

# *The Hot Corner: Bum Rap for Marian*

By JOHN E. MEYERS

First time Homewood-Flossmoor met a top-rated Chicago Catholic league football team was in 1974, the quarterfinals of the state playoffs. The Vikings lost 17-16 to Gordon Tech.

Next time was a year ago this month. St. Laurence beat H-F 26-0. The third occasion was eight days ago against the same St. Laurence. This time it was 31-0.

Has the Catholic league grown stronger or has H-F declined? Some of both. A point after touchdown was the difference in '74, but Gordon got trounced a week later, 46-0 by East St. Louis.

St. Laurence won the state 5A championship last year and may repeat. H-F last had a winning season in 1974.

TOM KRYSINSKI, H-F coach, says he won't reschedule St. Laurence and cites advantages enjoyed by Catholic leaguers, advantages like recruiting. Catholic league powers aren't really high school teams, they are all-star squads.

The mystery is why suburban schools scheduled Chicago Catholic league teams in the first place.

It's been going on for years, Catholic league schools recruiting in the suburban grade schools. Suburban coaches were aware some of their prize prospects were being whisked away to Mendel, Mt. Carmel, St. Rita, etc. It bothered them, but the matter didn't become a tempest until they had to play the Catholics.

It was only a few years ago the Catholic league came into the Illinois High School association and into football playoffs and the state basketball series. Before suburban coaches were only annoyed. Now some of them seem to be steaming.

DENNY HARRIS IS not with the steamers. His Bloom team got trounced 34-0 by St. Rita the same afternoon St. Laurence was shredding H-F but Harris felt it was a positive experience and plans to go right on playing St. Rita.

There is a difference in perspective. While the football goal at H-F has been championship, at Bloom it is respectability. Both qualities are elusive, but in the last 10 years H-F has come closer than Bloom.

If the suburbans feel the Catholic league has an advantage that is unfair and without remedy by

the IHSA, not scheduling them is one step, yet there is a step beyond. If there is something that should be done and the IHSA isn't doing it then suburban schools, those in 5A, can give their protests impact by simply refusing to enter the football playoffs.

Overwhelming conquests by Catholic leagues over suburban schools in September 9-10 openers stirred up a hornet's nest and the stinging has been indiscriminate. Marian Catholic of Chicago Heights, for instance, has been lumped with the recruiters, the Spartans calling attention to themselves by their unexpectedly one-sided victory, 30-9, over Hillcrest.

MARIAN IS ONE of two private schools, Joliet Catholic is the other, in the Illini-8. Any hanky panky on the part of parochials could mean expulsion from the conference.

Marian recruit? Two athletes who would be first string now were expelled last spring.

"To my knowledge, Marian has never offered a scholarship," said Dave Mattio, athletic director and football coach. "I talk at grade school banquets and I have persuaded or tried to persuade grade school athletes to take our entrance exams.

"I point out Marian has its good points, but I don't deny others schools have their good points. I have tried to honest, on the up and up."

RECRUIT? "MARIAN doesn't accept non-Catholic students," Mattio said. Add that to the part about entrance exams.

Perhaps Harris isn't bothered by the Chicago Catholic league because Marian is only a few blocks distance from Bloom. Marian is in the place those football players who made Bloom a 1940s-50s, '30s powerhouse have gone.

Marian doesn't need to recruit to get the cream of the football crop in Chicago Heights. Marian, in this sport, is a winner. Bloom is a loser.

A Catholic eighth grader with a yen to play football doesn't spend much time making the decision on which high school he wants to attend.

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