

Marquette Football Team Prepares For Fall Season, Senior Laden Roster Ready To Contribute As Explorers Play Independent Schedule

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ALTON - The football team for Marquette Catholic High School had a very good first week of preseason practice as the Explorers get ready for a regular fall 2021 season after going 2-4 during the spring, a season that was moved from the fall of 2020 because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

And as far as the 2021 preseason practice - so far, so good.

"Things went good," said Marquette head coach Leon McElrath III. "We had to beat the heat, but besides that, it went really, really well. We're all excited to be back and on a regular schedule this fall."

The Explorers will have a senior-heavy roster this coming season, and the seniors are ready to contribute to the team's success this coming year.

"We have a senior-heavy lineman group, which is always good," McElrath said. Those linemen include Matthew Dixon, Sam Harshbarger, Colton Roswell and Sam Ward, among others, and they bring experience to the Explorers.

They'll be blocking for a pair of talented running backs in Sage White, who comes over from Hardin Calhoun, and Derrick Thomas. who transferred from Trinity Catholic of North St. Louis County after the school folded at the end of the 2020-21 term. The receiving corps is headed by junior Nate Hamberg, and operating the offense will be

sophomore quarterback Michael Allen, who stepped in this past spring as a freshman and played exceptionally well.

"He's looking good," McElrath said of Allen. "The spring season really helped him develop."



Many of the same seniors on the offensive line will also anchor the defensive line, and also looks very good as well. The Explorers also return first-team all Prairie State Conference linebacker Jack Robinson, a junior who will make a big impact on the defensive side of the ball. The secondary is also senior-laden, and will be an important asset for the team.

Marquette will be playing an independent schedule this season after the PSC folded, with many of the schools moving over to the Cahokia Conference for the new year. It's still a very tough and very good schedule, however, and it starts on Aug. 27 at Public School Stadium against Civic Memorial. The Explorers then play three in a row on the road, at Salem, Columbia and Breese Mater Dei Catholic before returning home to a game against Nashville. Marquette then plays twice more on the road, at Nokomis and at Lutheran North of North St. Louis County, one of the powers of St. Louis football. The season concludes with back-to-back home games, against Collinsville and Quincy Notre Dame Catholic.

"We have a very, very tough schedule," McElrath said. "but we're up to the task."

The key to success for the Explorers is very simple.

"Being able to run the ball, not turn it over, and play assignment defense," McElrath said. "It's a pretty solid formula to win."

McElrath and his team are ready to get the season underway and enjoy success.

"Hopefully, the Delta variant holds off," McElrath said, "and we get some type of normalcy."