

# *The Hot Corner*

By JOHN E. MEYERS

*We feel the machine slipping from our hands.  
As if someone else were steering.  
If we see a light at the end of the tunnel.  
It's the light of the oncoming train.*

Robert Lowell

By now Marian knows the afternoon of September 10 was just a pleasant dream and like all dreams bears but faint resemblance to reality.

A stunning 30-9 victory at Hillcrest is not so stunning in retrospect, although the feeling certainly was great while it lasted... the week it lasted.

Marian beat a reputation, something evanescent rather than solid. The Hawks, championship stuff several seasons, are having an off year. They ain't what they used to be.

No one is aware (unless it was Carl Zambo and his aides) during the euphoric week following the season opener, the Hawks, being only human after all, were a bit down. The rude awakening came seven days later. Shepard crashed its linebackers and smashed the Marian myth, 20-6.

IF THE MACHINE was slipping from the hands of the Spartans, if they felt someone else was steering, was the 30-6 romp over Joliet East the light at the end of the tunnel?

Or is it the light of an oncoming train? Joliet Catholic will be at Sarff Field on Saturday and that's where it all happens.

This game is the Illini-8 championship, a berth in the state playoffs, the one playoff berth available; the conference isn't strong enough to rate two playoff teams as was the case last fall.

Joliet Catholic, state 4A champs the past two years but a team Marian beat last October, 16-6. A mid-season non-conference loss to fair to middlin' Elgin cost the Spartans a spot in the playoffs.

GORDON GILLESPIE'S Hilltoppers are unbeaten this year. Supposedly their defense is as good as ever, but the offense has yet to jell. A

three-game total of 90 points seem to belie that contention, but then the Hill has met only one (Richards) decent team.

Jeff Martin, who might have turned out to be the best back in the I-8, suffered a broken ankle in the Hillcrest game and it was feared he would be irreplaceable.

Maybe so, maybe not. Mike Petrarca has done well, but at 155 he isn't as rugged as the 180-pound Martin. Coach Dave Mattio was getting other backs ready in the Joliet East game, backs like sophomore Jimmy Dee, Mark Jurczyk, a junior, and Byron Anderson, who had been playing defense.

Faults not easy to spot in the welter of points which buried Hillcrest were more evident in the pedestrian win over Joliet East. Marian may be playing people both ways who don't have the endurance to swing the assignment, people like Jerral Stringer, for instance.

MARIAN BEAT JOLIET Catholic last October by throwing passes against a defense stacked to stop Joe Zarlengo through the middle.

While Mattio chose not to pass much against Joliet East, it is a weapon the Spartans know how to employ. Karl Volkman can throw accurately and several of his mates, Mark Blankenberger chiefly, can catch.

There are no dummies operating the program there so Joliet Catholic is fully aware of Marian's capacity to complete passes. Marian, by the same token, is not apt to be surprised by anything the Hilltoppers do.

Martin will be there Saturday, hobbling on crutches, hoping the doctors were right when they said he might be back for the last games of the season. By that time it may be too late. On the other hand, maybe it won't.

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