

New Head Coach Dickerson Believes "Good Things" Are Coming For Explorers' Football Program

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON - Monday kicked off the official first day of the fall sports season with area teams getting their first practices in, including the Marquette Catholic High football team out at Gordon Moore Park.

After all the summer workouts, Monday began the real thing. From here on out, the Explorers will be practicing nearly every day until the end of October. They'll be doing so this season under the direction of a new head coach, Eric Dickerson.

Dickerson is no stranger to the game though.

He has been a varsity football coach for 22 years, with stints at Marquette Catholic, East Alton Wood River, and Alton High, where he served as head coach and led the Redbirds to the playoffs in 2017 and 2018.



He comes into an Explorers program that has been struggling in recent years, into a program that hasn't won a football game in the last two seasons.

Why did he do that? Well apart from wanting to return to his alma mater, he knows he's got a group of guys that are bought in.

"They believe," Dickerson said about his team. "They believe in each other."

"They were a young team last year, still going to be young with only three seniors. They don't quit on each other, build one another up. They want to win as bad as everybody else, but I think they've got something special inside them."

The coach said that the main goal of this first full week of practice is to build that chemistry and just get better.

"I think it went as expected," Dickerson said about the first official day of practice.

"Love the attitude and the effort these kids have. It's been a tough few years for them but the fight they have in them now and the summer we've had, good things are going to happen to these guys."



A season ago the school's football program was in jeopardy. With not many rostered players, and many going down to injury or sickness early on, former head coach Leon McElrath and Marquette Athletic Director Brian Hoener had no choice but to forfeit their week three game against Columbia.

At that point in the season, it was looking bleak that any Marquette football team would take the field, but the numbers returned and the team finished out a grueling season.

Those players that trudged along last season will be the ones looking to lead the team in 2023 and it could be seen on day one of practice. Upperclassmen were constantly hyping up and supporting the new players during drills and some intense fitness training at the end.

"We've got a good group of freshman and a lot of guys coming back from last year's team," Dickerson said. "Those guys got a lot of experience last year on Friday nights and I think they'll be ready to go."



It's undoubtedly a group of Explorers that want to and believe they can win their first game in three seasons, and it seems as if the pieces are falling in place to do just that.

The Explorers open the season on Friday, August 25 just like everyone else with a few Saturday afternoon games sprinkled in there due to the fact they have to share Public School Stadium on Friday nights with Alton High.

Marquette's schedule goes as follows:

- Friday, August 25 - 7 p.m. vs. Civic Memorial
- Friday, September 1 - 7 p.m. @ Salem
- Saturday, September 9 - 1 p.m. vs. Wood River

- Friday, September 15 - 7 p.m. @ Harrisburg
- Friday, September 22 - 7 p.m. vs. Althoff
- Friday, September 29 - 7 p.m. @ Mater Dei
- Saturday, October 7 - 1 p.m. @ Priory
- Saturday, October 14 - Noon vs. Minonk Fieldcrest
- Friday, October 20 - 7 p.m. vs. Roxana

