

Marquette Catholic's boys basketball season in 2016-2017 won't soon be forgotten

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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CARBONDALE – Despite the way the season ended, Marquette Catholic's boys basketball season was one that won't soon be forgotten by the Explorers' coaches, players and supporters.

Marquette reached its' first IHSA Super-sectional game Tuesday night, being eliminated by a Mount Carmel team that reached its first IHSA state tournament in 73 years - 90 years after they won the state title - the Golden Aces taking a 61-40 win over the Explorers at Carbondale's SIU Arena.

“It was definitely a good experience,” said junior Sammy Green, who came into the program this year from Edwardsville and was the Explorers' leading scorer at 12.2 points per game, but was held to six points Tuesday night. “My first year coming here and then going to a super was pretty cool.”

“I told the kids this: I'd rather lose like this tonight for the off-season so you work a little bit harder,” said Explorer coach Steve Medford. “If you lose one by two points, maybe you think in the back of your mind, 'what if?' But this will make the kids work a little harder in the off-season, but if you look back at the season and say, 'hey, we're 30-4,' we won all three tournaments (the Explorers were in) and we won a regional, we won a sectional, that's a heck of a year.

“I'm really proud of my guys, I'm proud of what they stand for. As the year went on, it got more and more fun to be around practice; these guys really dug in, they did a lot of things right, they went about it the right way, they prepared the right way. Sometimes that's just how the cards fall; it's an unfortunate thing that happened tonight. We didn't play our best basketball, but I'm really proud of the season, I'm proud of my guys and I love all of them.”

Helping the Explorers reach a level they hadn't reached before will give Green some incentive for his off-season, he felt. “It gives me something to work for because I don't want to feel like this again,” Green said.

The Explorers will be playing in Class 3A next season because of IHSA rules, but moving up in class doesn't matter to Green. “Doesn't really matter our class, you've got to play hard,” Green said, “and you can beat anybody in the world.”

Green will have many memories of his first year as an Explorer. When asked what he will remember, Green said “just playing for coach Medford; he's a great guy.

“It was a great experience (playing for Marquette); I really enjoyed it a lot this year.”

Green will focus on basketball in the off-season and focus on getting better and improving his game, so “we'll come back stronger next year,” Green said. “It'll be something to remember.”