

30th Win: Kiyoko Proctor Leads Alton to Decisive 63-38 Victory over Edwardsville

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
February 17 2024 9:49 AM





COLLINSVILLE - Junior guard Kiyoko Proctor led four Alton players in double figures with 17 points as the Redbirds girls basketball team won the IHSA Class 4A regional championship with a 63-38 decision over Edwardsville in the final, played Friday evening at Collinsville's Vergil Fletcher Gym.

The win gave Alton back-to-back 30-win seasons for the first time in the program's history, and also ended an eight-game winning streak for the Tigers, who end the year 19-13, a remarkable turnaround for Edwardsville, who at one point was 3-9, but turned things around to go 16-4 the rest of the way.

Still, the night belonged to the Redbirds, who advanced to the Normal Community West Sectional, and will next play defending state Class 4A champions O'Fallon in a semifinal game on Tuesday, Feb. 20 at Belleville West at 7 p.m.

"I'm feeling really good," said Alton head coach Deserea Howard. "Edwardsville's playing good basketball, we saw them play on Monday night, we knew we had to come out and play tough, and I'm really glad of how we just executed tonight."

The back-to-back 30-win seasons is indeed a great accomplishment for the Redbirds' program, and it's something Howard is very proud of.

"Yeah," Howard said with a laugh. "I don't know if we've done that, but that's just who they are. They play hard, and they deserve these types of things. So, of course, we're really excited for the 30 wins."

The Redbirds started off slightly slow, but once they were able to get their rhythm established, Alton played exceptionally well.

"To try to do new things, and anytime you try new things, you've got to try and get comfortable," Howard said. "And that's what I saw tonight. Everybody was willing to stay patient and keep working on it. I think that's what you really saw, and we weren't really nervous about the first quarter, because we knew we were finding our way, and we did."

The regular players in the Redbird lineup played very well, and it's a good sign as Alton keeps going deeper into the playoffs.

"They're great teammates," Howard said. "They've been pushing their teammates to step up and take the big shots, to play the big minutes. I think that's what we saw tonight. We knew that the starting five had to do their jobs, but also, trust their teammates to do their jobs as well."







The Redbirds are looking ahead now to the challenge of the Panthers on Tuesday night.

"I feel good," Howard said. "It's always a good game, it's always competitive, everybody likes to keep it a little interesting. And so, I'm excited. I think we've got a good shot, I know that they're going to come prepared, they're going to come play hard. We just have to do what we do."

"Just another night in the Southwestern Conference," Howard said with a hearty laugh.

Although the season ended for a young Edwardsville team, it was still a remarkable campaign in a lot of ways for the Tigers, who rallied back with separate seven and eight-game winning streaks during the year.

"Not great, because of the outcome of the game," said Edwardsville head coach Bryan Young. "But we've got a bunch of gritty girls, and I know that."

The Tigers had many long possessions in the game, but the Alton defense wouldn't allow a shot, and it helped make a big difference in the outcome.

"Well, that kind of was the game plan," Young said, "to keep the ball longer, so they didn't have the ball. We didn't capitalize on those possessions, which hurt us. We talked

about it at halftime. We were about 11 points down, I said if we can capitalize on those long possessions, that'll make a difference. But, unfortunately, we just didn't get that done."

The Redbirds were turning turnovers into points on the other end, which helped tip the scales in favor of Alton.

"Exactly," Young said. "Empty possession, they'd come down, and Kiyoko's tough. She's hard to guard, she hard to deal with. And they've got the two big girls in there. If somebody misses a shot, they just go get the rebound and put it back. So, that's a great team, that's why they're second in the state. It's going to be tough to put them out of it."

A Talia Norman free throw and a Kaylea Lacey basket got the Redbirds off to a 3-0 lead to start, but a three from Lainey McFarlin allowed the Tigers to tie the game 3-3. A pair of free throws from Lacey made it 7-5 Alton, after which the Redbirds went on a 6-2 run, getting baskets from Proctor, Lacey, and Norman to take a 13-7 lead after the first quarter.

Freshman Madeleine Ducey hit a three to extend the lead to 16-7 as the second quarter started, but a Kennedy Gieseke three-point play cut the lead to 17-10.

Five straight points by Proctor, a three and a basket, extended the Alton lead to 22-10, and from there, the Redbirds maintained a double-digit lead, led by Proctor and Jarius Powers to give Alton a 30-19 lead at halftime.

The Redbirds opened the second half with seven straight points, from baskets by Lacey and Powers, along with a three from Proctor to go ahead 37-19, causing an Edwardsville time-out.

Ellie Neath immediately hit a three to make it 37-22, after which the teams exchanged baskets as Alton maintained the lead. In the end, the Redbirds outscored Edwardsville the rest of the period 14-6, as Lacey laid the ball in at the third quarter buzzer to increase the Redbird lead to 51-28.

In the fourth quarter, the Redbirds went out to as much as a 24-point lead, but the Tigers didn't give up, playing very hard. But in the end, Alton ended up taking the 63-38 win to advance to the sectional.

To go along with Proctor's 17 points, the Redbirds had Lacey score 13 points, while Powers came up with 11 points, Norman had 10 points, Kourtnee Evans had nine points, Ducey hit for six points, and Aryanna Anthony scored two points.

The Tigers were led by Neath, with 12 points, while McFarlin had eight points, Mia Semith hit for seven points, Giesecking scored five points, and Blakely Hockett, Gabby Cook, and Molly Peel all had two points each.

The Tigers season ends at 19-13, while the Redbirds go to 30-2, and will play the Panthers in the Normal Community West Sectional Tuesday night at Belleville West in a 7 p.m. start.

The winner goes to the 'Sweet Sixteen', and will play either Normal Community, who won the Pekin Regional over the host Dragons 57-30, or the winner of the Moline Sectional, either East Moline United or Rock Island, in the final next Thursday night, Feb. 22, at 7 p.m.

The sectional winner meets the Oswego Sectional champion in the Bloomington Super-Sectional on Feb. 26 at the Shirk Center at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington.

The state finals are set for Feb. 29-Mar. 2 at CEFCU Arena at Illinois State University in Bloomington-Normal.





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