

Marquette Snaps Two-Season Losing Streak, Blocker Has Four-Touchdown Game

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – “It takes a lot to learn how to win,” Marquette Catholic head football coach Eric Dickerson said Saturday afternoon.

He knew the number, his team knew the number, and the entire city of Alton knew how long it had been since the Explorers last won a football game.

Two seasons, 24-game losing streak, 878 days. All over.

An efficient first half saw Marquette leading the East Alton-Wood River Oilers by a score of 35-7 at halftime. EAWR made it a little interesting, but the Explorers held on to a 49-21 win at Public School Stadium, their first since April 9, 2020, during the COVID-19-shortened Spring season.

Dickerson talked about what it took to get there.

“It’s the kids,” he said. “It started with our five seniors, not missing, being dedicated, getting everyone on board and I think that trickles down. It’s the kids. We show up, put the kids in place and they execute. They did a wonderful job, I’m so happy for them.”

The Explorers got on the board first thanks to senior Johnny Everage. After a 65-yard run, he set up a first-and-goal scenario. He later carried it in from five yards out. The kick was good from Joe Stephan who stayed perfect on the day as Marquette went up 7-0 after the first quarter.

EAWR’s Drake Champlin carried it in from the one-yard line to tie the game up at 7-7, but it was all Marquette for the rest of the half.

Four straight scores from the Explorers all but sealed the Oilers’ fate early on.

Senior receiver Duarell Blocker scored back-to-back rushing touchdowns. First, he carried one in from 46 yards out and after Stephan recovered his own punt, Blocker ran it in again from 23 yards out to go ahead 21-7.

Sophomore quarterback Jack Rea got in on the action, mostly on the ground throughout the game. He scored a long rushing TD followed by a 53-yard carry from Blocker, his third TD of the quarter to make it a 35-7 ballgame at the half.

“We just made too many mistakes in the first half,” Wood River head coach Garry Herron said. “We kind of felt sorry for ourselves there in the second quarter. If we don’t have that bad quarter, it’s a different game I believe.”

What was probably the play of the game opened things off in the second. Blocker returned the Oilers’ punt 80 yards to the house and made it 42-7, but Wood River would have a response this time.

Champlin carried in another short TD before Richard Stewart found a hole and ran one in from 20 yards away. Just like that it was 42-21, a three-score game with almost the entire fourth quarter remaining.

It seemed as if Wood River had a little bit of life until Everage scored another rushing TD from 22 yards out to ice the game and get to the final score of 49-21.

“We came out blazing in the first half, and kind of got a little complacent there in the second half, but we picked it up when we needed it,” Dickerson added.

A 1996 Marquette Catholic graduate, this one was a bit more special for the Explorers’ newly appointed head coach.

“Graduating from here and seeing where the program was and where we are today, looking at the kids and seeing how happy they were, that’s what it’s all about,” Dickerson added.

He made it clear that he and the team were going to celebrate this one before turning the page to week four.

After improving to 1-2 on the season, the Explorers will head to Harrisburg next week.

The Oilers fall to 0-3 this season and will play next at Salem.