

# *I-8's Best Team? No Doubt About It*

By PETER TESTA

It was apparent right from the opening kickoff yesterday that a repeat of last year's surprise Marian victory over Joliet Catholic was not in the offing.

Mark Jurczyk, the Spartan's 155-pound junior halfback, began to travel upfield after the kick, coughed up the ball, and was left helpless in a pileup after the Hilltoppers Mike Purviance made the recovery. Striking quickly, Joliet Catholic was on its way to a 26-0 Sarff Field shutout that left little doubt as to the best team in the Illini-8.

Hillmen quarterback Dave Abena gave his first indication of the impressive passing day that he would go on to enjoy by dropping back immediately after Jurczyk's bobble and firing a perfect strike over the middle to his favorite target, senior end Paul Benigni, for a 19-yard score that enabled Gordie Gillespie's talented squad to get off in the best way any coach would hope.

THE Hilltopper defensive unit made as much of a contribution to the long afternoon suffered by Dave Mattio's now .500 Spartan's as did the crunching Joliet Catholic offense, holding Marian to only three plays on its first possession before forcing the first of five punts.

The Spartans were treated to the anti-thesis of the quick touchdown on the second Hillmen drive as Joliet Catholic went to a ball-control series that lasted 19 p lays, 82 yards, and 7 ½ minutes, before tallback Dave Matichak, went the final four yards to hike the edge to 12-0 after only 8 minutes and 22 seconds had been played.

Unlike the first try for a two-point conversion that Marian stopped short of dirt, Matichak went over on his second attempt to make it a 14-point lead after the first period.

For the second straight game, Marian reached the 100-yard mark in penalty yardage, and after being able to get away with the frequent mistakes against a weak Joliet East team last week, found lost ground due to penalties, combined with turnovers at crucial times, were too much of a deficit to overcome against a Joliet Catholic squad that is on its way to another of its many Illini-8 titles and a possible third straight class 4 A crown.

MIXING a running game that finally amassed 246 yards to dominate play with his 12-of-17 passing statistics for an additional 134 yards, Abens ran for three consecutive plays to commence a march from his own 33 midway through the second period, then passed to Benigni for an 11-yard first down before another Hilltopper junior , Ron Nagel sprinted past the right side of the

Marian line, broke away from the futile pursuit of the outstanding Spartan defensive tackle Todd Bruni, and completed a 45-yard jaunt to paydirt that forced the Spartans into a 20-0 halftime deficit.

The last hope that the Spartans realistically had of getting back into the game was actually throttled by the big but mobile Joliet Catholic offense, as Abens took the second-half Marian kickoff for another time-killing Hillmen drive that was finally halted by a goal-line stand at the Spartan 1.

Marian couldn't get out of the hole and after another unproductive series of three plays, punted to set up the games last scoring action, a 15-yard TD pass from Abens to Benigni that enabled Joliet Catholic to post its final 26-0 margin of triumph.