

Kline Leads Five Players In Double Figures With 21 Points, Explorers Score Game's First 16 Points, Three-Point Shooting Helps As Marquette Wins

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EDWARDSVILLE - Braden Kline helped lead the way for Marquette Catholic with 21 points as the Explorers used hot three-point shooting and scored the game's first 16 points in going on to an 88-41 win over Metro-East Lutheran in a Gateway Metro Conference boys basketball game Friday night at Thomas Hooks Gym.

Marquette's hot shooting was a big factor in the contest, as the Explorers took a 28-12 lead after the first quarter and went on from there to the win.

"It was just one of those nights where everything was falling," said first-year Marquette head coach Cody Best, "everything was falling. Sometimes, we get hot and we kind of cool off, but we stayed pretty consistent tonight, I mean, with Braden Kline shooting like that, it's going to be tough to beat us."

The big margin also allowed the Explorers to use their bench and get their younger players a chance to play, which they also did well.

"It is," Best said. "They got in, I think we had five guys in double digits, so we're getting there. I mean, we've still got about 25 games left, but we're still learning some stuff."

The quick start was very important to the Explorers, and Best had good feelings about how things went from there.

"I feel good," Best said. "We want to be a run-and-gun type team and that's why we were pressing and trying to work on some stuff. We can shoot it, too. We've just got so many weapons right now on offense, we're sharing the ball, we're moving the ball and tonight, we scored the ball."

It was the second game in a row where Marquette scored the first 16 points of the game and Best was very pleased with how his team came out of the gate in both contests.



"Yeah, we scored the first 16 tonight and we scored the first 16 the other night," Best said. "We came out hot; I don't know if it's something I say in the pregame," he said with a smile, "but they're excited to play, it's an older group, so they know what to do. Sometimes, you've just got to throw the ball up and we'll play anybody right now."

The Knights were able to recover from the first quarter start to play well offensively, but Metro-East is a young team and it's very much a learning process for the younger players.

"We've got kids with 14, 15 turnovers," said Knights' head coach Anthony Smith. "One of the things about being in varsity-level basketball, 1A through 4A, is you have to take some pride and play some defense. We can't right now, we can't guard anyone. And the process is not being able to guard anyone, they don't go to him. We either have to guard and score, or score and score. We can't do either. We can't guard and we don't score. They don't work very well."

The Knights are coming off a successful season last year in which Metro-East went 16-11 and lost to Jacksonville Routt Catholic in the sectional semifinal at White Hall North Greene. The roster reflects the youth of the team.

"We have three seniors, two juniors and 25 freshmen and sophomores," Smith said. "And in the process of having a young team, we're going to take some lumps. I understand we're going to take some lumps. But in the process of taking some lumps, we have to be getting better. We're taking lumps. We have to be at least competitive. And I'm not saying there aren't players trying. Part about being competitive is you've got to have some pride and you've got to have some heart, take some initiative to say 'OK, I'm playing varsity basketball.'

"Freshman, sophomore, junior or senior, I don't really care. It's never been my thing to say OK, I need five seniors, I need five juniors. I need guys that just want to play and work hard. You don't have to be a junior or senior to be a good player, you just have to want it as much as anyone else. They go hand-in-hand. If you play hard and you want it, good things happen.

"Marquette's a good ball club," Smith continued. "They're big, they're strong, they've got some seniors, they can shoot it, everybody can shoot it. And in the process of everybody being able to shoot it, you have to take some initiative and say 'OK, let's compete.' Now if we win or not, it's a different story. But you have to be able to compete."

It only took the Explorers 57 seconds to score the game's first five points, on baskets by Parker Macias and Dre Davis, along with a free throw from Kendall Lavender, then Marquette, led by 11 straight points by Kline, went out to a 16-0 lead before Landyn Jefferson scored and Mikal Bell hit a three to cut the lead to 16-5. The Explorers went on a 9-0 run before Bell hit another three to bring the lead to 25-8. Baskets from Jonas Hoff and Jefferson, sandwiched around a three from Macias, made the score 28-12 Marquette after the first quarter.

The Explorers scored the first 14 points of the second quarter, behind three from Davis, to go up 42-12 before Drew Suhre dropped a three to cut the advantage to 42-15. Marquette then went on to outscore the Knights the remainder of the quarter 15-12 in taking a 57-27 halftime lead. The third period saw the Explorers further increase their lead as Sean Williams and Kline hit on threes, while the Knights had Suhre hit a pair of three at the start of the period, but a 14-4 run at the end of the period saw Marquette take a 77-37 lead at the end of the quarter and trigger the running clock rule in the fourth. The Explorers outscored Metro-East in the final period 11-4, with Ian Skelton and Max Weber hitting back-to-back for Metro-East before the buzzer to make the final score 88-41.

Kline led the Explorers with 21 points, while Davis and Lavender both added 17 points each, Brody Bechtold and Macias both scored 12 points, Williams hit for seven points, Jaden Rochester had six points, Jack Spain hit for three points and Kendall Van Dyke scored two points.

Bell led the way for the Knights with nine points, while J.J. Lostutter had eight points, Jefferson and Weber each scored seven points, Suhre scored five points, Rodrick Holmes and Skelton each had three points, and both Hoff and LaMark Kirkwood each hit for two points.

The Explorers are now 5-3 and play at Centralia Christ Our Rock Lutheran next Tuesday, then host St. Louis Priory Catholic next Wednesday, then play at Maryville Christian next Friday, with all games starting at 7:30 p.m. Metro-East is now 0-4 and continue their pre-Holiday home stand with games against Bunker Hill on Tuesday, Christ Our Rock Dec. 16, both games starting at 7:30 p.m., then host Collinsville Dec. 17 in a game that tips off at 4:30 p.m.





[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)