

Damian Jones Uses World Cup Moment To Rally Alton

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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ALTON — Student Athletes Leading Tomorrow and STL CITY SC partnered with the City of Alton in a free community soccer festival, a World Cup watch party, and a variety of youth activities on Friday, July 10, 2026, at Rock Spring Park, part of STL CITY SC’s regional “40 Days of Soccer” celebration tied to the World Cup.

The event ran from 1 to 5 p.m. on Friday at Rock Spring Park, 2116 College Ave. in Alton, with STL CITY SC staff leading activities from 2 to 4 p.m. The community event had many activities geared toward youth and families.

SALT (Student Athletes Leading Tomorrow) Executive Director Damian Jones formulated the plan for this big event during the World Cup Soccer Tournament after miniature soccer courts were built around Alton.

Jones said activities on Friday included open play on the mini pitch, table soccer, skills and drills, clinics, obstacle courses on the pickleball and tennis courts, and a soccer tennis activity. Organizers also had a World Cup quarterfinal watch party on a temporary outdoor screen and said they are reaching out to food truck vendors. The provided information said resources could include one or two food trucks and refreshments.





Jones said STL CITY SC's presence in Alton is important for community relations and youth.

"We want to leverage the park to celebrate the World Cup - the biggest sporting event on planet," Jones said. Jones also connected the event to a broader effort to expand youth physical activity and community sports access. He said the program was developed with SIUE, SALT and the Alton School District, and he described the event as part of a promise fulfilled.

"We were very proud to host the event on Friday," Jones said. "I tried to make promises and keep them. Promises made, and I am very thankful, promises kept."

Jones said he has also emphasized the importance of Southern Illinois representation in statewide discussions about youth sports and physical activity programs.

"It is important for our community to help develop these programs for youth physical activity," Jones said.







