

Marian Goes to Joliet

By PETER TESTA

That a football takes some funny bounces has been proven on many occasions. It would require another adjective to describe the peculiar twist of fate which has hit Marian.

Six weeks ago, the Spartans were handed their most decisive trouncing of the year by a Joliet Catholic team which appeared to be headed for a defense of its Class 4A state title.

The Hilltoppers had to share the Illini-8 championship with Lockport, with their loss to the Porters preventing another playoff showing.

Instead, Joliet Catholic qualified for the brand-new Chicagoland Prep Bowl along with Marian, and since both squads survived opening-round games, the Spartans will enjoy a rare opportunity to extract some revenge when they visit Joliet's Memorial Stadium to face the Hillmen at 1:30 p.m. Sunday.

PLAYING on its home grounds, Joliet Catholic had little trouble raising its record to 7-3 by blanking St. Viator of the East Suburban Catholic Conference 34-0. It was a far different story for Marian which waited until the final period before disposing of Holy Cross from the same Class 4A League 14-6 last Saturday.

Spartans coach Dave Mattio cited the work of the defensive unit for Marian's first victory over a 5A team since a 28-22 decision over Elgin back in 1975. "Our defense played extremely well," Mattio said. "If it wasn't for that we wouldn't be playing this week."

Conversely, the offense struggled, unable to score until punching across the clinching touchdown with 1:30 remaining in the final quarter. "We were handicapped by the rebuilding in our offensive line," pointed out Mattio, "it seems that we can't get through a game without having to make changes there."

All-League guard Rich Fordon was lost in the regular season finale, and then senior linemen Ed Ziltz and Tom VanDyck (another All-Conference selection) were injured against the Crusaders.

FREE SAFETY Bob Klupchak stood out in the secondary, swiping three passes to bring his total of interceptions to five for the campaign. His 63-yard scoring return of a deflected toss was the one play which turned the game Marian's way.

Just before halftime, Klupchak snared a leaping goal-line theft, and with Holy Cross desperately trying to catch up, Klupchak iced the win by picking off yet another pass.

Senior rover Mike Joyce was hurt against Joliet West, but shook off the injury to also garner an interception, which led to Marian's clinching six-pointer. All I-8 linebacker Tom Zarlengo and end Dan Lagone each recovered fumbles as the Spartan stoppers forced six Crusader turnovers, holding Holy Cross to a miserably one yard of total offense in the second half.

Mattio doesn't have to issue any reminders to his squad about the Hillmen. "I won't have to do much to get the kids ready. They remember the mid-point of our season when they came in and literally destroyed us. It's just going to be a matter of playing with confidence."

The game will mark a pair of first for Marian. Never before have the Spartans played 11 games in one season, and Marian has never met the same school twice in a give year. Maybe the second, not the third time, will be the charm.

THE STAR

Thursday, November 15, 1979