

# Explorers find way to hold off Bulldogs, move into own Class 2A regional final

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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ALTON – When it comes down to postseason basketball, nothing a team reaches for will come easily.

That was the case for Marquette Catholic's girls basketball team Tuesday night in their IHSA Class 2A Marquette Regional semifinal contest against Staunton.

It wasn't easy, but the Explorers found a way to win and advance, squeezing out a 35-32 win over Staunton to move into Thursday night's final against Piasa Southwestern, who defeated Hillsboro 60-55 in overtime Tuesday night. The Explorers moved into the final at 19-8 on the year, while the Bulldogs were eliminated at 15-12.

“It wasn't easy, for sure,” Green said. “They created a little bit of a problem with that 2-3 (zone defense); they extended it out a little bit, and with the big girl (the Bulldogs' Abby Scanzoni) on the inside, it's hard to get anything the lane with her. She's about 6-2 and does a good job of not fouling and gets her hands up and forces you to make some outside shots and we kind of struggled with that tonight.”

While the Explorers had a bit of a problem hitting from outside, the big thing that helped carry Marquette was their defense. “Ever since I've been here coaching Marquette for

two years, we've preached defense and worked defense every single day,” Green said, “That's what won the game for us tonight; we scored just 35 points and found a way to win.

“You don't usually win on 35 points, but we'll take it – we'll need to get our offense going a little bit more on Thursday night.”

The Explorers got out to a 13-6 lead at quarter time and kept the Bulldogs at bay in the second quarter, holding on to a 22-18 lead at the long break. Staunton stayed close throughout the third period before Peyton Kline broke things open a little bit with a three-ball to put the Explorers up at 27-21 before the Bulldogs got close at 27-26 before the period came to a close with the Explorers up 30-29.

Staunton tied things up at 30-30 to open the final quarter, but a Kline triple gave Marquette enough breathing room; the Bulldogs made one last run at the Explorers, but could only get as close at 33-32 before Lila Snider and Emma Nicholson came up with the points to enable Marquette to run out winners on the night.

Kline led the Explorers with 12 points, with Snider adding 10 and Lauren Fischer five on the night; the Bulldogs were led by Scanzoni's 14 points and Savannah Bruhn's 11 points on the night.

Green knows that Thursday's final will not be an easy task for the Explorers.

“Southwestern and Hillsboro are two great teams and (have) two great coaches,” Green said prior to the Southwestern-Hillsboro game. “We haven't played Southwestern, but I've seen them play a couple of times; coach (Steve) Wooley does a great job...it'll be tough – there's no easy games once you get to the playoffs, especially in a regional championship game.”

