



1980 State Championship Baseball Team Honored: Marquette Catholic Boys Top McGivney 54-46

by Brandon Harris

February 12 2022 7:20 AM





ALTON – In the final conference game of their seasons, the Marquette Explorers welcomed the Father McGivney Catholic Griffins to their home gym for a Friday night matchup. Not only was it the final conference game, but it was also a time to remember and recognize the first State Championship in Explorer History, the 1980 Marquette Baseball team. Fans at the game showed their appreciation for some of the Explorers' most successful athletes and helped cheer the blue and white on to a 54-46 victory.

The Explorers would start the game strong. Recording 18 points in the first quarter and 19 in the second, Marquette raced to a 37-18 first half. “I thought we moved the ball well in the first half,” said head coach, Steve Medford. “We did a good job of moving the ball and finding the open shooters. Our press created turnovers which allowed us to get some points off turnovers in the first half.”

The energy continued into the half-time ceremony where the 1980 State Champion Baseball Team was recognized. Old fans showed their appreciation as new fans learned about the beginning of Marquette’s winning history.



At the start of the second half began, the cheers quickly turned to the fans from Father McGivney Catholic. The Griffins would score more points than the Explorers in both quarters of the second half. Despite the Explorers scoring only 2 points in the third quarter, the Griffins getting within six points of tying the game, and outscoring their opponents by 11 points in the second half of the game, it was not enough for Father McGivney to get back in the game.

Coach Medford did not mince words when asked how tonight's victory felt. “It felt good to get the win for the kids and it’s fun getting a chance to play in front of the home crowd. Little disappointed in how we played in the second half, but at the end of the day, we got through it, and we won.”

As the Explorers head coach mentioned, the Marquette home crowd knows how to bring the energy. The Marquette Blue Crew was on full display as they filled the stadium with their cheers and played a large part in the home team’s win.

While the Explorers won the game, it was not their best overall performance. “I think our energy level fell off”. Said, Medford. “They started making some tough shots, we could not make some shots, we kept settling for threes, and we needed to attack the basketball more. Defensively, we did not sit in the gaps well, let them take advantage of us, and kinda beat us up.”

Even with the ups and downs of the team, the Blue Crew's impact is consistent. "It's always good having the Blue Crew here. We have a good fanbase & they always do a good job. Hopefully, we can build on this tonight and get a little better." Said Medford as he credited the crowd for pushing his guys on the court.

Owen Williams was the offensive star of the game as he accounted for over half of his team's points with his 28-point night. Even though Williams contributed hugely to the Explorer's victory, Medford believes the senior has another defensive level in him. When asked who the coach thought stood out, he said, "Owen (Williams) made some shots tonight, but he must be better defensively for us.

As for the Griffins, they had three players with standout offensive nights. The Griffins' Jackson Rogers had 15 points, Jacob Huber had 12 points and Gabe Smith also had 12 points.

The final point totals are below.

Marquette Explorers:

Owen Williams – 14 points

Parker Macias – 10 points

Kendall Lavender – 9 points

Braden Kline – 5 points

Brody Hendricks – 2 points

Father McGivney Catholic Griffins:

Jackson Rodgers – 15 points

Jacob Huber – 12 points

Gabe Smith – 12 points

Evan Schrage – 5 points

Ashton Mersinger – 2 points

Father McGivney Catholic entered the game on a two-game win streak and hoped to leapfrog the Explorers in their conference standing. Their loss tonight pushes the Griffins to 15-14 on the season with two games left to play. With a home and away game against Mt. Olive and Red Bud, the Griffins will try to keep their head high and ride the confidence from their previous two games as they push for their first-ever season with more wins than losses.

Marquette has three games left in their season and will play them all on their home court. With games against Christ Our Rock Lutheran, Civic Memorial, and Gibault Catholic, what do the Explorers need to do to ensure a winning finish to their season? Medford says, "Defense has to be a lot better. We must defend, rebound, and have effort. Those three things travel. If you defend, rebound, and have a great effort - offense comes and goes, but those things have to be a constant."

After Friday's win, the Explorers moved to 16-11 and guaranteed a .500-win average to finish off Owen Williams senior year. Fans may catch Marquette's next game at 4 p.m. Saturday as they take on Christ Our Rock Lutheran Silver Stallions.