

Explorers' Green comes up big when team needs him most as Marquette advances to sectional

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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WATERLOO – Sammy Green came up big when his **Marquette Catholic** teammates needed him to.

Green, a junior, a key basket in overtime and then hit a couple of big free throws down the stretch as part of a 20-point night that propelled Marquette Catholic to a 54-48 IHSA Class 2A Waterloo Gibault Regional championship triumph over the Hawks.

The win sent the Explorers to next week's IHSA Class 2A Nashville Sectional against Trenton Wesclin, themselves 74-66 overtime winners over Hillsboro in the Hillsboro Regional final Friday night. That game will be played at 7 p.m. Wednesday, with the winner of that game taking on Tuesday's Pickneyville-Nashville winner in the sectional final at 7 p.m. March 3, with a trip to the March 7 Carbondale Supersectional at SIU Arena against the West Frankfort Sectional champion on the line.

“I tell you what, the kids battled; our kids came back and got the game into overtime,” said **Explorer coach Steve Medford**. “We had some foul trouble, but I thought at the beginning of the game, we had the chance to really open up the game; we just couldn't make a shot there.

“It wasn't one of our better shooting nights by any means, but I thought they (Gibault) did a really good job of trying to high-low us. Our kids came back and they battled; Sammy Green hit some really big shots – it's kind of what we expect of him and we keep this thing rolling.”

Medford thought Green did an excellent job Friday. “We put him in some positions where we had to (isolate) him a little bit, but he made some big plays for us; that's what he's done all year for us.”

Both teams are pretty familiar with each other. “It was played pretty close to the vest,” said Hawk coach Dennis Reuter. “It was going to be a hard-fought game one way or the other and I was sure it was going to be a pretty close game; obviously, it was. It was a fun atmosphere , no doubt.

“Green was huge; he made some big shots – he made more big shots than anyone on either team. Trevor (Davis) tried to keep us in it and did some things down there, but Green was their MVP so to speak. He was their guy and they have 3-4 guys who can be their guy, but he was their guy tonight.”

Not shot may have been bigger than Green's last basket in regulation time, lifting it over several Hawk defenders and seeing it go off the glass and into the basket with 1:19 to go to draw the Explorers even at 45-45. Gibault did have a chance to win the game with the last shot in regulation, but the Hawks were called for a double-dribble with 0.9 seconds to go, forcing the game to be decided in overtime.

Nick Hemann and Green opened overtime with a pair of big buckets that put the Explorers up 49-45 early; Gibault tried to find the answers, but big free throws down the stretch by Greem and Reagan Snider held the Hawks off.

Snider ended up with 14 points and Isaiah Ervin had 10; Jake Hall had five, Hemann added three and Bryce Pettiford scored twice. Davis led Gibault with 19 points, with Colin Kessler adding 11.

