

Explorers Blank Carlinville - Win Third Regional Title In Four Years

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – Explorers head coach Brian Hoener told his team the same thing he did a season ago, don't take these moments lightly.

It's hard not to when winning a Regional Title becomes the expectation.

As the title suggests, that expectation was met for the third time in four years. It was the program's 13th Regional crown.

After beating Gillespie 12-0 in the Regional Semis a few days ago, Marquette has been buzzing. They followed that performance up with an 8-0 win over Carlinville Friday afternoon, both games being played on their home field at Gordon Moore Park.

The game was a close one for the opening 20 minutes, with the Explorers on the doorstep. Senior midfielder Aela Scruggs hit the crossbar in the 5th minute and then the post in the 20th.

The Explorers opener came in the 8th minute with Scruggs getting the assist. She passed a ball across the 18-yard box to the feet of sophomore forward Ella Anselm who undoubtedly found the back of the net to make it 1-0.

The game was close at this point with the Cavies' defense holding tough, but once Marquette found its second goal, the floodgates opened.

The second and third goals came within a minute of each other. First, sophomore midfielder Maya Stephan hit a shot first time that went off the post and in. Right after the restart, Anselm went the other way to immediately make it 3-0.

"I thought we were playing well in the opening segment of the game, just couldn't find that final finish," Hoener said.

"But we were creating great chances and getting in good spots, so I knew it was just a matter of finding that final touch, final finish, and finally, after 20 minutes we got that."

Senior defender Kylie Murray scored in the 30th minute followed by freshman midfielder Emma Dempsey in the 31st and 34th minutes. Freshman midfielder Maddie Waters ended the first half scoring to put her team up 7-0 at the break.

Dempsey scored a brace in her first-ever Regional Final just like Anselm did a season ago in a 7-1 win over Greenville.



After Anselm's performance Friday, she leads her team with 33 goals this season. Dempsey now has eight on a Marquette team that has seen 19 different goal-scorers this season.

"There are contributions up and down the roster, and when you have contributions up and down the roster, it's difficult for teams to match up with you," Hoener said.

After growing the big lead, the second half clock was cut in half to play just another 20 minutes.

Marquette grabbed one more for good measure when senior defender Meaghan Carroll scored from a free kick in the 44th minute.

Hoener was obviously pleased with his team's ability to score goals in these first two postseason tests.

"I thought we did a very good job, not only creating chances, but quality chances, and when you get those kinds of quality chances in the postseason you have to finish them, and we did a fantastic job doing that," he said.

The win brings Marquette to 18-3-2 as they get to continue one of its best seasons in recent memory. Carlinville's season ended at 12-9.

This was back-to-back years that Marquette won a Regional Championship on the same day as graduation. Last year saw a mad dash back home from Greenville. This season, the team's 11 seniors had plenty of time to clean up before walking across the stage.

"It's a great day for the seniors to really have some special memories," Hoener said.

They'll be looking to keep those memories going into the Sectional Semifinals, in a rematch from last season.

Springfield Sacred Heart-Griffin beat Quincy Notre Dame 4-2 in their Regional Final to set up the rematch with the Explorers. A season ago it was SHG with a narrow 1-0 win, ending Marquette's season at 15-7-3.

This year's game will be played at Riverton on Tuesday, May 16 at 4:30 p.m.