

Marquette Catholic girls, Triad battle in tight soccer match with weather delays

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – **Marquette Catholic and Triad** played a season-opening girls soccer match Tuesday evening that seemingly had a bit of everything.

Even a weather delay.

The Explorers and Knights had to endure a series of lightning delays in the 65th minute that put their **Metro Girls Cup Adidas Bracket** first-round match on hold for about an hour at Edwardsville's Tiger Stadium.

The match was even at 1-1 when officials, hearing a rumble of thunder and then seeing lightning, ordered an IHSA-mandated weather delay. Some stray cells passed through the area with no rain falling, allowing the match to resume once they left the immediate area.

And the match wound up going into extra time, ending in the 89th minute – right before it would have gone into a penalty-kick shootout to decide a winner – when **Meghan Smith** managed to score to end the game on a golden goal, giving the Knights a 2-1 win to advance into a Thursday-evening semifinal match.

“They're a big school, they're a big, big team,” said **Explorer coach Steve Mitchell**. “The kids did well; we just ran out of gas at the end. It's early, we learned a lot from this game; we'll just move forward.

“The kids played really well. I'm proud of them.”

The weather delay seemingly affected Marquette; they had been building some momentum when officials stopped the match, Mitchell felt. “We were starting to gain momentum there,” Mitchell said. “We were pressing there, we got a corner kick and then the delay. Your legs go to jello and you have to re-stretch.

“It happens; it's a tough break, but I'd rather have it happen now than in the end. That's what we're here for, to get ready for the end (of the season and the IHSA postseason).”

“It was a great win,” said **Knight coach Matt Bettlach**. “It was a crazy night with the weather delays, but we battled through and we came out on top.”

Bettlach felt the delay didn't affect his side. “I don't think it did,” Bettlach said about the delay. “I feel like it helped us; when it hit, it gave us some extra time to rest. I don't think it hurt us, I think it actually kind of helped us.

“I felt like our girls played so well tonight and we really needed to get that win.”

The match started out evenly, both sides having good chances early. The Knights broke through first in the 22nd minute when Sam Bassler got a pass from Ashley Newcombe and scored to put Triad up 1-0. The lead didn't last very long when, off a long pass, Bailey Hartrich managed to bounce the ball into the back of the net in the 33rd minute to tie proceedings at 1-1. It remained that way through the rest of the half.

Marquette had a couple of good chances early in the second half, but play settled down before the weather delay was called. Both sides also had chances to win before the match reached full time, necessitating two five-minute sessions of extra time with a golden-goal (or sudden-death overtime) format.

Both teams played cautiously but did get potential match-winning shots on goal; in the 89th minute, Smith took a through ball and came down the left side, then fired a shot that managed to squeeze through into the goal to give Triad the win.

The win put the Knights into a 7:30 p.m. Thursday semifinal match against Edwardsville; Marquette was relegated to the consolation bracket, where they will meet up with Springfield at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday; a win would put them into the consolation

final at 7:30 p.m. Friday; the seventh-place match is set for 5:30 p.m. Friday. The championship match will take place at 6 p.m. Saturday.

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