



Explorers prepare for regional final against Columbia

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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WATERLOO - This Friday night the Marquette Catholic Explorers will look to win their 30th game of the season and to keep their perfect season alive.

The Explorers are the only team in Class 3A that own an undefeated record and were ranked No. 4 in the latest AP boys basketball rankings. The game will be televised live on Riverbender.com.

This past Tuesday in the Waterloo Class 3A Regional Semifinals Marquette had trouble with the Mascoutah Indians falling behind early 9-2. However, they bounced back with forwards Jake Hall and Nick Hemann leading the way with 16 and 13 points respectively. Sammy Green tallied 13 points in the fourth quarter and scored 11 straight to help ice the victory.

Head coach Steve Medford wasn't impressed with his team's performance.

"I don't think I got the idea that everybody is going to come for them. You're going to get a lot of teams' best punches," Medford said. "I thought they played harder than us and had a little more effort."

Despite the effort, Medford sees that as a potential blessing in disguise.

"I think it's a good thing that we got punched in the face a little bit. I think our guys kinda thought we could take these guys lightly," Medford said. "We've been in some big games all year long. We know we're going to get everybody's best punch and we know we're going to have to play well. Our guys know that. This will wake them up."

The Explorers regional championship opponent is the Columbia Eagles who knocked off Civic Memorial 55-39 Wednesday night. They trailed 21-13 with 3:57 to play in the first half and for the final 19 minutes of the game they outscored Civic Memorial 42-18.

Their record is 19-11 and has won nine of their last ten games, including an 85-65 victory over Mascoutah.

“We were playing aggressive . That’s part of the reason why we’re 9-1 in our last ten games,” Columbia head coach Mark Sandstrom said.

The Eagles are led by University of Illinois football signee Jordan Holmes who averages 18 points a game and scored 20 to help beat Civic Memorial.



Columbia mirrors Marquette in a way.

The Explorers have Green who has arguably been the best point guard in the Riverbender area this season and the Eagles counter with Holmes' athletic and scoring ability. Marquette has height with Hall at 6-foot-7 and Hemann at 6-foot-6. Columbia can answer that with 6-foot-6 junior Jon Peterson whose averaging 13 points a game. The Indians also rotate in the 6-foot-8 center, Cole Khoury.

Riley Huber, Jacob O'Connor, Brennen van Breusegen, and Drew Worley are other key contributors for the Eagles.

Sandstrom and the Eagles are acutely aware of where they stand coming up against Marquette. They're a team in good form who are keen on upsetting the Explorers.

"We got nothing to lose Friday night. We're the big underdog," Sandstrom said. "We're not undefeated, but I can tell you this; Our kids are gonna show up, and they're gonna give them their best shot possible. We're gonna let the chips fall where they may on Friday."

Marquette is looking to claim their third straight regional championship.

Tip-off is scheduled for 7 p.m at Waterloo High School.