

# *The Hot Corner: I-8 Shuns Retribution*

By JOHN E. MEYERS

In the first varsity football game played by a Marian team, the Spartans were walloped 47-0 by, would you believe, the Joliet Catholic junior varsity.

Marian was coached by Lee Albrecht, whose luck hasn't changed. The past two years he's coached the Chicago Heights Broncos.

That was the beginning for Marian but let's go back before the beginning, to the outside of an organized league for south suburban high schools.

Let's go back to 1926 and the South Suburban League.

BLOOM, THORNTON, Blue Island, Thornton Fractional at Calumet city, Argo, Lockport and Kankakee were the mainstays of that circuit which was at times to include University High of Chicago and Leyden, way out west in Franklin Park.

It came to pass that Joliet left the Big Eight to join the SSL, thus avoiding overnight trips to Freeport and LaSalle-Peru and Thornridge, a spin-off of Thornton, also joined.

It was all orderly, since Thornton Fractional split into North and South and entered the Southeast Suburban, third conference in the area after the Southwest Suburban.

Then in the 1960s, Joliet split into three campuses, Kankakee into two and Blue Island became Eisenhower and Richards. The South Suburban was on the verge of becoming an 11-school league.

AN 11-SCHOOL league wouldn't work, but athletic directors and administrators pondered long over the problem and did nothing. A suggestion which cropped up frequently in this column that the league adopts a two division system was ignored.

"We didn't even discuss divisions," one A.D. told me, somewhat triumphantly, after another of their futile meetings.

Something happened anyway, a surprise. The three Joliet, the two Kankakees, Lockport and Argo exited the South Suburban, picked up Lockport West (now Romeoville) and formed the Illini-8.

This left the SSL with five members and wondering

what hit them. The league remained in trouble until realignment - formation of the South Interconference Association.

THE ILLINI-8 sailed along smoothly for only a few years. In 1970, the Kankakees withdrew a combination of financial difficulties and an inability to compete against larger schools.

Now about Marian.

The school joined the Chicago Metropolitan Conference in 1960 and in 1966 linked up with the Chicagoland Prep. The former Andean of Gary and St. Francis of Wheaton, while the latter wandered from Chicago schools to St. Joseph of Westchester.

Since neither arrangement was satisfactory, Marian leaped at a chance to join the I-8, which also induced Joliet Catholic to leave the Suburban Catholic. And while this denies prejudice, public school people at the top level are probably more comfortable dealing with their own.

In fact, this objection, if it really is one, might be overcome if Marian did not lack for facilities and program.

Marian does not have its own athletic field, therefore no track. The school has a track team, all meets away from home, but without practice essentials it is not competitive.

MARIAN'S GYMNASIUM is small. Some SICA schools have small gyms, but they are already in the fold. Marian does not have teams in cross country, tennis or gymnastics and it has no girls program to speak of.

There is room on the Marian campus for a football stadium complete with running track.

There is room for additional gymnasiums, for tennis courts. There are qualified to coach gymnastics, tennis and cross country and who are looking to work. The same goes for coaches of women's sports.

All it takes is money.

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