

Alton, Metro East Lutheran battle to wire in volleyball match

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – **Alton** and **Metro East Lutheran** volleyball matches historically have been tight affairs.

Wednesday night's encounter between the two schools was no exception, as the Redbirds and Knights, for the most part, couldn't seem to shake each other off. In the end, though, Alton managed to hold off one final MEL surge to take a 22-25, 25-15, 25-22 win at MEL's gym.

“It's been a pretty even competition between us,” said Redbird coach **Stacey Ferguson**. “They've always got a pretty tough team and playing them helps get us ready for the season. They really gave us a run for our money there, but it was good for us to bounce back after we lost the first game.”

“Getting a win like that helps our confidence,” added Redbird senior outside hitter **Jada Green**. “It was something we can build on the rest of the season.”

“The girls did a great job tonight; they kept battling and made some key plays; they just made a couple more than we did,” said Knight coach **Jon Giordano**. “We could have folded up our tents when we fell behind in the third game, but we kept fighting and battling.”

“It's a good way for us to start the year; it's always a competitive match year in and year out.”

Both sides couldn't shake each other off in the opening game; neither team could make a decisive run and neither held more than a two-point lead at any time. The scores were, in fact, tied several times before the Knights managed to put together a small run to finally put away the Redbirds and take a 1-0 match lead. Alton opened the second game on an 8-3 run to force MEL to call time out to stop the momentum. It seemed to work for a bit before the Redbirds got on another run to take the score first to 14-6, then to 18-8 before the Knights made a move. It wasn't enough, though, and Alton forced a third and deciding game relatively easily.

The teams split the first four points of Game 3 before Alton got on a run to make it 8-3, the run highlighted by big spikes from the Redbirds' Annie Evans and Kalin Haug into open space before the Knights could respond. MEL bounced back and tied it at 11-11 as they took advantage of Redbird mistakes and a huge kill from Audrey Paitz before the Redbirds seemingly took control with a five-point run.

The teams traded points but Alton retained the lead, getting it to 23-17 before MEL made one last run to make it 23-21 before Alton scored two of the final three points, the match-winner coming on an dink at the net.

The 1-1 Redbirds host East Alton-Wood River at 5:45 p.m. Tuesday, while the Knights travel to Springfield Lutheran for a tournament Friday and Saturday.

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