

Marquette pushes past Pawnee 33-28, brings Prairie State Conference record to 3-0

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ALTON – In possibly their biggest test of the year, the **Marquette Catholic High School Explorers** made their way out onto the gridiron to redeem themselves against their **Prairie State Conference** competitors from **Pawnee High School** Friday night at **Public School Stadium**.

Having lost to the **Indians** twice since 2014, the victory was sweet for the Explorers as they defeated their opponents **33-28** after 48 intense minutes of play.



For Marquette head coach **Darrell Angleton**, it all boils down to waiting for the right time to run the perfect play. In this case, running back **Treven Swingler** had to come through with a solid throw to **John Blachford** with time running out.

“It’s been in my playbook forever,” Angleton said. “You just wait for the right time for that play, and when Treven runs the ball... he hides it very well.”

Though the throw was quite low, Blachford kept the ball in tight and made it across the goal line to push the Explorers into the lead at **33-28** with just 36.3 left on the clock after the kick.

“I’m thinking it’s either coming to me or **Jeremy**,” Blachford said. “I saw the ball come to me and it was low, so I picked it up.”

“It was a tough game. It was a hard game to play for us but we totally played it to the best of our ability and we got the W, so that’s all that matters.”

Before Swinger's hail Mary pass to Blachford in the fourth, the team had to persist during the first three quarters of the game. **D'Avion Peebles** kept the Explorers alive with two touchdowns prior to the middle of the second quarter, but Pawnee's **Trenton Eckert** made his opponents run for their lives on two intense touchdown plays himself. A two-point conversion and a free point allowed the Indians to lead **16-13** in the second.

With just under two left on the clock for the second, the Indians' star running back **Austin Galloway** brought in a touchdown for his team. After a missed two-point opportunity, the Indians led the Explorers **22-13**.



An intense back and fourth between the Pawnee offense and the Marquette defense made the majority of the third quarter go quite slowly.

“We had some great drives in the second half that we couldn't finish off,” Pawnee head coach **Tim Kratochvil** said. “We would have three or four great plays and then we'd take a play off. Now, we were at long yardage and they could take a tee off on us and we converted a few of those early ones, but it just didn't come down to those plays.”

With just under two and a half minutes left on the clock in the third, Swinger made the short five-yard trek to the goal line to score a touchdown for Marquette. After **Liam Maher's** kick, the Explorers trailed the Indians at **22-20**, a two-point deficit.

Over eight and a half minutes into the final quarter remained on the clock, and from the 14-yard line, Swinger brought in yet another touchdown for the Explorers. Marquette took the lead with a score of **26-22**.

From the 13-yard line with 2:38 left, Pawnee made their final push into the end zone after **Kolton Behrent** made a solid pass to Eckert who had just made his way past the goal line. After a failed two-point conversion attempt, the Indians took back the lead with a score of **28-26**.

With everything on the line, that fateful play from Swinger to Blachford took place and the Explorers ultimately defeated the Indians **33-28**.

“Those guys are a dual-headed dragon,” Angleton said. “The thing about those two, Treven’s a sophomore and Peebs is a junior. They’re going to be around next year.”

The Explorers remain tied with Kinkaid-South Fork for the first place spot in the Prairie State Conference standings. The two teams will duke it out on Oct. 21.

