

Spartans Heading Into Toughest Part of Year

By BILL O'CONNELL

Marian Catholic's football schedule has a lot in common with the Spartans' team. As the schedule gets tougher, so do the Spartans.

Marian opened the season with an easy 20-0 victory over Bolingbrook, followed by a 28-6 triumph over Joliet East in a slightly tougher contest.

Last Friday, first-year coach Dave Mattio's squad responded to its toughest challenge to date by securing a 23-0 Illini-8 conference victory over Joliet West.

MARIAN'S schedule continues to improve as the Spartans seek their fourth straight I-8 victory of the season Saturday at 2 p.m. against Romeoville at Sarff Field.

Marian's Homecoming opponent has compiled a 2-0, I-8 record and an overall mark of 2-1. Romeoville, also nicknamed the Spartans, defeated Joliet West (12-8) and Argo (24-8).

"Each game is a little more formidable," said Marian's Mattio. "We're getting stronger and our opponents are improving. It's getting more difficult as we go along."

"We've had this same schedule for two years and we're fortunate to be able to build up to the tougher games."

ALTHOUGH Mattio is pleased with Marian's steady rise and its 3-0 record, he is slightly concerned about the versatility of the Spartans' offensive attack.

"We have to open up a little more," said Mattio, who has called for very little passing in his offensive repertoire thus far. "Our goal at the start of the season was to play power ball and control the line of scrimmage. We've done that. A lot of people sit in the stands and say that's not exciting. It may not be exciting, but it produced three wins.

"But as we reach the more difficult part of our schedule, we have to find out if we're capable of opening up. We're not doing it for the fans, but for our own good."

One reason why Mattio has stuck with the power attack is Marian's healthy rushing statistics. The Spartans have rushed for 827 yards compared to just 185 for its opponents. But the Spartans have passed for only 60 yards, as opposed to 228. Marian is averaging 295.6 yards total offense per game, while its opponents are struggling at a 137.6 pace.

SPARTAN fullback Joe Zarlengo scored on

touchdown against West and gained 100 yards (or more) for the third consecutive week. The 5-8, 210-pounder rushed for exactly 100 yards on 15 carries against the Tigers to boost his season total to 342 yards on 51 carries, a 6.7 average.

Halfback Tom Chisholm, who rushed for 64 yards on just seven carries against West, is leading Marian in scoring with 20 points on three touchdowns and one two-point conversion run. Zarlengo has scored 18 points, while quarterback Nick Calvi has added 16.

"We're happy to have established our running game," said Mattio, who installed the new offense after succeeding Bob Voss. "We're looking for a little variety now. When you play the more difficult teams you have to show a little more balance."

"When you play against the defending champions (Catholic High, 4-A) you're not going to beat their brains out at the line of scrimmage. For our own sake, we have to find out what we can do. I'm not saying we're going to go out and throw 40 times against Romeoville, but we should have a more exciting approach. It's not really for the fan's benefit. We have to broaden our attack."

MARIAN has only thrown 12 times. Three of those passes were intercepted and five were caught by end Shawn Janus. Calvi has completed four out of nine attempts for 37 yards, while backup Karl Volkman has hit on two of two attempts for 23 yards.

"If we are put in the situation where we have to throw, we want to know what to expect," said Mattio. "But that is dictated by the particular game. Against Bolingbrook we locked it up early and didn't need to pass.

"Against East we controlled the line of scrimmage and against West we never had the field position to throw. But I feel we're capable of passing."

"I'm pleased with three victories. But I like to think of myself as an internal perfectionist. We have room for improvement."

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