

Hawks vs. Marian; This Is a Natural

By MARK SMITH

When Hillcrest's Hawks host Marian Catholic's Spartans to open the football season Saturday it will see the two natural rivals meeting for the first time. How'd it come about? Marian just called Hillcrest and asked to play 'em.

"We tried to set up a cross town rivalry with Bloom," said Spartan coach Dave Mattio, "but they had prior commitments. So we called up Carl Zambo. It turns out he needed an opening game too.

"Yeah, Dave called me," confirmed Zambo after Thursday's rain-soaked workout in Country Club Hills. "We had three open dates after they realigned SICA (Bremen replaced Stagg in SICA East). Our kids kinda know each other. It'll be great for both programs. I don't think they'll have to worry about attendance at the games."

GAMES plural is correct. "We signed a two-year contract with them and we'll play here next year," smiled Mattio. "After we beat 'em twice, then we'll think about renewing the series."

Seriously, Saturday's visiting coach knows his side will be the underdog on the field where the invaders have not triumphed in six years. "I have a feeling that this will get to be a big motivational thing next week," Mattio continued. "We've got our hands full, but I'm optimistic. It's a super set-up. Super competition."

"We have a lot of respect for Marian," admitted Hawk assistant coach Gene Johnston. "It would be a big thing for us to beat them and get off to a good start in the series."

It would also be a big thing if Hillcrest were to roll up some significant passing yardage in that opener considering the fact it connected on only 19 of 49 aerials last year. Actually, on 20 Hawk passes fell incomplete last season but when told this, Zambo was immediately aware of what happened to the difference.

"YEAH, I know," he grinned. "Ten went to the other team. We're re-evaluating our passing attack."

"We've added some complimentary patterns where receivers do things on the same side of the field to compliment each other. We've also cut down on the number of pass plays to work on, executing them better."

This should be a great help to the number one quarterback. Many passing failures last season were, according to the coaching staff, the fault of receivers running incorrect routes. That QB, whether he be 6-foot-1, 190-pound senior Jack

Phillips, who leads going into the final practice week, or 5-foot-10, 165-pound senior Joel Seiner, will also get extra work reading defenses.

"We're going to put more effort into explaining to the quarterback who to read," tells Zambo "Pre-snap and post-snap reads. Who the QB should watch before and after the snap to tell what defense is being played."

A SLIGHT change will be noticeable in Hillcrest's offensive line the Hawks hope to be able to rotate linemen, if necessary, like tires on a car. Similar to the Russian hockey philosophy of anyone playing anywhere.

"We're going to try to have six offensive linemen who can play anywhere we need them" says Zambo, who hope this idea won't confuse blocking assignments.

"It better not. We use pretty much the same blocking rules for onside and backside blocking," explained Zambo. Onside being the side to which the play is being run and backside the other away side. "They're the same basic blocking rules," he says. "So far, it's worked pretty well."

Although Zambo has expressed his preference for experienced seniors, the big Hillcrest coach has mentioned several juniors prominently in his plans for this year.

TONY Guaccio (601, 165) has shown enough versatility to be considered a possibility at linebacker, defensive end, defensive back and guard. "He's very aggressive," offers Zambo, "and fairly quick. We want to keep moving him around so he can learn a few positions."

Jeff Kudukis, at 6-foot-0, 195 pounds, would be Hillcrest's biggest running back since 1973 when Bill Shupryl carried 200 pounds. With fullback being mainly a receiving and blocking post in Hillcrest's Houston-Veer triple option, the Hawks need a power halfback to replace graduated John Krutzler (676 yards - seven TDs).

Other junior hopes are 5-foot-7, 145-pound Bob Robinson at halfback, fullback and defensive back, Mike Bolling (5-10, 175) at defensive tackle, Ken Durrant and Phil Rekitzke as possible punters and (5-8, 155) Mike Turner at defensive back and halfback.

Turner, Robinson and the team's latest player, track star Lowell Jones, will figure in the two-man kickoff return squadron.

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