

Alton Falls To Unbeaten Lincoln In State Farm Shootout

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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WOOD RIVER – The Lady Redbirds did their homework, but they failed the test.

Saturday afternoon at East Alton-Wood River High School in the State Farm Shootout, in the day's marquee game, it pitted Alton, No. 2 in IHSA Class 4A, against unbeaten Lincoln, the No. 1 ranked team in Class 3A.

Alton head coach Deserea Howard and her scouting team knew all about the Railers. They watched Lincoln beat O'Fallon the night before and have watched plenty of film to understand more about Lincoln's style.

“They were exactly who we thought they were,” Howard said. “We prepared, and we just didn’t execute.”

“Everything we practiced kind of went out the window once the ball went up. I could see the nerves and I was just waiting for the shoulders to drop and they never did.”

Howard said that she didn’t know why her team seemed so nervous. She said that the Redbirds played tight and never really got into a flow.

Alton did score first when Alyssa Lewis drilled a three, and after a Jarius Powers basket, Alton led 5-2 early on.

But this lead quickly went away, and they’d never get it back, eventually falling 57-49 in one of the state’s most anticipated games of the season.

Lincoln improved to 30-0 on the season, their second straight 30-win season. The Railers finished last season 36-1, the only loss being in the Class 3A state championship game.

Alton picks up just its second loss of the season, falling to 26-2.

Once the game was at 5-2 Alton, the Railers used a 12-point run to take a 14-5 lead, eventually leading 18-10 after the first quarter.

The Redbirds grew a little closer but still trailed 28-22 at halftime and then 46-35 after three quarters.

Alton knew about Lincoln’s star player Kloe Froebe but didn’t have an answer for her. Froebe scored at will on Saturday afternoon, finishing with 27 points. The night before at O’Fallon, she scored her 3,000th career point.

She was awarded a State Farm Shootout Player of the Game after beating Alton. Teammates Becca Heitzig and Jenna Bowman scored 14 and 12 points respectively.

Powers was Alton’s only double-digit scorer with 15. Lewis had nine, Talia Norman had eight, and Kiyoko Proctor and Kaylea Lacey were each held to seven points.

But coach Howard still believes that this game made her team stronger.

“We need it right now,” she said about the minor setback. “We were playing really well, we were playing confidently, and so we needed to see how we respond when our

shoulders don't drop so we can prepare for that too. That's why we put this game at this point in the season."

The Redbirds have just two regular season games remaining. They will host Belleville East on Tuesday, Feb. 6 at 7:30 p.m. It will be Alton's Senior Night and a win would lock up sole possession of the Southwestern Conference.

The Redbirds shared the conference title with O'Fallon last year.

IHSA also released the playoff brackets last Friday. Alton was awarded the No. 1 seed and they'll be taking on No. 8 seeded Granite City on Monday, Feb. 12 at 6 p.m. at Collinsville High School.