



Atkinson, McClintock Strikes In First Half Send Explorers To State Class 1A Finals In 2-1 Win Over Columbia

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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BREESE - A pair of first-half goals from Luke Atkinson and Noah McClintock gave Marquette Catholic a 2-1 win over Columbia in the IHSA Class 1A boys soccer super-sectional match on a rainy and cold Tuesday evening at Breese Mater Dei high school.

The win sends the Explorers to the state finals this weekend at EastSide Center in East Peoria, where Marquette will play in the second semifinal against defending champion Quincy Notre Dame, who won in a penalty shootout after drawing with Normal University 2-2 in the Normal University super-sectional, in a kickoff set for 7 p.m.

"We played with a lot of energy," said Marquette coach Tim Gould, "a lot of guys put forth some great efforts despite injury and being shorthanded, Everybody believed in what we were doing on the field, and we executed it."

After conceding a goal in the opening minute from Tate Schilling that deflected off a defender, the Explorers equalized in the fourth minute on a shot taken by Atkinson that the Eagle goalie miskicked, the ball slid by and rolled into the net to tie the game at 1-1. The match-winner came in the 32nd minute, after Nick LaFata split the defense and

passed off to McClintock, who was able to beat another defender and get a good shot past Eagle goalie Alec Venhaus into the back of the net to give Marquette a 2-1 lead at halftime.

Columbia was relentless in its attack on the Explorer goal in the second half, but solid defending won the day for Marquette.

"Columbia definitely went for it," Gould said, "and they put their top players upfront. Justin Atkinson cleared a ball off the line, and our defending was focused, and our positioning was pretty darn good with all of the numbers they were throwing at us."

[Charles Thomas also contributed to this story.](#)