

Explorers Rain Down Threes In Win Over Hillsboro

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – The Marquette Explorers picked up a bounce-back win Tuesday night at home against Hillsboro. After a quick start from the Hilltoppers, Marquette began knocking down shots like there was no tomorrow en route to a 76-48 scoreline.

The Explorers improve to 14-3 while Hillsboro drops to 6-11.

Hillsboro's leading scorer Nathan Matoush got things going with a three-pointer followed by Mitchell Lowe's basket to go up 5-0 a minute and a half into the contest.

It didn't phase the Explorers who bounced right back with Braden Kline's three and basket to make it 7-5 Hilltoppers. Sean Williams struck from deep twice in a row to take the lead and then extend it to 11-7.

Marquette never lost hold of that lead, going up 24-14 after the first quarter.

The Explorers sank six threes in the opening frame and finished with 12 on the night.

They kept going with a 26-point second quarter thanks to a perfect 7-of-7 from the foul line and three more triples. Marquette led 50-32 at halftime.

"We definitely lived by the three tonight," Marquette head coach Cody Best said. "Defense, we had some moments where we let down, but man our offense was clicking. Overall, I thought they shared the ball well and we just knocked down open shots."

The Explorers finished with four of their starters in double digits. Leading the way was Kline who dropped another 30-bomb. It was the fourth time this season he's scored 30 or more points.

With him was Brody Bechtold with 18, Williams with 14, and Rochester with 11.

Marquette can sometimes be a one-trick pony with Kline, but coach Best was happy to see his other seniors stepping up and scoring big.

"Sean Williams doesn't get his name in the paper that often because he's usually our tough guy on defense, but he was feeling it. He was clicking," Best said.

"And Brody, he's known for that. It just comes in spurts. He had a good game. This group of seniors, they don't care who they play, they just want to win."

This win comes off the back of a 46-35 loss to Columbia in the final of the Eagles' Holiday Tournament last Saturday. It halted a seven-game winning streak for Marquette.

Columbia came out of the gates hot, draining six threes in the opening quarter to get out to a 17-11 lead. Marquette, chasing the whole game, picked up just its third loss of the season.

“Yeah. It’s going to make us better,” Best said about the championship loss. “We learned from that tournament what was going to work, and what wasn’t. It was good to go up against a team like that. It kind of gave us a bit of a reality check I guess, but we’ve got some battles coming up, so we’ll find out where we really are.”

The Explorers will play three straight road games against Granite City (7-8), Althoff (10-5), and Breese Central (14-2) before returning home to host Father McGivney (5-9) on Friday, Jan. 12.

Tuesday night the Hilltoppers were led by Matoush, the team’s only double-digit scorer. He finished with 25 points. Lowe and Elliot Lentz each scored six, Jace Stewart scored five, and Jackson Tuetken scored four.

Hillsboro will be back in action at home against Carlinville (7-7) on Friday, Jan. 5.

