

Marian Still Toils

By PETER TESTA

Ever since it began settling into the routine of those exhausting pre-season practice sessions two months ago, there's been one ambition in particular which acted as a lift to Marian's spirits on even the most trying of days.

By the time the Illini-8 campaign rolls around, the thought was, we'll be well on our way to becoming an unstoppable force. Now that the conference picture has had three weeks to develop, the Spartans are starting to encounter some immovable objects which are posing serious threats to those lofty ideals.

Joliet Catholic showed absolutely no indication of relinquishing its stranglehold atop the league when it handed the Spartans a 28-point whipping last Saturday, and tomorrow night, Marian will face a team with the potential to blossom into every bit as onerous as the Hilltoppers when it travels to Lockport.

"IF WE have any aspirations to win the conference championship, we're going to have to play well in these next two games," Spartan coach Dave Mattio intoned while preparing for the Hillmen.

Frankly, Marian was anything but effective as new school lows were registered in the following areas: most opponent first downs by rushing in a game, fewest yards rushing in a game, and most opponent yards rushing in a game. A few other categories narrowly missed Joliet Catholic's siege on the record book.

It's no wonder that Mattio was hard-pressed to

uncover any cheery notes. "When I walked off the field Saturday, I felt worse than I have at any time since I've been here" (which dates back to 1976). "It's not that I question the desire to win the game, but somewhere along the line we just lost all our motivation."

How strongly the Spartans can bounce back will be the challenge against the Porters, who loom as the main deterrent to yet another league crown for Joliet Catholic.

AFTER dropping its season opener by just one point, Lockport has gone on to capture its next four games. Offensively, the Porters seem to be peaking, Coach Bill Zimmer's club has racked up 95 points in the last three wins.

What makes this week's task so difficult is the point that the places in which Joliet Catholic pulverized Marian appear to be Lockport's strengths as well.

"They're a large, physical team," Mattio said. Their quarterback, Tim Sartori, is a major college prospect. He's 6-feet-2, and throws extremely well." The line of scrimmage was ruled by the Hillmen a week ago, and Lockport enjoys a 240-pound tackle of its own in Ed Trubich.

"We'll have to stop their 1-option in order to win, predicted Mattio, "but we also have to be conscious of the fact that they pass with great success."

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