



Redbirds Beat Cross-Town Rivals Marquette Catholic On Penalties – Snap Six Game Losing Streak

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON - It's not often that Alton High School and Marquette Catholic High School cross paths on the soccer field. As a matter of fact, the rivalry was just renewed last season after a long hiatus.

Last year, back on September 27th, the Explorers bested the Redbirds by a score of 3-1 out at Gordon Moore Park.

This time around the game was to be played on a neutral site, well sort of. This year's rendition of the 'Alton Derby' was held at Public School Stadium, where both schools play their home football games, albeit the field is decked out with a giant Redbird at center field after the stadium's recent updates.



Fans packed the stands in either red or blue attire and each school brought out an impressive student section. All of it made for an exciting atmosphere under the lights Monday evening.

“It’s something special to get to play them,” Alton head coach Tyler Hamilton said postgame, referring to the renewal with their Catholic rivals. “The atmosphere was incredible,” he added.

“It’s not a game that happens every year,” he said. Hamilton could be heard postgame telling his team that this is something they’ll remember for the rest of their lives.

After the match, it was determined that Alton runs red. AHS won the game 2-1 on penalty kicks to cap off a dramatic win and snap a six-game losing streak. The win brings them to 5-8 on the season while the Explorers fall to 8-4.

The game kicked off with plenty of intensity with the Redbirds bringing the heat early on. They had a few good looks within the first 20 minutes of the game, but nothing came of it. Things went into halftime tied at 0-0.

In the second half the teams traded goals, quite impressive ones at that.

But first, in the 54th minute, junior midfielder Cameron Belchik had a tempting freekick for the Redbirds. He put it on net from about 30 yards out forcing Marquette's keeper sophomore Will Fahnestock to make a crucial save, pushing the ball off the crossbar and out of play. It was the best chance either team had had thus far.

That was until a few minutes later when sophomore forward Dillan Cowan broke the tie. He ran on to a well-weighted through ball with only the diving Fahnestock to beat. Cowan took a touch around him and slotted the ball into the empty net to make it 1-0 Redbirds.

It wasn't until the 72nd minute that Marquette tied things back up with a rocket of a shot from about 20 yards out that went off the crossbar and in.

Things stayed tied until the end, but a winner still had to be determined. The coaches had talked before the game and decided that the best way to decide a winner was skipping overtime and going straight to penalty kicks. The decision was made because both teams have grueling schedules for the rest of the week and there was no sense in playing longer and risking tired legs in upcoming matches.

So, it was straight to PKs which took place in front of the mighty Redbirds' student section.

It was senior goalkeeper Aiden Belchik who came up clutch for Alton making two saves during the shootout. He was on fire throughout the entirety of the match, making some key saves to keep his team in it.

The winning PK was scored by Cowan to ice the game and more importantly get back in the win column.

"We're trying to fight back to .500," is the message Hamilton gave to his team, one that is moving in the right direction.

The Redbirds will play three more games this week beginning on Wednesday at McCluer North, Thursday at Belleville West, and Friday at Hazelwood West. They won't be back home again until October 10th when they take on Highland at 6:30 p.m.

As for the Explorers, they also have a very busy week. They play Highland on Tuesday, Metro-East Lutheran on Wednesday, Mater Dei on Thursday, and Triad on Saturday. The Highland game is away, but those other three games will be played at home at Gordon Moore Park.

