

Marquette 40, Roxana 39: Clutch Shots Late Power Explorer Girls to Victory

by Nathan Tucker

January 20 2023 8:02 AM





ALTON - It was a break from conference play on Thursday for the Marquette and Roxana girls' basketball teams, but Thursday night's matchup was just as tense as any. The Explorers held off the Shells in a tight one in Alton, 40-39 the final score.

"We've been starting games cold," Marquette head coach Whitney Sykes-Rogers said following the win. "Eventually we started making our shots, including some free throws down the stretch, those were big for us, we had to have those free throws each time from Nia (Ballinger) and Haley (Rodgers)."

The two players mentioned there by coach Sykes-Rogers, Nia Ballinger and Haley Rodgers, led the way for Marquette, primarily in the second half. Roxana's defense kept giving Ballinger open looks from three-point land, and she connected with three from deep, and added 5 free throws, including two clutch makes with just seconds on the clock, to lead the team with 14 points.

Rodgers led Marquette from the point, dictating the pace and flow of the Explorer offense all night, finishing with ten points. Olivia Kratschmer added 12 points of her own for Marquette on the way to the victory.

"In these tight games, you have to have people who want to score," Sykes-Rogers said. "You have to have the confidence, all that takes is knowing 'I've been in the gym, I've been practicing, I know I'm going to make this shot'. Confidence is such a big deal."

Marquette's scorers did exactly that when they had their opportunities, but a strong comeback from the visiting Roxana Shells almost forced overtime. The Shells were led by Daisy Daugherty's 14 points, and Ava Strohmeier who added 12 of her own, all on three-pointers.

The victory for Marquette pushes their record to .500 on the season at 10-10. Roxana drops to 7-13 with a tough stretch of road games to come next week against Carlinville, Madison, and Breese Central.

The Explorer girls will head to the Carrollton tournament this weekend, and they'll face Jerseyville on Saturday.



