

Marquette Catholic Girls Capture Regional Championship With Win Over Staunton

by Brandon Harris
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ROXANA – Roxana High School played host for the Class 2A Regional Championship Girls' Basketball game. The game was played between two even teams, the Staunton Bulldogs, and the Marquette Explorers.

The Bulldogs entered the game with a record of 21-7 and the Explorers entered the game riding a 14-game winning streak and record of 25-6. The Explorers basketball team played one of the best games of their season and won their first Regional Championship since 2018 with a final score of 65-48.

“It feels great,” said head Lee Green after being asked how it felt to bring home a championship. “You put a lot of work in, and this is your first goal, to win a regional championship because you can’t go any farther if you don’t win that. Since the summer, this is what we talked about. We haven’t won this championship since 2018, so there isn’t anybody on this team that won one. Every year we have been in the regional championship game, excluding last year, so we wanted to get this one for our players’ senior years and then hopefully more.”

Staunton started the game hot and outscored Marquette 15-13 in the first quarter. “I give credit to Staunton – they played great.” Said the Explorer head coach. Part of being a

good team is rising to the occasion and the Explorers did that and then some. Seniors Chloe White and Abigail Williams helped their team outscore the Bulldogs by 23-points in the second and third quarters.

When asked what the Explorer head coach thought to lead to his team's dominating turnaround, he attributed it to a rise in defensive execution and momentum caused by Jillian Nelson. "In the second half, we picked up our defensive pressure and caused some turnovers." Said Green. "We didn't shoot well in the first quarter and then Jillian Nelson hit a couple of threes from the corner in the second quarter. That helped us start finding out shots and then by the third quarter, I think we wore them out."

After the Explorer's push in the second and third quarters, their first regional championship was all but solidified. With a scoreline of 53-33, Marquette cruised their way to victory.

Point totals are as follows for the Explorers' Regional Champions:

Abigail Williams – 9 points

Nia Ballinger – 8 points

Jillian Nelson – 9 points

Alyssa Powell – 15 points

Chloe White – 24 points

When asked what this championship will mean for the seniors currently on the team and for the culture of Explorer's Girls Basketball, Green said, "It means everything for the seniors. Every year there has been a state playoff, besides last year, and every year we have been beaten soundly. To win this game, I'm happy for the seniors, the whole team, and for all the work that my coaching staff puts in."

The Explorers are guaranteed at least one more game with their 2021-2022 season. The Explorers have a few minor details to clean up if they want to extend their season another game even further. "We have to clean up our passes – we had some silly turnovers. A little less fowling. If we bring tonight's effort and do those things, I think we can beat anybody."

The Explorers next will be on Tuesday, February 22nd.