Waterloo to strike when Austin Hopfinger found Caiden Anderson for the game’s first goal at 4:56.

Not long after, Keller Jacobs served a two-minute penalty when Alton was given a bench minor. Coach Clark firmly voiced his opinion to an official over a missed call and was given a penalty for his actions.

Parker Stoll sent one over to Zach Bonenberger who buried it to go ahead 2-0 at 3:05.

“I’ll own that,” Clark said of Waterloo’s second power-play goal. “That’s on me, but I was just trying to stick up for my team at the end of the day.”

At the end of the night, it was all water under the bridge.

Because Alton would score four unanswered goals, three in the third period.

The Redbirds began to gain some momentum, going to work on the forecheck and maintaining the puck for a lot of the second period. It finally led to a breakthrough when Jacobs leaned into a slap shot at 3:19. He took a forward pass from Ethan Taul into a little bit of space before letting the shot go over Waterloo netminder Logan Sherman’s stick side to cut the lead in half.

Some fireworks kicked off the third period when a few heated words between Alton’s Talan Neely and Waterloo’s Layne Wilkens turned into a shoving match and then a bit of a scrap as the two took one another down to the ice.

Neely, who instigated the fight, was sent out of the game, meanwhile, Wilkens served a five-minute game misconduct. Both teams continued to play five-on-five, and the game moved on.

But Lawson Bell must have taken all the trash talk and fighting personally. So, he did something about it.

At 6:00 in the third period, Bell found the puck after it hopped over a Waterloo defender’s stick. Bell took it on with some speed as he crossed the blue line, made a nice

forehand, backhand move, and put it past Sherman's glove side to tie the game up at 2-2. Henry Neely, being the last Alton player to touch the puck, was credited with an assist.

Bell still wasn't done. At 2:30 he followed up on his own rebound and stuffed the puck into the back of the net amidst some goalie interference chirps from the Waterloo bench. The goal stood and Alton led for the first time.

With 47 seconds left in the game, Caden Clark found an empty net from inside his own blue line to put the game to bed at 4-2.

It seemed as if the fight at the beginning of the third period brought even more life to the Redbirds who had already been buzzing in the second.

"Little sparks here and there on plays like that, I'll never condone it, but it's something that got our team going and it ended up working in our favor," coach Clark said about the fight.

Talan Neely will have to serve at least a one-game suspension for the altercation.

"It was a hard-fought game," coach Clark said. "I thought we were pretty slow to start, letting take to us. We were a little bit sloppy, but as the game went on, I thought we got better. We spent a lot more time in the offensive zone, and that seemed to help things out."

Bell now has 14 goals and 10 assists this season. It was Clark's 16<sup>th</sup> goal this season while it was Jacobs' 12<sup>th</sup>. Those three are Alton's leading scorers.

"Those two goals from Lawson were huge. He kind of put the team on his shoulders toward the end. What a way to get us back in it," coach Clark said.