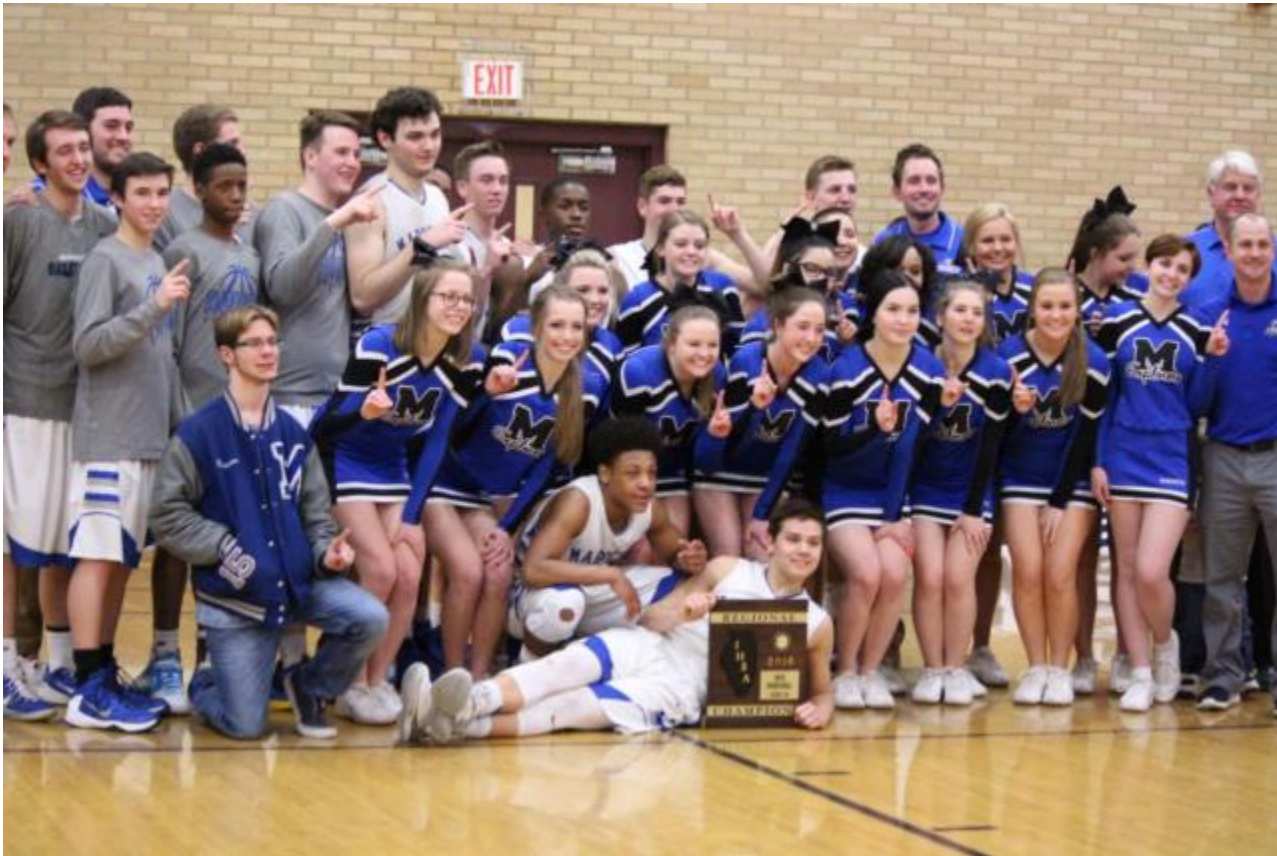


Marquette defeats Roxana 48-45 in tough battle at Dupo Regional

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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DUPO – In a match that each team had worked for all season to reach, the **Marquette Catholic High School Explorers** and the **Roxana High School Shells** boys basketball teams duked it out for the title of the **IHSA Dupo Regional Champions**.

Over the course of the evening, the two teams fought tooth and nail to best the other in the high intensity competition. Blood, sweat and tears came out of this game not only

figuratively, but literally as each team shed some of these in one way or another throughout the night.

Unfortunately, only one of these amazing teams could walk away with the regional title and after four quarters and four extra minutes of overtime, the Explorers came out on top against the Shells **48-45**.

“We didn’t think we were going to pull it out, but we did,” **Marquette Coach Steve Medford** said after his team took the win. “It was a back and forth game and golly, I really thought we had a chance of putting it away and we didn’t.”

After such an emotional game for both himself and his seniors, **Roxana Coach Mark Briggs** reflected upon the season and the accomplishments his team has made throughout their career together.

“I’m just trying to wrap my mind around this, especially after talking to those seniors,” he said, trying his best to keep his composure. “Our kids are warriors, man. That’s just the kind of kid we breed in our program at Roxana. They felt like in this game they had every bit of a chance to win and it’s one of those things where you get your hands around something and it slips through your fingers.”



The game kicked off to somewhat of a difficult start for Roxana, allowing Marquette to take a seven-point lead in the first. The Explorers kept the command heading into the second, holding steadily in the lead at 17-3 before **Trace Gentry** kicked off a series of three-point shots by both himself and **Blake Vandiver**.

Roxana worked diligently to catch up with Marquette's offence during the third period. The hard work of **Zack Haas, Zach Golenor, Chris Pulley, Cody McMillen**, Gentry and Vandiver truly paid off as they pushed into the lead.

Trey Aguirre and Ben Sebacher did not allow the Explorers to take this push laying down; however, they could only contribute to the team's score with a total of five points earned from free throws from the foul line to bring the score to **27-25** in Roxana's favor.

During the fourth, the Explorers and Shells fought neck-and-neck to overcome one another. Coming back from only one three-pointer contributed throughout the course of the night, **Shandon Boone** made two pivotal threes to tie the score at 33. Golenor and **Chance Foss** were able to keep the Shells alive and snagged the lead back. With just under 40 seconds left on the clock, Boone tied the score at **38** before the final buzzer, pushing the game into overtime.

In the most intense four minutes, each of the teams tied the score back up again at 40 and 43 points. In a key three-point shot by **Reagan Snider**, the Explorers took the lead and then extended it further with a basket by Boone, securing the win with a score of **48-45**.

The Marquette Catholic Explorers will advance up in the IHSA 2A bracket system to play **Breese Central High School** at **7 p.m.** this **Tuesday** at the **Pinckneyville Sectional**. Should they win that match, they will face the winners of the **Sparta** or **Greenville Regionals** and from there, the team will participate at the **Carbondale Super-Sectional** against the winner of the **Flora Sectional**.

