

Alton captures Redbird Invitational title, Southwestern reveals solid skills

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
September 6 2015 11:55 AM





ALTON – There are times when what seems to be a comfortable lead in a volleyball game can suddenly evaporate into nothing.

Orchard Farm can certainly attest to that. The Eagles held a 9-1 lead in the third and deciding game of their final match in the **Alton Invitational tournament** Saturday afternoon at Alton's gym.



It seemed all but over, but someone didn't tell the Redbirds.

They suddenly caught fire and erased the eight-point gap on their way to 19-25, 25-22, 15-13 win over the Eagles to finish the tournament as the only unbeaten team in the competition. Triad finished second at 4-1, Piasa Southwestern was third at 3-2, the Eagles from north St. Louis County were fourth at 2-3, tied with Gillespie for fourth with Orchard Farm winning the tiebreaker, and Granite City finished sixth at 1-4.

The way the Redbirds rallied back to take the win was a demonstration of the team's heart and character, felt Redbird coach Stacey Ferguson. "We had to battle back in every game during the tournament," Ferguson said. "The girls just kept fighting and finding ways to win. The work ethic and fighting spirit they showed helped bring the girls together.

"It's promising, showing the way we battled back and kept fighting for everything. We showed a lot of heart and character to come back as we did and as we get further into the season, especially in the conference games, it's really going to help."



Another team showing a fighting spirit was Piasa Southwestern, who kept going on regardless of the situation. “We battled hard all weekend, and while you would have liked to win or finish second, we kept on fighting,” said Piasa Bird coach Julie Kinser. “A tournament like this, especially this early in the season, shows you where you stand, what you need to work on and what you do well. It's a great early tournament and it showed us where we are.

“Thing we keep stressing in practice is daily improvement, doing the little things that help win matches. There's really good competition here and we're looking at different rotations and where our girls fit best In the lineup.”

“As the tournament went on, we kept improving on things,” said Granite City coach Ginger Harrison. “We lost our opener to Highland earlier in the week and and we're in an early stretch where we'll play 17 games in 14 days, incuding our tournament (Sept. 19). It's giving us a chance to work the kinks out and see where we stand.

“We had some girls who did stand out. Megan Burge was really consistent in her serving; I think she missed only two serves all weekend. Haley Jones also served consistently; she didn't miss a serve at all. They're playing consistent right now.”

Alton opened tournament play with a 26-24, 25-16 win over Gillespie Friday evening, while Piasa Southwestern defeated Granite 25-12, 25-20; Triad downed Gillespie 25-22, 20-25, 16-9; Orchard Farm defeated Granite City 25-22, 25-19; Alton upended Triad 18-25, 25-23, 16-14; and Southwestern defeatd Orchard Farm 25-22, 25-19.

Saturday's play started with the Redbirds upending their Southwestern Conference rival Warriors 25-21, 25-12; Triad defeating Southwestern 25-17, 15-25, 15-6; Gillespie defeating Orchard Farm 26-24, 25-23; the Piasa Birds falling to the Redbirds 20-25, 25-21, 15-8; Triad disposing of Granite City 23-25, 25-10, 15-9; Gillespie scoring a 17-25, 25-10, 15-13 win over Granite; and Southwestern finishing up with a 25-21, 25-14 win over Gillespie.

Alton's Annie Evans was named tournament Most Valuable Player and was joined on the All-Tournament Team by teammates Sydney Schmidt and Jada Green; also appointed to the team were Triad's Allison Richter and Abby Burroughs, Southwestern's Madison Greeling and Stephanie Korte, Orchard Farm's Morgan Muzzey, Gillespie's Bailey Jarman and Granite City's Burge.

