

Second half onslaught by Quincy Notre Dame too much for Explorers

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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ALTON - For the young Marquette Catholic girls soccer Explorers, the signs of potential can be seen on the horizon.

However, the team has opened with some extremely difficult competition and is still searching for victories.

Marquette shutout the Quincy Notre Dame Raiders in the first half Wednesday night at Gordon Moore Park in Alton. Quincy Notre Dame, the two-time reigning state champions, would ultimately prove their worth in the second half by netting three goals, two within the first ten minutes and road to a 3-0 victory.

Junior Morgan Evans scored two goals, and senior Anna Stokes added another for QND.

“They’re a very, very good team,” Marquette coach Brian Hoener said of Notre Dame. “Early on we’ve played some difficult teams. We accepted the challenge of playing another very difficult team, and I thought our girls did a great job playing with purpose and playing with passion. Eventually broke through and sometimes those things happen when you play very good teams, but I can’t fault our effort and energy. We just have to get better in certain areas and eventually we’ll make some plays.”

Marquette is now off to a 0-6-1 start. However, their combined opponent record through seven games is 35-18-4. At the same time, seniority and experience are thin with Natalie Brown and Emily Dixon being the lone seniors. Nonetheless, Hoener and the Explorers didn't want to back down from an intense early season schedule.

"The message continues to play, and these challenging games is going to make us better at some point in the season. Maybe it's mid-April; maybe it's late-April?" Hoener said. "We continue to challenge ourselves with this schedule, and I know the record isn't pretty, but we're building something that hopefully we'll be playing better soccer here in the next couple of weeks. We've been able to find out what we need to work on."

Notre Dame (7-0) have now outscored opponents, 24-2 through seven games, but despite controlling possession, they hardly threatened the Explorers goal thanks in large part to organized and pesky defending.

"We defended very well in the first half, and we took pride in defending," Hoener said. "A couple of other games this year we made it a little easier on teams and today we made it difficult on them. When you play a quality side like that the best you can ask for is to make them earn it, don't give them anything."

Eventually, the Raiders quality found a way to break through.

In the 41st minute, they won a free kick within 25-yards of goal and Evans powered a shot with pin-point accuracy into the bottom-left side of the net. In the 48th minute, Stokes made it 2-0. With ten minutes to play, Evans, with some help from McKenna Little to clear up space by holding off two Marquette defenders, got in on goal and slotted the ball into the top-left corner of the goal that put the game away.

"With a young team, the more you play with each other and the more you play with difficult teams, you'll get rid of some of the mistakes," Hoener said. "We're well on our way. The last game we played, we didn't play with much purpose or passion, but I thought today was a big step in the right direction for that."





[Chris Rhodes also contributed to this story.](#)