

# *Mattio Pilots Marian*

By FRED MITCHELL

When Marian Catholic's football team takes the field this fall, two former leaders will be conspicuous by their absence.

Coach Bob Voss, credited with turning the Marina program into respectability, has moved on to Lockport and Greg Damiani last year's all-everything fullback, has graduated. He is now attending Iowa Central junior college.

Despite their absence, an indelible mark has been left on the Marian program which should sustain them near the top of the Illinois-Nine for years to come.

TAKING over the head coaching reins is Athletic Director Dave Mattio, who served a coaching apprenticeship under Voss. "Coach Voss resurrected this program five years ago and turned things around so that we're at least competitively successful now," Mattio said. "Bob Voss, more than anyone else, has had the most positive effect on my life," he praised.

Mattio inherits a team that was 6-3 last year and returns lettermen in several key positions despite the loss of Damiani. "This particular group of kids has worked especially hard to devote themselves to having a very successful team," Mattio said.

Among the 58 varsity candidates who have been enduring three-a-day practices are 25 seniors, most of whom have been active in some other sport since the final football game last fall.

Mattio plans no drastic change in the Marian attack, although he would like to refine some of the techniques of his players. "We've always been known as a hitting team. I'd like to work more on our specialty teams; spend more time on running our pass routes, phases of the game like that, I'm cautiously optimistic about this season," he said.

MARIAN was undefeated last year before running into perennial power Joliet Catholic. Again, Mattio looks realistically at Marian's schedule which is identical to last year's, only the sites being reversed.

"We're a co-ed school of only 1,400 going against an all-boys school the size of Joliet Catholic and it's awfully rough. We stayed close with them for the first half, 16-0, but then they just wore us down in the second half.

"Our kids remember that and have as one of their goals this year to get revenge against Joliet Catholic. They don't want to be humiliated again.

Mattio's game strategy is basically a ball-control attack. "The best defense is a good offense," he asserts. "The more time you eat up during the offensive drive, the less your defense will have to toll." That makes sense, especially in Marian's smaller-numbers game.

MATTIO retains his position as athletic director in addition to being the head football coach. "I know I'll probably get a lot of criticism from people who think those two jobs are too much to handle. But there are a lot of athletic directors who coach football in the state of Illinois," said the 28-year-old Park Forest South resident.

A 1966 graduate of Marian, Mattio accepted a football scholarship to Northern Illinois University where he played for two years under Howard Fletcher before a knee injury cut short his career.

"I've always wanted to become a coach. I just wasn't sure if I had the right finesse to do it," he said. "When I came here five years ago, along with Voss, I was really impressed with the way he related to the kids. They always respected him and gave 100 percent. I try to pattern myself after him.

Mattio also feels that the presence of Damiani at Marian in years past may be an inspiration to this year's contingent. "Greg has the kind of personality that you couldn't help but wish him the best of luck. He was always telling the other guys that he couldn't have gained all those yards if they hadn't been blocking for him.

Marian also had to bid adieu to two other outstanding football players last year, tackle Gary Blue and defensive end Jeff LaPorte. But Mattio also feels that new standouts will emerge this fall. "We'll find out September 11 when we meet Bolingbrook," Mattio said.

**THE STAR**  
*Thursday, September 2, 1976*