

Explorers' tough conference battle against Pawnee set for this evening at Public School Stadium

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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ALTON - After last week's rain out and rescheduled victory against the **East Alton-Wood River High School Oilers**, the **Marquette Catholic High School Explorers** are ready to head out to **Public School Stadium** this **Friday** evening to face off against one of their toughest conference opponents: The **Pawnee Indians**.

“They’re the reigning conference champs,” Marquette head coach **Darrell Angleton** said. “They took a tough loss last week (the Indians fell to the **Kinkaid-South Fork Ponies 28-21** in week four), but you always have to consider their title.”

Marquette is holding at a solid **2-0** record in the **Prairie State Conference**, tied for first with the Ponies’ co-op squad. This game, though it is among one of their toughest matchups of the season, also serves as the school’s homecoming game.

“It’s a very serious game and on top of everything, it’s our homecoming game. The kids are always up for that,” Angleton said. “It’s not hard to get them up for a homecoming game. At this time of the season, you want to win this game and focus on South Fork (The teams will duke it out on **Oct. 21**).”

Pawnee, **East Alton-Wood River**, **Nokomis** and **Mount Olive** area currently in a four-way tie for third place with a conference records of **1-1**.

When the two teams faced off against one another in 2015, Pawnee defeated Marquette **30-7**.

“The challenge is that Pawnee still has their star running back in **Galloway**,” he said. “They lost quite a few seniors last year. They’re a new team this year, with a whole new coaching staff this year as well.

“I have to think it is a little more difficult for them. They have eight kids going both ways. There’s fourteen kids playing. That’s a lot to ask for with a team to go out there and play four quarters.”

Last year, the Explorers fell to second place in PSC title fight to Friday night’s opponents from Pawnee. The Indians went 7-0 and captured first place in their conference while obtaining a record of 9-2 overall. In their playoff run, the team defeated **Decatur 42-8** and inevitably fell to **Carrollton 28-22**. The Hawks went on to face **LeRoy** who ended their race up the brackets in an upsetting **28-22** loss.

Having qualified for the playoffs themselves, the Explorers travelled to face **Rochester** on their home turf. The combination of the team’s size and overall force led to the Rockets’ victory with a score of **52-7**. The team pushed through the rankings to defeat **Murphysboro**. Rochester was ultimately taken down by **Althoff Catholic**. The Crusaders defeated **Mater Dei** and then lost to the **Wendell Phillips Academy Wildcats 57-1** in the State Finals.

The Explorers are in for one interesting battle Friday evening, but if they can use their physicality to their benefit and wear the Indians down, the possibility of earning another conference victory is certainly at their fingertips.

“It’s the same thing every week. We have to execute our game plan and not make stupid mistakes,” Angleton said. “We don’t need to forget what we do each week. There’s not a team in the conference that is as physical as we are.”