

Marian Proud of Defense

By BILL O'CONNELL

It is obvious Marian Catholic possesses one of the finest offenses in Illini-8 Conference.

After all, a few high school football teams in a conference as competitive as the I-8, average 262 yards total offense per game in racking up four straight victories.

But it's the Spartans' defense which has been the most consistent and most impressive thus far. Marian has given up just 489 yards - 295 on the ground - an average of just 122 yards per game.

LAST Saturday at Sarff Field, the Spartans' stingy defense turned in its finest performance of the year to preserve a 14-6 Homecoming victory over stubborn Romeoville.

After giving up a first-quarter touchdown - the result of a fumble at the Spartan 33 - Marian's defense dug in and stalled Romeoville's offensive efforts the remainder of the afternoon.

Another Marian fumble in the first quarter saved Romeoville possession at the Spartan 17, but Shawn Janus' interception in the end zone stifled the drive.

Marina, in giving up only its second touchdown this year against Romeoville (the first came on a fluke 84-yard halfback pass against Joliet East), held Romeoville to 104 yards total offense.

"OUR DEFENSE played one whale of a football game," said first-year Marian Head Coach Dave Mattio, whose team seeks victory No. 5 Saturday against I-8 for Argo at Summit.

"I'd go as far as to say the defense saved our necks. Considering we turned the ball over a couple of times deep into our own territory, we could have been behind 16-0. But our defense got stronger as the game progressed."

Mattio was especially pleased with the play of linebackers Janus, Jim Greer and Andy DeRosa.

"Our linebackers did an excellent job and the secondary played another fine game," said Mattio. "Mark Fagan, Matt Scott, Don West, John Billerbeck and Karl Volkman did excellent jobs in the secondary."

MATTIO admits even he has taken the Spartans' defense for granted.

"All along our defense has kind of been the unsung heroes of this team," he said. "I expected them to excel so I'm not surprised. They are an excellent group and they've worked hard for the successes they've had in the first four games."

"A lot of people take them for granted. They expect an excellent job week in and week out. This unit helps one another. They are very much concerned with being successful. Shutouts are in our game plan. This is a seasonal defensive group and they go about their business in a professional manner."

Although Marian's defense was superb against Romeoville, the Spartans' offense had its lowest output of the year - 162 yards.

THE SPARTANS gained 316 yards in a 20-0 win over Bolingbrook; 346 in a 28-6 win over Joliet East, and 225 in a 12-0 victory over Joliet West.

"Romeoville did an excellent job of stacking up the middle and forcing us to go outside," said Mattio. "We went outside with some success and had some nice sweeps. But we broke down on second down situations giving us third-and-long yardage. We never had good field position all day."

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