

Redbirds Can't Hang On In Fourth Quarter, Lose To State-Ranked Collinsville

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
February 17 2024 8:59 AM



ALTON – On the final day of the regular season, the Redbirds were attempting to rain on Collinsville's parade.

Alton hosted the Kahoks (ranked No. 7 in IHSA Class 4A in the final Associated Press poll) in the two's twelfth and final Southwestern Conference game of the season.

If Collinsville won, it would win the conference outright, had Alton won, Collinsville would have to share with O'Fallon.

After the game was tied up at 25 at halftime, the Redbirds were giving the Kahoks a run for their money. The teams kept at each other, and the game was tied again at 30 with five minutes left in the third quarter.

Alton's Kobe Taylor converted on a three-point play before Semaj Stampley rattled home a triple to go ahead 36-30. The surge was enough to give Alton a 38-35 lead after three quarters.

Hassani Elliot scored to open the fourth and make it 40-35, but Collinsville's Zach Chambers and Evan Wilkinson cut the lead to 40-39. Taylor kept the Kahoks at bay with a basket followed by a three-pointer to lead 45-41.

But Chambers scored back-to-back baskets to tie the game right back up at 45. Trai' Sean Sims scored to go ahead by a basket, but Chambers made a single free throw to make it a one-point game with time winding down.

After Jamorie Wysinger was fouled, he hit the ground hard and was slow to get up. But after he collected himself, he sank both foul shots to go ahead 48-47 with 55 seconds remaining.

"He hit the ground hard, and I wasn't sure," Collinsville head coach Darin Lee said. "But we didn't want anybody else to go up there and shoot them."

Alton didn't call a timeout, instead killing time to try and get off the game's final shot. The play call didn't work out as intended and Alton turned the ball over in the final seconds as Collinsville held on for the 48-47 win.

"We haven't had much luck in close games," Lee said. "We finally got a little tonight."

The win secured sole possession of the SWC title as the Kahoks finished the regular season 27-4 and 9-3 in the conference.

Alton closes the season at 17-14, its first winning season since 2018-19, and 3-9 in the SWC.

After having a five-point lead in the fourth, Alton felt like they beat themselves.

"Three things on the scouting report: loose balls, defensive rebounds, and take care of the ball," Alton head coach Dylan Dudley said.

“In the end, the fourth quarter, that was the difference. We didn’t get loose balls, we didn’t get defensive rebounds. When you have the lead and you’re up four or five points with two minutes left, finish the game. We beat ourselves and that’s disappointing.”

It was the Kahoks celebrating and taking photos with the conference banner, but Dudley feels it could have just as easily been his team.

“We left five games on the court that we were winning every game,” he said. “We could have been out there taking a picture of it, and for whatever reason we weren’t.”

Now both teams will regroup for the postseason.

Alton, seeded No. 6 in the top half of the Pekin Sectional, will take on the No. 2-seeded Quincy Blue Devils on Wednesday, Feb. 21 at Edwardsville High School at 6 p.m.

The Kahoks earned the No. 1 seed and will play at No. 8-seeded Granite City also on Wednesday at 6 p.m.