

# *Spartans Battling Back*

By PETER TESTA

Two teams which have battled back from adversity conclude Illini-8 campaigns Saturday when Marian shoots for sole possession of third place, traveling to Bolingbrook.

The Spartan's misfortunes have come in the form of injuries that ended the varsity careers of the three main ingredients of Coach Dave Mattio's offense, halfbacks Jeff Martin and Mark Blankenberger and quarterback Karl Volkman.

With the skill positions completely staffed by underclassmen, Marian continued its comeback from a pair of mid-season shutouts that destroyed hopes for an I-8 championship, notching its third straight win in last week's 14-6 decision over Joliet West.

BUT the Raiders suffered a tragic blow when the only coach they've ever had, Ron Wrather, was killed in an auto accident October 18. Bolingbrook attained its best sports successes in football under Wrather's guidance in football, finishing in a fifth-place tie in conference play last year, and winning its opener this season before dropping five consecutive games.

Then came the fatal crash that took Wrather's life, and plans were very much up in the air as to whether Bolingbrook would complete its schedule.

After the players decide to continue on, the Raiders have won their last two contests, defeating Joliet West 19-12, and Joliet East 20-0, advancing from the cellar to once again find themselves deadlocked for fifth.

Marian assured itself of a winning season with its fifth victory and fourth in conference action

when senior defensive back Tony Jiganti broke a 6-6 tie by running his third of four pass interceptions in the past two games for a 52-yard score that was a new Spartan record. Besides Jiganti's game-winning sprint, other aspects of Marian's defense pleased Mattio.

"THE characteristic thing about our last three wins has been the improvement of our defense," said Mattio. "They've been dominant most of the time, except in the second half the loss to Shepard in the Joliet Catholic game."

Playing in the down linemen slots defensively have been Tom Wieser, Tom Shander, Mark Panozzo, Todd Bruni and Jeff Schied, while Mike Bartolomei, Jerral Stringer, Mike Broderick and Dennis McCarron have backed up the line. This group has allowed its last four opponents a rushing average of just 106 yards a game.

Jiganti, Don Prior, Charlie Funk, Dave Klupchak, John Velo and Jim Thompson have comprised the secondary and limited Lockport, Joliet Central, Romeoville and Joliet West to only a 30 1/2 yards-per-game passing production.

Juniors Mike Petrarca, Brian Blue, Byron Anderson and Scott Janus have been doing the ball handling for Marina in recent games, with Petrarca compiling 222 of his team-leading 343 ground yards in the past three weeks. The injuries to Volkman and Blankenberger have enabled Blue and Janus to become the next passing combination for the Spartans.

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