

Marquette Boys Soccer To Rely On Senior Heavy Squad And Talented Young Players

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON - The Marquette Catholic High School boys soccer team lost a handful of seniors to graduation in 2021, five total, but they didn't roster nearly as many seniors as they do now.

Heading into this season, the Explorers have 12 fourth-year players rostered compared to just six total underclassmen.

Head coach Brian Hoener loves that dynamic heading into the season that begins Monday, August 22nd in O'Fallon.

"We have a good mixture of upper and underclassmen," Hoener said after the first after-school practice out at Gordon Moore Park. "I kind of like where our roster is at, we've got some experience, got some depth, and got some talented young players as well."

Marquette graduated some key players like Preston Stork, one of the Explorers' go-to goalies, playing in 11 games, totaling 830 minutes and picking up three shutouts. They'll also miss Cody Miller, an influential forward who snagged eight goals and 10 helpers last year.

They do return senior goalkeeper Jack Keller who will assumably be taking a larger role in net for Marquette, as well as senior midfielder Dre Davis. He led the team with his impressive 20 goals and five assists last year.

Despite the senior-heavy team this season, things are still looking good for the program's future.

"I think we're something between 35 and 40 players. That is a good number for our program. We'll be able to have the varsity and a full JV," Hoener said.

They have five incoming freshmen and 11 sophomores who will only continue to get better for seasons to come.

Those JV games are just as important as the varsity ones. It's a great way for players to log minutes and learn from in-game situations. The JV schedule lists 14 games for this season. The JV squad will also kick off their season against O'Fallon on Monday.

After a long summer of hard work, Hoener believes his teams are ready for the start of the season.

One thing that might make it a little tougher is that he's having to learn who all these boys are, their strengths, and their weaknesses in his first season as boys soccer head coach.

"Practices have been going well, the boys are working hard. It's my first year with them, so we're getting to know each other. I'm learning what they can do and what their skill sets are. They're learning what I like, and what I'm asking them to do. There's an adjustment period but the work rate and mentality have been good."

Wednesday was the team's first after-school practice which is always a little anxious.

"Today was a little bit different," Hoener said. "It's just a different routine, but I only expect it to get better."

The Explorers open their season to not just one, but two Southwestern Conference powerhouses. They kick off the season on Monday (August 22) at 6:30 p.m. at O'Fallon and then on Thursday, August 25th at 7 p.m. against Collinsville.

"It'll be a good challenge for us and let us know what we need to work on right away," Hoener said regarding those two matchups.

The Explorers' first home game at Gordon Moore Park won't be until September 1st when they host Roxana at 6 p.m.

The team is ready to improve upon an 11-8-1 season from last year and doesn't have a lot of time left to prepare.

"It happens quick," Hoener said. "You think to yourself you've had all preseason to get ready and then all of a sudden, blink of an eye, and the game's here."

Before the season starts though the team will get to have a little bit of fun this Saturday, August 20th at the Blue-Grey Game. The teams will be introduced and then play a 30-minute scrimmage at Public School Stadium. Festivities begin at 6 p.m.