

Redbirds Split The Weekend In Grow The Game Shootout - Pick Up First Loss To Three-Time Defending State Champs

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON 57, WHITNEY YOUNG 56

The Lady Redbirds were in the greater Chicago area once again for two big games over the weekend in the Grow the Game Shootout.

The daunting double-header began with a nail-biter with Chicago Whitney Young, previously ranked No. 6 in IHSA Class 4A, but has since fallen out of the top 10. The Dolphins came into the game with a 10-4 record, while Alton, ranked No. 2 in Class 4A, was still undefeated at 17-0.

Kiyoko Proctor might have been the team's leading scorer that day with 17 points, but Kaylea Lacey's performance was arguably more impressive.

Lacey finished the game with a double-double, 14 points and 10 rebounds. She also scored the game-winning free throw with 1.7 seconds left on the clock.

Alton head coach Deserea Howard said that Lacey "came up super clutch" in Friday's game.

Jarius Powers finished with 12 points as she and Talia Norman went to work in the paint, not giving Whitney Young very many second chance opportunities according to Howard.

NOTRE DAME DE LA BAIE 70, ALTON 63

Not even 24 hours after beating Whitney Young, the Redbirds had another tough task on their hands – the three-time defending Wisconsin state champs.

Notre Dame de la Baie, out of Green Bay, Wisconsin, proved to be a little too much for Alton as it was handed its first loss of the season, dropping to 17-1.

Trying to keep her team in it was Alton's lone senior Alyssa Lewis. She was lights out from behind the three-point line, knocking down seven triples, and finishing the game with a team-high 23 points.

Proctor added 19 points and Lacey had 12.

"Jarius Powers and Talia Norman looked dominant in stretches when on the floor together and played a ton of minutes, doing a lot of the heavy lifting and battling inside, but we came up short in the end," coach Howard said.

Alton found itself in some foul trouble, slowing down the game, which played well for the Tritons who improved to 12-1.

HEAD COACH DESEREA HOWARD'S THOUGHTS

“At this point in the season, there’s nothing to hang our heads about as we got to see how we respond in these environments and still live to fight another day as we prepare to make a run in the playoffs,” Howard said.

“I thought the weekend was great basketball,” she continued. “We played two really tough teams with totally different styles and split the weekend. The experience taught us some important things about ourselves and pushed us to get better at our weaknesses.”

Over the last 10 days, Alton played seven games against some of the best talent in the state. The Redbirds won the Morton Holiday Tournament with wins over state-ranked Peoria Notre Dame (No. 4 Class 2A) and Batavia (No. 8 Class 4A) along the way.

They beat Chatham Glenwood, a high-class 3A team, before the big games against Whitney Young and Notre Dame.

“All of those games were against top-ranked teams with solid programs and very few losses on the season. So, to come out 6-1 over this stretch, I thought the girls showed real grit,” Howard said.

The Redbirds will be back in action at home on Tuesday, Jan. 9 against Collinsville before playing at Edwardsville on Thursday. Then, they’ll kick off the 37th Annual Highland Tournament with a first-round matchup against Belleville West on Saturday.