

Keller's Brace Leads Marquette To Rivalry Win, Redbirds' Struggles Continue

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – In the third installment in what has been dubbed ‘The Battle of the Bowl’, the Marquette Catholic boys soccer team defeated the Alton Redbirds by a score of 2-0.

These teams played every year from 1999 to 2012 before a long hiatus in the rivalry. It was reintroduced in 2021 and has been played each year since then.

Some coaching jobs have changed to spice things up as well. An added bonus to this year’s game was that newly hired Alton head coach Greg Nasello was an assistant coach under Marquette’s Brian Hoener. Now, Nasello is back at the helm for the Redbirds and got to go up against his former partner.

“I have nothing but respect for him,” Nasello said regarding Hoener, the head coach for both Marquette soccer teams as well as Athletic Director. “That whole coaching staff is great guys over there.”

In Nasello’s eyes, there are bitter rivalries and there are friendly rivalries. He believes that when the two Alton teams clash, it’s mostly friendly. Most of the players grew up as friends and played with or against one another before.

“I’m friends with a lot of these guys and it was an intense match,” Marquette junior midfielder Jude Keller said Monday night at Public School Stadium. “I love playing against them.”

Last year was a 2-1 win for Alton after the game was decided by penalty kicks. The year before that was a 3-1 win for the Explorers.

Keller, then a freshman, scored in that 3-1 win. He scored both goals Monday night, but he chalked his performance up to his teammates.

“I have a great team to help me out there, the pressing on got me the ball and I took it in. It was great teamwork. It was a really quick goal and after that, I think it was just hard work.”

That quick goal came one minute and 39 seconds into the game. The Explorers won possession before getting a dangerous cross into the box where Keller hit the ball mid-stride into the back of the net to go ahead 1-0 early on.

After hitting the crossbar in the 15th minute, Keller scored again just before the half-hour mark. This time he ran onto a nicely weighted through ball with a couple of defenders still to beat. He used his speed and strength to shove them off before rolling it past the keeper to double his team’s lead before halftime.

“I thought Jude was fantastic tonight,” Hoener said about Monday’s obvious choice for player-of-the-game. “I thought he did a good job, especially early on in the first half. He was really aggressive and made some nice plays offensively for us. He was one of the difference makers tonight and I thought he played really well.”

“I knew that we had to keep him off the board if we were going to win, we just couldn’t do it,” Nasello said about his former player.



Besides an Alton header going high over the bar in the 5th minute, it was mainly all Explorers in the first 40 minutes. It was a completely different story in the second half.

“Second half I thought we just hung on. I thought outplayed us in the second half. We were fortunate to come away without conceding a goal,” Hoener said.

Alton had two glaring opportunities in the second half that could’ve completely changed the outcome of the game.

In the 58th minute, the Redbirds did everything right, working hard inside the box and not giving up on a play to get a great pass across that was eventually missed wide, basically missing an open goal. In the 65th minute, Marquette keeper Will Fahnestock made a clutch save during a one-on-one breakaway with Alton forward Dillan Cowan to keep the Redbirds off the board.

Fahnestock earned his seventh shutout of the season.

“We just can’t find it right now,” Nasello said. “Once we get it going, we will be fine, but getting it going is the hard part. We do a pretty good job of building, we have good intensity in our play, we’re getting the ball into the danger areas, we just can’t finish it. Once we can do that, hopefully, we can find a way to win.”

Alton is now 0-7 on the year and has just one goal to its name on the season.

“The thing is, it’s not like we’re not trying, it just won’t go in for whatever reason. We find posts, we miss open goals, it’s just very frustrating and I feel bad for them,” Nasello said.

“We’ll keep working on it. Eventually, it’s got to go in, it just has to.”

For the Explorers, they move to 8-1-1 on the season but still failed to put together a full 80 minutes, something Hoener has harped on time and time this season.

“We found a way to win when we didn’t play well, but I tip my cap to Alton because I thought they played really well tonight,” Hoener said. “They dictated the game, put us on our back foot a little bit and we didn’t do a very good job responding to that.”

It’s a quick turnaround for both squads.

Both teams have busy schedules this week as they hop back into conference play. The Redbirds will be on the road at Belleville East and Edwardsville while Marquette will host Metro-East Lutheran before heading to Father McGivney.