

Explorers drop 2-0 decision to Lancers in Metro Cup match

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Marquette Catholic's girls soccer team have dropped their first two matches of the season.

But Explorer coach Steve Mitchell knows the early matches in the season can provide learning opportunities for his team, lessons that can pay off down the stretch.

“They learn from every game,” Mitchell said following the Explorers' 2-0 loss to Belleville East in a consolation semifinal match of the Metro Girls Cup Adidas Bracket at Edwardsville's Tiger Stadium Wednesday night. The loss dropped MCHS to 0-2-0 on the year and put them into Saturday's seventh-place match, where they will meet Waterloo, who dropped a 2-1 decision to Springfield at Belleville West, at noon Saturday in Edwardsville.

“I'm not unhappy with it,” Mitchell said. “They're battling, they're playing; we just have to fix a few things. It'll come with time; that's all you can ask for.

“The last two times we qualified for state (the Explorers finished third in last year's IHSA Class 1A tournament), we started 0-3. The kids are right there; I'm proud of them, they played hard. We have to fix a few things.”

The Explorers made some changes to try to get some pressure on the Lancer goal, Mitchell said. “We've got some young kids trying to play at varsity,” Mitchell said, “and we had to move Ketoura (Ngwa) around because of (a leg injury requiring surgery following an off-season auto accident); she's not 100 percent yet.

“She basically was our heart and soul of our defense; when you lose your heart and soul and you have to move things around, it changes your whole entire game.”

Despite not being at full strength, Ngwa is refusing to come out of the lineup. “She refuses to let me take her out,” Mitchell said, “so I leave it up to her, but she's still not 100 percent; we're moving her around to different positions until she gets strong enough to play her old position.”

The Explorers, thus far, haven't been able to get scoring opportunities so far this year. “We're just not generating any chances,” Mitchell said. “We've played two big schools right off the bat (Edwardsville and East); we've played with both of them – we're right in the games. We make a mistake, they're countering them; they make a mistake, we're not making them pay.

“The kids are playing hard; we'll get there, that's what you look for in the first 3-5 games.”

The Lancers got on the board in the 16th minute when Kara Gunter put a ball past Explorer goalkeeper Lauren Fischer; things remained that way, with both sides having chances, until the 75th minute, when Grace Brauer scored an insurance goal for East.

Following Saturday's contest with the Bulldogs, Marquette hosts Columbia in a 4:30 p. m. Tuesday match at Gordon Moore Park, then takes on Breese Mater Dei in a 5 p.m. March 23 home match.

