

# Marquette Catholic Boys Dominate Greenville 55-24 For Boys Regional Basketball Championship

by Brandon Harris

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GREENVILLE – The Greenville Comets welcomed the Marquette Explorers to their home stadium for the 2022 Class 2A Regional Championship. A three-point pregame event featuring some of the region's best shooters gave Comet fans plenty of time to fill the stadium. By tip-off, it cheers from a sea of blue filled the stadium. The number of Comet fans outweighed that of Marquette's, but the Explorer's sense of urgency & overall play outweighed Greenville's.

The Explorers and their head coach, Steve Medford, won their 12th Regional Championship in school history (8th in Medford's tenure) by a dominating score of 55-24.

How does a head coach feel after their team wins a championship? "Awesome!" Medford said. "I am really happy for the kids, this is what you work for & this is why you want to play. I think that has been a staple of our program – defending our end & defending the rebound. That is what we did tonight. The result speaks for itself."

Time of possession favored the Comets at the beginning of the first quarter. Behind great play and an 18-points night from Parker Macias, the Explorers quickly shook off their nerves and got back to their game. It was not long before the Explorer's evened the score and pushed themselves to a convincing lead.

"A lot of these guys have not played in a Regional Final game," Coach Medford said. "Some nerves were there & it was a matter of settling in & getting more comfortable. We made a couple more shots, drove to the basket, we had a lot of different guys step up tonight and play well."

On the heels of Macias, rebounds, and a couple of three-pointers, it was 11-6 Explorers at the end of the first quarter. As the lead increased for Marquette, Comet fans got quieter, and things did not get better going into the second quarter.

Into the second quarter, the Explorers picked up where they left off and ran the score to 15-6 before the Comets took a full-time-out to slow down Marquette's momentum. "At the beginning of the game, we got a lot of loose balls," Medford said. "In big games, the margin of error goes down. Rebounding and being in the right spots defensively are huge – I thought our guys did a great job of that tonight. We took care of our boards, and our guys did what they needed to do." With good defensive play and winning rebound after rebound, Marquette led 22-13 after the half.

The Explorers dominating play continued well into the second half and helped solidify their Championship hopes. In an ode to Medford complimenting his team's defensive

play, it took the Comets, again, more than four minutes to get their first points in the third quarter. Marquette silenced Comet's fans and more than doubled Greenville's points by the end of the third quarter with a score of 47-21.

When asking Medford what he thought about silencing a packed home stadium, the Explorer's head coach said, "It was great, wasn't it? When you play that well & play defense like that, you make it difficult for a team that likes to shoot threes. Ultimately, when they tried threes, we shut them down defensively. I'm proud of our defense – they really got our going tonight."

After the Comets didn't score until there were 1:32 seconds left in the fourth quarter, a Marquette Regional Championship was imminent. The Explorer's offense was firing on all cylinders as they had three players with points in the teens. Parker Macias, Kendall Lavender, and senior star Owen Williams would, respectively, finish the night with 18-points, 14-points, and 13-points. As the lone senior and team captain, Owen Williams getting a Regional Championship for his senior year was a deserving moment in Explorer's basketball history.

"Owen is a great kid... he really is," said an emotional Medford. "He deserves this more than anybody. This team and I love Owen. Out of all the kids, he is the only one who was there when we won early, went through a pandemic year, continued to be a staple of our program, and continues to be the epitome of what a Marquette basketball player is all about."

### **Point totals for the Explorer's are as follows:**

Parker Macias – 18 points

Adonnis Hopson – 2 points

Braden Kline – 4 points

Kendall Lavender – 14 points

Owen Williams – 13 points

Dre Davis – 2 points

The Explorers and their senior leader, Owen Williams, advance to the first round of Sectionals after their victory. The first Sectional match-up for Marquette takes them to Flora, Illinois, as they take on the 23-7 Teutopolis Wooden Shoes on Tuesday, February 28th.

