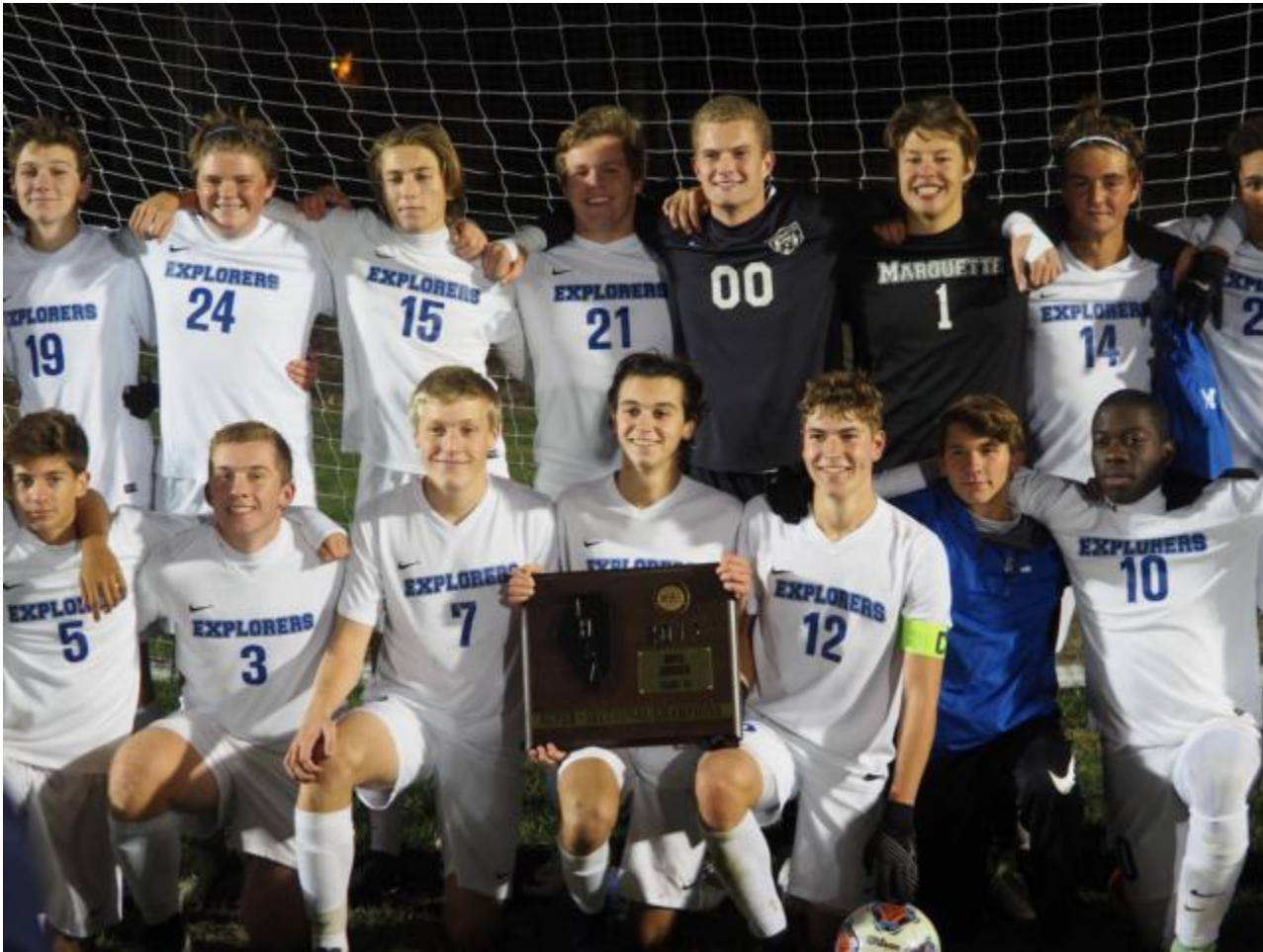


Marquette advances to state semifinals with 4-1 victory over Sacred Heart-Griffin

by John Hough, Sports Writer
October 24 2017 11:41 PM



RAYMOND - There's only been one week all season long when the Marquette Explorers have been fully healthy, and that was the very beginning.

Coming into the game super sophomore Aaron Boulch was disqualified because of obtaining two yellow cards in the sectional semifinals.

“He was in tears the other night,” Marquette head coach Joe Burchett said. “You’re taking a young man, an integral part of our team out of a meaningful game for something that didn’t need to be. That being said we asked the other boys to step up. They’re young men with lots of energy and exuberance. It was a really good feeling. I never felt like we weren’t the better team.”

Boy did they step.

Marquette, like they have done all season battled through and defeated the Sacred-Heart Griffin Cyclones in style 4-1 to win the IHSA Class 1A super-sectional in Raymond on Tuesday night. Noah Fahnestock, Chris Hartrich, Brett Terry, Riley Velloff all tallied a goal apiece to help the Explorers advance to their first state appearance since they won it all in 2012.

It’s ironic that Fahnestock scored because of no less than six hours before game time he wasn’t even available. However, Marquette received a boost when he was cleared to play after sitting out five and a half weeks due to a broken collarbone.

“It was a wonderful little surprise for us to find out this afternoon that we were going to get one of our captains back. The doctor released him and how tickled were we to find out that he was able to play today,” Burchett said. “I’m really happy about that. He broke his collarbone on September 16. It’s been five weeks and four days. We thought it might take six weeks before we would see him, but lo and behold here he is wanting to play.”

The Explorers came out strong and forced SHG goalkeeper Mason Southwood into making smart and difficult saves. Despite, the early onslaught of chances, SHG took the lead first when Patrick Hoyle found the back of the net from close range off a Kasten Streb corner kick.

It looked like it may not be the Explorers night when they almost immediately tied it up when Hartrich got in on goal, but Southwood tipped his shot off of the crossbar and eventually out of play.

“They had a high backline, and we wanted to take advantage of that,” Hartrich said. “Our goal was to score one early, but they got one on us first, so we had to dig deep. I’m just really proud of my guys, and I couldn’t be happier right now.”

“goaltender was making some unbelievable saves, but I love the fact that we were creating so many good opportunities. We had multiple chances when we were very close,” Burchett said. “I’m glad there was no quit down 1-0. They had already been there, they kept peppering away and to get two goals in that first half to put us back on top was huge.”

The Explorers leveled things when Hartrich beat two defenders, dribbled to the byline, made a perfect cross for Terry to easily head home the goal from a foot out. Within a minute, Hartrich single-handedly gave Marquette the lead when he read an SHG back pass to a center back near their goal, dispossessed the defender with a slide tackle, and then calmly slotted the ball past Southwood.





With under 20 minutes play, SHG had no choice but to commit more players forward leaving plenty of space for Marquette to counter-attack. With 13 minutes left in the match, Fahnestock all but finished it off with a goal that was set up again by Hartrich and less than eight minutes later, Velloff put the icing on the cake as he found the net.

“When we got three you could see was hanging on for dear life and that’s when even more chances came,” Burchett said.

Burchett noted that the soccer pitch was not in ideal condition and believes it played a role in the match, but it ultimately led to the Explorers benefit.

“This is a lot like our practice field,” Burchett said. “When played the ball back it took funny bounces and sort of had a hard time dealing with it. Maybe on a better pitch, we get a different game. If the pitch is nice, we can keep possession well. We can string 15-to-16 passes together.”

The Explorers will take on Acero-Garcia Charter High School from Chicago at 5 p.m. at the Peoria EastSide Center on Friday in the state semifinals.

“This is our first game with all three captains. To have another great player like back is unbelievable,” Hartrich said. “We just got to play as a team, stick together, and stick to our game plan.”

