

Room for Improvement: Mattio

By PETER TESTA

It wasn't supposed to come together quite as quickly and explosively as it did, but after a slow beginning Saturday it produced the most impressive opening-game win in Marian's football history.

The "it" is the Spartan offensive unit, which was held to only three plays and six yards by Hillcrest's ball-control attack during the first 12 minutes of the Hawks' attempt to extend their 23-game home field winning streak, but recorded a 385-yard outburst over the final three periods that carved up the Hawks by a 30-9 margin, and showed that this year's Marian squad can continue the tradition of outstanding football.

Coach Dave Mattio pointed to the backfield in explaining why Marian rolled up such a decisive triumph. "Karl (Volkman), Jeff (Martin) and mark (Blankenberger) were the story," said Mattio. Volkman hit nine of 13 passes for 179 yards, and rushed for 31 more yards on four carries for 310 yards of total offense.

VOLKMAN'S favorite target was Blankenberger, who at 5-feet-10 and 180 pounds, continually managed to snare throws from the 601 Volkman, grabbing six tosses for 114 yards and tallying the final pair of Spartan six-pointers to ice the verdict.

On one pass over the middle five Hawk defenders were surrounding Blankenberger, but the senior halfback still hauled down Volkman's pinpoint pass.

If any of the trio of Marian standouts could be singled out, it had to be the all-around brilliance of Martin, who contributed to the rout in three separate areas.

Going either around right end or up the middle, Martin rushed for 104 yards in 12 trips, pulled down Volkman's three other completions for 65 additional yards and keyed the crucial turnaround in field position that began midway through the second quarter by punting three times for a 43-yard average.

WITH everything in Marian's favor late in the game, the Spartans were stunned when Martin gamely hobbled to the sidelines after a routine carry by junior Mike Petrarca, as the 5-foot-10 senior halfback failed to make it to the bench, a fractured ankle putting Martin apparently out for the season.

Mattio could hardly be more delighted with the spectacular success that his young team had against Hillcrest, but realizes that the season isn't made with just one game.

"I'm very pleased at the results last week, but the jury is still out as to our week-to-week performance," said Mattio. "There's lots of room for improvement," declared the second-year coach, referring mainly to the defense.

Although the Spartans won by three touchdowns Mattio credited the momentum that Marian accumulated after the first period for the lopsided win. "Our kids came to play ball," said Mattio. "I have a thing about talking to the kids about pride and intensity, and we preached those things during last week's practices."

THE Spartans will face their second straight SICA opponent Saturday when they go against Shepard at Palos Heights. The Astros have their first senior class this year, and are one of the most dangerous foes Marian could possibly have, coming onto the schedule as they do the week after the Spartans were at such an emotional pitch for Hillcrest.

Another factor in Saturday's game could be the fact that the Astros have yet to win a varsity gridiron match, losing 10 consecutive games.

Mattio says of the SICA West representatives, "Shepard has a fine team with an outstanding sophomore class from last year. They're mobile, and big physically with an outstanding back in Steve Boman (who carried for 171 yards in Shepard's opening-day 6-3 setback at the hands of Oak Forest). They were picked to finish second in their division in the pre-season coaches poll."

Defensively, 190-pound nose guard Mike Bartolomei, linebacker Mike Broderick, end Dennis McCarron, and tackle Jeff Schied, all juniors, stood out in holding Hillcrest's potent ground attack to merely 62 yards, and the Hawk passing offense to just a 3-for-8 day, with all of the Hillcrest successes in the air coming after the Spartans were ahead 30-3 Senior end Tom Shander registered a sack of Hillcrest signal-caller Jack Phillips, along with Bartolomei.

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