

New Goals for Spartans

By PETER TESTA

Even though Marian's season is only halfway complete, it's already time for the Spartans to reshape their hopes.

Last week's 26-0 blanking at the hands of another of the many devastating Joliet Catholic squads put to rest, even at this early point in its campaign, a pair of dreams Dave Mattio's youthful aggregation wanted to bring to reality.

The first was to make what would have been the first-ever Spartan appearance in the state football playoffs, but with just a .500 record over the first four games, the criterion required to receive an at-large playoff berth (an 80 percent winning percentage) cannot be met.

ALSO, the Spartans wanted to retain their share of the Illini-8 tri-championship earned in 1976, but the Hilltoppers have been so impressive in early season play that, combined with the weakness of the I-8's second-division, only two conference teams appear to be able to be competitive of what's left of the Hillmen slate, Joliet Central, and the team Marian travels to play tomorrow night, Lockport.

"All I can say is that we were stunned at the way we were dominated," Mattio said of the dismal events of last Saturday's loss. "Of course, the big factor was the opening fumble." Junior halfback Mark Jurczyk was in the process of returning the contest's opening boot when he was hit hard and fumbled.

The Hilltoppers tailed the first of their four touchdowns on the next play, giving credence to the idea that the first of October was not to be the Spartans' day.

Penalties and runovers have been the two areas where Marian has had the most trouble, the Spartans losing 325 yards to yellow flags, and running the ball over to their first four opponents 14 times. "We've made mistakes at inopportune times," said Mattio. With Joliet Catholic exercising its authority over Marian by running off 85 plays to just 41 snaps by the Spartans, Mattio commented, "There wasn't any chance for our offense to get much going."

SINCE Marian has alternated between wins and losses in the first four weeks, the inconsistency of the Spartans has stood out. Mattio stated, "We either gain 15 yards and then lose five, or we'll punt for 50 yards one time and then turn around

the next time and kick for 10. It's not that we're making stupid mistakes, it's just that they come at the wrong time."

The hard-hitting that took place last Saturday completed during the fourth quarter, caused the Spartan injury list to make its most dramatic increase since the Hillcrest game, when senior halfback Jeff Martin was lost for the year.

Senior tackle Jim Denman suffered a slight concussion, offensive guard Mike Sass, a 185-pounder, sprained his ankle and defensive tackle Bill Mullee was also hurt.

"Rich Fordon, a sophomore, will probably start at guard and we'll move Jeff Schied (a tackle) from defense to offense," said Mattio. The area's leading receiver, senior halfback Mark Blankenberger, also was hurt slightly against Joliet Catholic, but the 5-foot-10, 160-pound pass-catching standout is expected to be in tomorrow night's lineup.

WITH the hoped-for team goals apparently out of reach, Mattio is far from viewing this as a lost season. "The kids are looking to set personal goals for themselves first, but we still feel that winning seven games is a fine accomplishment." If Marian can close out its year with five straight victories, the Spartans will match their 7-2 record of last year.

Bill Zimmer's Porters will have a revenge motive prominently on their minds tomorrow night, as Marian won one of its most important triumphs of 1976 on Lockport's turf, 17-14 on the strength of a last-minute touchdown reception by Shawn Janus.

The Forters top offensive threat is senior tailback Don Daniels, who ran for 651 yards and three scores last year. Daniels looks even better for 1977, running for 201 of Lockport's 238 ground yards in a 20-0 shutout of Joliet West that opened the Porters' I-8 campaign.

Once again, Marian will face a quarterback playing his first year as a starter. Senior Jim Fender directs Lockport's option offense. After dropping their two non-conference games a by a total of just 11 points, the Porters have rebounded to even the ledger at 2-2 with the win over tigers and last Saturday's 30-6 rout of Bolingbrook.

THE STAR
Thursday, October 6, 1977