

# *Marian Catholic King of Hill in I-8*

By BILL O'CONNELL

Marian Catholic is King of the Hill for the first time in the history of the Illini-8 conference.

The Spartans, playing the "greatest game in Marian history," according to Coach Dave Mattio, upset defending Class 4A state champion Joliet Catholic 16-6 yesterday afternoon at Sarff Field.

In defeating the Hillmen for the first time in seven meetings, Marian also moved a step closer to its first I-8 football title with a 6-0 record. The Spartans, bouncing back from last Friday's 34-14 loss to Elgin, stand 6-1 overall.

FIVE-TIME I-8 champion Joliet suffered its first loss of the season and its first regular season setback in 21 games.

"We'd been chasing Joliet for six years and we finally caught them," said an elated Mattio, who has still not suffered a conference loss as head coach.

"This has to be the greatest day of my life. It's difficult to explain how happy I am at this moment."

Mattio had reason to be excited. Joliet, the state's No. 2 ranked 4A team, came into yesterday's game boasting excellent statistics.

THE HILLMEN had averaged 435 yards total offense in their first six games and had scored 40 points per game, while giving up just three points.

But the Spartans, led by Tom Chisholm's 96 yards rushing and two touchdowns, ignored those figures and turned in some impressive statistics of their own.

Marian gained 191 yards rushing compared to 174 for the Hillmen, by far their lowest output of the season. Rich Thayer, the bulldozing 6-1, 215-pound back for Joliet, gained 111 yards on 16 carries, but Eric Beltzhoover, the team's leading rusher, gained just 63 yards on 12 carries.

After Thayer scored on a five-yard run to climax a 38-yard, six-play drive on Joliet's first possession, it appeared the Hillmen domination would continue.

NOT SO, Beltzhoover was stopped on the two-point conversion, which turned out to be a crucial play.

It paid off late in the first period when Marian took over on the Joliet 42 after a 20-yard punt by the Hillmen.

Twelve plays later, Chisholm plunged over from the 1 and quarterback Nick Calvi swept the right side for the conversion and an 8-6 lead, which the Spartans never relinquished.

The key play on the drive came on a fourth-and-six at the Joliet 21. Marian's Tom Foote was set to attempt a 36-yard field goal. Joliet jumped off sides, giving the Spartans a fourth-and-nine at the 16.

MATTIO then elected to go for the first down and halfback Jeff Martin, who picked up 43 yards on six carries, picked up the most important yard of the afternoon for Marian.

Two plays later, Calvi chopped back to pass, could not find a receiver and raced 12 yards down the right sideline to the one to set the stage for Chisholm's blast off tackle.

In the third quarter, Marian added to Joliet's infrequent taste of frustration. Defensive end Pat O'Meara blocked a Joliet punt and teammate Shawn Janus caught the ball in midair and returned it to the Hillmen 24. Eight plays later, Chisholm scored from seven yards away and Calvi swept the left side this time to give Marian a 16-6 lead.

Key plays in the drive were Chisholm's 11-yard run. Calvi's eight-yard run, a seven-yard pass from Calvi to Kevin Daney, and a 15-yard pass interference infraction.

"I TOLD the kids before the game, this would be the greatest game they've ever played in," said Mattio. "And it came down to the greatest game they've ever played. The best game in Marian history."

Although the game was played in sloppy conditions (11 fumbles), Mattio didn't feel the weather was a big factor to the outcome.

"We really didn't know what to expect," he said. "There are a lot of ifs... if the weather had been like this, if the weather had been like that... but the way we played I think we'd have been successful under any condition."

Marian will seek to take another step closer to its first I-8 title Friday at Lockport, where Bob Voss, the former Spartan Head Coach, is an assistant.

The Spartans meet Joliet Central in their final I-8 test. Joliet Catholic has one conference opponent remaining - Lockport.

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