

# *Marian's Finest Season*

By BILL O'CONNELL

It will go down as the greatest season in the history of Marian Catholic football.

But it will probably be most remembered for its tragic ending.

The Spartans, under first-year Head Coach Dave Mattio, claimed a share of the Illini-8 conference crown with Joliet Central and Joliet Catholic - marking the first conference title of any kind by any Marian team.

ON THE field, Marian was beaten just once in conference play, a season ending 16-14 in overtime loss to Joliet Central. The Spartans also suffered a 34-14 non-conference loss to Elgin for a 7-2 overall record.

Marian suffered its biggest loss of the field. The setback to Central forced the three-way tie for the I-8 title and prevented the Spartans from winning the outright title in the process.

At that point, it was left up to the coaches to select the team most worthy of representing the I-8 in the state 4A playoffs. And when it was announced Joliet Central was guaranteed an at-large berth prior to the final voting, that, in essence, set up a voting duel between the Spartans and Joliet Catholic.

Marian beat Catholic high 16-6 during the season; Joliet Catholic won the election by a six-vote margin.

THAT vote slammed the door on Marian's finest season and forced Mattio into the most difficult moment of the year. "There's no way I can justify what happened personally," said Mattio. "So compound that 50 times when you try to explain to 50 kids that our season was over. It was difficult trying to tell them we were not selected, and that Catholic High was going in our place."

What concerns Mattio most about the vote is that: in I-8 constitution it states that in the event of a tie, head-to-head competition will be the determining factor.

"After Central was eliminated by the at-large berth it came down to us and Catholic High," he explained. "And at that point the coaches went against what they had set down in the constitution several years ago."

The only loophole in Mattio's argument is the fact that Central, theoretically, was still in the voting despite the at-large selection. The Steelmen did receive one vote, from their coach, George Legan. And if you go to a head-to-head competition, Central had beaten Marian, but Catholic High had beaten Central (22-8).

"IN THEIR (other coaches) minds, they can justify their pick," said Mattio. "But what they are telling me is that our victory over Catholic High and our whole season, for that matter, was a fluke which I have to disagree with."

"The coaches chalked up our wins as 'lucky' and

gave it to Catholic High because of the amount of points they score; because they're the defending state champs; because they are perennially strong, and because the muddy weather made our victory over them a fluke."

If Mattio seems a bit disillusioned, he has a right to be. The Spartans came one overtime period away from a perfect conference record; they beat Catholic High for the first time in the school's history and outscored their opponents 152-82. But in the end, only one coach voted for Marian - Mattio himself.

"Mostly, I feel sorry for the kids," said the coach who spent five years as an assistant under Bob Voss before gaining the head job. "The goals the kids set out to achieve were unrealistically taken away by a vote."

PART OF Marian's inability to receive votes may stem from the "outsider" image given to the Spartans and Argo of Summit. Eighty percent of the I-8 schools are in the Joliet area. Chicago Heights is a 35-mile drive from Joliet. Argo is dropping from the I-8 next year.

"Here was an opportunity for an outsider to represent the conference, a chance for somebody else to get a piece of the action," said Mattio. "I'm not taking anything away from Catholic High. They have a fine football team. But we beat them physically and on the scoreboard."

Although Mattio questions the conference voting, he has no regrets regarding the way his team performed this season. After all, the Spartans won their first five games in a row; 'upset' Catholic High, and used a dramatic fourth quarter drive to stop Lockport 17-14.

"Whatever success we had can be attributed to these kids," said the Coach. "They are the ones who worked their butts off. They are the ones responsible for working hard enough each week to be successful."

"THEY ARE a highly, self-motivated group. There's almost no individualism. This is the first real strong group I've been associated with in my six years at the school. It's the first group that made the most of the concept of a team. They're a close-knit group and that went a long way in determining how successful we were."

Although individualism was not an obvious feature on Marian's roster, the Spartans did possess some excellent individual performers.

*THE STAR*  
*Sunday, November 14, 1976*

# *Marian's Finest Season (Contd.)*

By BILL O'CONNELL

The list is headed by Shawn Janus, the only Spartan to play both ways the entire season. Janus quarterbacked Marina's stingy defense from his middle linebacker position and also led the team in receptions as split end. He caught 20 passes for 283 yards and two touchdowns. His biggest grab came against Lockport when he took a 17-yard pass from quarterback Nick Calvi and gave Marian a 17-14 win over Lockport with 1:06 left to play in the game.

"Shawn's the most talented athlete on the team," says Mattio. "I can't say enough good things about him. He did everything I could ever imagine a high school student doing and more."

SENIOR fullback Joe Zarlengo led the Spartans in rushing with 603 yards, but it was his unselfish attitude that impressed Mattio most.

"First of all, he made the switch from linebacker to fullback for the good of the team. The first five games of the season, Joe Zarlengo was our offense."

After that, his stats fell because we opened up our offense more. He was used as a decoy in several situations. He realized people were keying on him and accepted his role. He was also an inspirational leader from the standpoint of the fine example he set."

The variety present in Marian's attack after the fifth game of the season brought out the best in Calvi, who completed 27 of 62 passes for 267 yards.

"WITH NCİK, it was just a matter of untracking our offense," said Mattio. "When we started opening up and going away from Joe, that's when he displayed the talent we knew he possessed."

Senior halfback Tom Chisholm led the team in scoring with 48 points and also rushed for 426 yards, while junior Jeff Martin chipped in 211 yards on 37 carries. Mike Ciarlo gained 129 yards on 32 carries.

Despite Marian's backfield talent, it was the line of scrimmage where the Spartans excelled.

The offense was headed by tackle Tony Mitchell who "is a super football player" in the world of Mattio.

MITCHELL was joined at tackle by Todd Bruni, guards Jack Weishaar and Mike Wilczynski, center Dave Goss and tight end Kevin Daney.

Defensively, tackle Leo Lindbloom led the charge. He was supported on the line by tackle Mike Seibt, and ends Mike Schelf, Tom Shane and Bob O'Meara.

Joining Janus as linebacker were Jim Greer and Andy DeRosa, who combined to make an excellent linebacking trio, according to Mattio. The secondary was filled by Don West, Matt Scott, Mark Fagan, John Billerbeck and Karl Volkman.

"This was the finest football season I've been associated with in regards to what they accomplished," said Mattio. Few people can argue that point.

*THE STAR*  
*Sunday, November 14, 1976*