

The Hot Corner: I-8 Shuns Retribution

By JOHN E. MEYERS

Those Illini-8 coaches are seared of Gordon Gillespie. How else can you explain the way they did his bidding when it came to picking a conference champion?

Joliet Central, assured of a spot in the state football playoffs, had stepped aside and no longer a three-way tie for first, it was between Marian and Joliet Catholic.

Marian beat the Hilltoppers 16-6 two weeks earlier. Should be automatic, right?

Wrong.

IT'S GOT TO BE voted on, says Gillespie and his peers nodded their heads and voted him the title and handed him a pass to the playoffs.

"I guess they were afraid he might stick it to them next season," said Marian Coach Dave Mattio.

Stick it to 'em is what Gillespie has been doing every chance he got. He humiliated Bolingbrook 64-0, routed Joliet East 46-0, and embarrassed Argo 59-6.

This was a chance to get back the guy. Why didn't they stick it to Gillespie when the chance came their way?

THIS IDEA OF holding an end-of-the-season poll to name a champion and a playoff representative is one whose time has passed.

Under the South Inter-Conference Association Point Award System (details of which will be avoided just now) the winner in a tight race is known as soon as the last day's results are in.

And under the SICA system, Marian would be the 1976 Illini-8 football champion.

Which can only make Mattio feel worse.

IN HIS FIRST YEAR as head coach, Mattio directed the Spartans to their first football victory ever over Joliet Catholic, only to lose out last Friday to Joliet Central, 16-14 in overtime, a result which fashioned a three-way tie for first.

Both teams tallied on their first possessions in the overtime, but the Steelmen, who had first shot, added a two-point conversion.

"Our kids in the line say they had Tomala (Andy) stopped on that run for the two-pointer," Mattio recalled. "They thought they heard a whistle and then Tomala crawled into the end zone.

"I understand the official working behind the offense called the try good."

AFTER MARIAN'S OVERTIME TD, Nick Calvi tried to find Shawn Janus on a pass over the middle, but a defender tipped the ball before it reached its target.

But Mattio doesn't favor overtime football, at

least not the way it's administered in Illinois.

Conceding the 16-14 encounter was a "well-played game," Mattio said. "I have a disappointed feeling for our players. They have more class than you can imagine. All the work they put in, the hell they went through in practice."

MARIAN'S "WON" THE game on Tom Foote's field goal in the fourth quarter... only it was kicked a few seconds after the fourth quarter ended.

The Spartans stopped the Steelmen on fourth and one at the Marian 22 late in the game.

Five plays later it was third and 10 at Marian's 33. Two Calvi passes failed but now the quarterback pitched back to Matt Scott and then drifted toward the sideline to grab a pass from Scott.

The old flea-flicker.

CALVI GOT ALL the way down to the Joliet 26 before he was stopped. "He wanted to cut back toward the center of the field or to get out of bounds and stop the clock but his ankle gave out on him," the coach revealed.

With 20 seconds to go, Foote was to try a field goal but the center snap was bad.

Dave Klupchak, the holder, recovered.

"They didn't realize they still had the ball and had another down coming," said Mattio. "They treated it like an unsuccessful try for point after."

AFTER SOME SCRAMBLING, Marian did line up and Foote kicked the ball a mile... about two seconds after time ran out.

"We might have got the play off sooner," said Mattio. "Maybe there would have been an illegal procedure call, but a game can't end on a penalty. We'd still have another try."

A bad snap cost Marian, just like it cost the Bears Sunday afternoon. The important difference is the Bears' center has played college and pro ball maybe eight or 10 years and has a payday around 50 grand. Which proves anybody can make a mistake or a bad snap.

Two teams from this vicinity were in the playoffs yesterday. There should have been three. Marian is one touchdown, at least, better than Rich South or Hillcrest.

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