

Explorers Score Three Unanswered OT Goals To Snap Seven-Game Losing Streak To Althoff

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – The Althoff Crusaders have kind of been the Achilles heel for the Marquette girls soccer team.

The Explorers had suffered seven straight defeats dating back to 2018.

It was March 21, 2014, the last time Marquette beat Althoff, a 2-0 win played at McKendree University.

The streak was snapped Thursday night at Gordon Moore Park after the Explorers came back from two goals down in overtime to win 3-2 in the final seconds.

It was the first time Marquette head coach Brian Hoener had beaten the Crusaders, and he was sure to soak it all in.

“We’re in a position where we’re playing a very difficult portion of our schedule,” Hoener said.

“We play some very good teams, and getting a win, especially a win against Althoff, it’s really special and something to be proud of. A win over Althoff when you’re down two goals with 16 minutes left means that much more. I’m really happy that these girls got to make that memory tonight.”

It was a rather uneventful opening 80 minutes, but both sides had their chances throughout.

Radley Hoener had a dangerous free kick in the 10th minute. She decided to strike it low, under the wall, but Althoff keeper Zoey Masengale was there to make the save.

A few minutes later Marquette goalie Jessica Eales had to make a couple of clutch saves. After pushing the initial shot off the post, Althoff nearly cashed in on the rebound but Eales made a point-blank save to keep the game level.

Those were the only scoring opportunities of the first half.

Marquette’s golden chance came in the 68th minute when Hoener played a ball behind Althoff’s defense and into the path of Jamie Jarzenbeck.

Jarzenbeck had just the keeper to beat after a short breakaway, but somehow Masengale came up with a kick save to keep the score level again.

Being a conference game, it went into overtime which was played in two 10-minute halves, no golden-goal.

That’s when the real fun began.

The Crusaders struck first after an untimely error from Eales. She had just barely picked the ball up outside of the 18-yard box, giving Althoff a freekick in a perfect spot.

Brianna Birdsong stepped up to take and she sent a shot flying over Eales' head and into the back of the net for a 1-0 lead.

It shocked the Explorers and just like that, Althoff smelled blood in the water and quickly doubled its lead after poking one home after a corner kick in the 84th minute.

Staring into a 2-0 deficit with 16 minutes remaining in overtime, the Explorers went to work.

With 26 seconds left in the first half of OT, Izzi Hough put one in the net to cut the lead in half and breathe life into her team.

Jarzenbeck would find the scoresheet after all when she scored thanks to a nifty through ball from the midfield. She was virtually one-on-one with the keeper again and this time made no mistake, taking a touch around the onrushing Masengale and rolling one across the goal line.

That goal came in the 93rd minute, which meant there was still plenty of time for either side to win it and avoid a penalty kick shootout.

And that's exactly what happened.

After nailing the crossbar in the final minute, the ball eventually went out of play, giving Marquette a corner kick. An in-swinging ball was whipped in and bounced around for a bit.

Radley Hoener was the last Marquette player to touch the ball, but it looked like it bounced off an Althoff defender and in with 12.9 seconds remaining on the clock.

It didn't matter how it went in, it just mattered that it did go in.

"Once we got the first one you could see the spark," coach Hoener said. "You could see a little bit of energy and then we just found a way to gut out two more and get the result."

The result was a much-needed one during the first of three tough stretches of games for the Explorers.

After splitting games in the Metro Cup against Springfield (3-0 loss) and Mater Dei (4-1 win), Marquette lost three straight to three quality teams in Columbia, Father McGivney, and Duchesne.

The Explorers beat Mater Dei again on Tuesday before beating Althoff to improve to 3-4 on the year and 1-1 in the Gateway Metro Conference. Back-to-back results that couldn't have come at a better time.

"I thought we played really hard throughout the first 80 minutes," coach Hoener said.

"We had a breakaway chance to maybe get the result in regulation, but we didn't make the play. And then came out and made a couple of plays, we made some mistakes and we found ourselves behind by two with 16 minutes left in the game."

"So, to find three goals in that period of time shows a lot of character," Hoener continued. "We played extremely hard, not pretty at times, but hard, and I'll take playing really hard any day of the week."