

Explorers Set Back By Columbia - Focused On “Error-Free Soccer” Heading Toward Postseason

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
October 2 2023 8:22 PM



ALTON – The IHSA Class 1A soccer brackets were released last Friday.

Columbia had already locked up the No. 1 seed in the Murphysboro Sectional while Marquette Catholic had to settle for the No. 2 seed.

So, when the teams met Monday night at Gordon Moore Park, it was a bit of a feeling-out process for what is maybe still to come.



In separate sides of the bracket, for the Eagles and Explorers to play again, it would have to be in the sectional championship, but neither team was worried about that.

“We take the playoffs one game at a time,” Marquette head coach Brian Hoener said after a 4-0 loss to the Eagles Monday night. “Before we start looking to where we’ll see them, there’s too many other good teams that we have to focus on.”

The Explorers earned themselves a bye straight into the regional semifinals, which they will host on Friday, Oct. 13 at 4:30 p.m. They’ll take on the winner between No. 8 East Alton-Wood River and No. 9 Piasa Southwestern.

But still, Hoener’s not really worried about that either.

“As the opponents get more difficult, the margin for error minimizes, and we have to learn that lesson because when we’ve played these good teams - Althoff, Columbia, Father McGivney – we haven’t learned that we have to minimize errors,” Hoener said.

It’s a tough ask, but he wants his team to play error-free soccer.

In the postseason, errors send teams home,” he said.

Monday against the Eagles, in what was Marquette’s Senior Night, the Explorers made their fair share of errors.

One such error from goalkeeper Will Fahnestock and his backline led to a dangerous free-kick opportunity for Columbia in just the second minute of the game.

Fahnestock tried to pass the ball to a teammate on a goal kick, but some miscommunications saw him touch the ball twice in a row, costing his team the infringement.

Luckily for the Explorers, Columbia misplayed the indirect free-kick from about eight yards out to keep the game scoreless.



The game wouldn't stay that way for long though.

Five minutes later Hayes Van Breusegen headed one home from right outside the six-yard box to grab his team the 1-0 lead.

In the 47th minute, the Eagles doubled that lead.

Marquette's best chance of the game came shortly after the goal when Jude Keller went on a nice run on the counterattack but put the chance just wide.

"Some of our problems reoccurred tonight," Hoener said. "Some of the things we've struggled with in big games before, we struggled with again tonight."

One of those reoccurring problems was finding the back of the net. Many times throughout the game, the Explorers were on the doorstep, but couldn't put anything venomous together in the offensive third.

“Even at a 2-0 game, we get a golden chance to make it 2-1, and maybe that changes the game, maybe the momentum changes. We don't make the play, and not even two minutes later they make a play, make it 3-0 and the game's over,” Hoener added.

That third goal for Columbia came in the 49th minute. Their fourth came in the 62nd.

The 4-0 loss sets back Marquette to 11-4-1 on the season while the Eagles improve to 10-3-4.

The win over Marquette came off the back of a 0-0 tie with the No. 1 ranked team in Illinois, the Triad Knight back on Thursday.

Columbia will play the No. 7 seeded Metro-East Lutheran Knights in the regional semifinals, also on Friday the 13th at 4:30 p.m., but at Father McGivney.

“Tonight they were better than us,” Hoener said. “They're a very good team, they don't beat themselves, they put a lot of pressure on you, they take advantage of any mistake that you make, and that's what a good team does.”

“We learned that we'll have to be better than we were tonight in the postseason if we want to get farther down the road.”