

Janus Theft Saves Marian

By BILL O'CONNELL

Marian Catholic's Shawn Janus pulled off a robbery before hundreds of witnesses Friday night and got away scot-free.

Marian and Lockport fans alike would testify Janus' fourth quarter touchdown reception was an act of thievery, but when the final verdict was delivered, Marian escaped with a dramatic 17-14 victory.

With 1:06 left to play Friday, the 6-3, 200-pound Janus reached up and stripped a victory and the ball out of the hands of 5-9 Lockport cornerback Daren McCarthy for a 17-yard touchdown reception from Nick Calvi, a play which erased a 14-9 Porter lead and preserved Marian's unbeaten Illini-8 conference record.

THE VICTORY stretches Marian's I-8 record to 7-0 and assures it of at least a share of the conference crown, while Lockport falls to 5-2 in the conference and 5-3 overall. Marian is 7-1 overall.

Janus, who also recovered a fumble at the Lockport 25 and returned it 10 yards to set up Tom Foote's 32-yard field goal in the second quarter, didn't rest in the final minutes.

This thief gave the witnesses an encore.

After Calvi swept the left side for the two-point conversion and the three-point lead, Lockport's Dan Burris came one Spartan away from breaking the ensuing kickoff and advanced the ball to the Porter 42.

LOCKPORT quarterback Mike Carlson then drilled a 12-yard pass to Dave McGownd, but on the very next play Janus, who moonlights as the Spartans' middle linebacker, picked off a Carlson pass and returned it 30 yards with seven seconds to play. Marian let time run out on Lockport's I-8 title hopes at the 24.

Janus, whose defensive play keyed Marian's 16-6 victory over Joliet Catholic the previous week, caught four passes for 60 yards to complement his interception and fumble recovery - not to mention at least eight solo tackles.

"For a second it didn't look like I'd be able to get to the ball," said Janus, the only Spartan who plays both ways. "We both had our hands on it, but as we were falling, I pulled it out and the ref was right there to see it. When I saw the ball coming, I didn't know what was going to happen... Oh man, it feels good."

Lockport had grabbed the 14-9 lead with 6:14 left to play when Kip Carmen scored his second touchdown, a one-yard plunge followed by Carlson's conversion pass to Dave McGownd. But after Jeff Martin returned the Porter kickoff 11 yards, Marian's magic was unfolded.

THE KEY plays on Marian's final drive which began at the 6:10 mark were: 1) a Lockport offsides penalty which gave Marian a first down at its own 47, 2) Calvi's eight-yard pass to Matt Scott on a fourth-and-six which gave the Spartans new life at the Porter 41, 3) a 15-yard personal foul for piling on after Calvi picked up just two yards on a third-and-18 situation at the 49, and; 4) Calvi's 10-yard pass to Janus to set

the stage for the final strike.

For approximately 40 minutes, Marian played as if the I-8 championship had already been decided. But in the final six minutes the Spartans performed like a team worthy of wearing that crown.

"I'm just thankful to get out of here with a victory," said Marian Coach Dave Mattio, displeased with his Spartans' spotty play leading up to the final drive.

"We've put a lot of time and energy into execution, but it didn't show for awhile tonight," said Mattio. "We couldn't capitalize on their mistakes and we lost our poise for awhile. But I don't want to take anything away from Lockport. They played a hell of a game. They gave us all we could handle."

MATTIO has reason to be disturbed. Marian had possession inside the Porter 20-yard line on four occasions and came away with a mere three points.

The busted drives prevented Marian from turning the contest into a rout and nearly handed Lockport a victory.

The first missed opportunity came late in the first quarter when Foote's punt was mishandled by Lockport's Steve Jenkins and Matt Griffiths recovered at the 17. The Spartans could move only one yard before Foote's 33-yard field goal attempt fell short.

On Lockport's second play after the kickoff, Carlson fumbled the snap from center and Janus scooped it up at the 25 to carry it to the Porter 15. After losses brought the ball back to the 17, Foote found the range on a 32-yard field goal to give the Spartans a 3-0 at 11:50 of the second quarter.

BOTH TEAMS exchanged touchdowns in the second quarter. Marian struck first when Calvi followed a perfect block by fullback Joe Zarlengo into the end zone from 21 yards out with 4:27 to play.

Halfback Tom Chisholm was stopped on the conversion attempt, making it 9-0 Marian. Lockport's Kip Carmen put his team on the board with a two-yard run at the 2:50 mark, but don Daniels conversion failed.

With time running out in the first half, Marian moved to the Porter 5 yard line with the help of a 16-yard halfback pass from Scott to Kevin Daney and a 15-yard run by Scott, keyed by a beautiful block by Chisholm. But after losses totaling five yards, Foote's 26-yard field goal attempt sailed off to the right at the buzzer.

In the third quarter, Lockport was forced to punt from its own 23. A bad snap from center gave Marian a first down at the Porter 14. But on the first play Calvi fumbled and Lockport's Kaj Hermensen recovered.