

Spartans Finally Stopped

By PETER TESTA

If any television network is in the market for a different kind of soap opera, it wouldn't have to look much further than to explore the story of Marian and the long-running series of events which could loosely be termed as a season.

As the weeks passed and summer became fall, then winter, and back almost to summer once again, there were enough crises floating about on all sorts of levels to stock an entire episode just by themselves.

Can the Spartans survive pre-season practice without sustaining any serious injuries? How will Marian be able to rebound from one loss which occurred with only four seconds remaining and another where, for all intents and purposes, it stayed in the game for approximately the same length of time? Can the Spartans survive the first half of the regular season without sustaining any serious injuries?

COULD THEY forge at least a tie for the Illini-8 championship as they did back in 1976? If so, could games played in such diverse locations as Wheaton and Midlothian earn them the conference's slot in the Class 4A playoffs for the first time?

Should Coach Dave Mattio call heads or tails if a coin flip is required to settle the issue? Can the Spartans survive the conclusion of the league season without sustaining any serious injuries?

Although decimated by the effects of the hard-hitting style of play which has become Marian's trademark, will it elect to prolong the year by taking part in the inaugural Chicagoland Prep Bowl? Can the Spartans survive their initial post-season contest without sustaining any serious injuries?

Is it possible for a defensive unit to not only hold down an opponent, but score enough points to win a game at the same time? Can the Spartans survive a second playoff game without sustaining any serious injuries?

THE ANSWERS to all those matters turned out as follows: no; very impressively; no; it didn't matter; no; yes; no; once but not for two straight games; of course not; and would you please repeat the question.

For each of the past 11 weeks, the final phrase could have been the one usually employed at the end of the program:

"Tune in again next week for the continuing saga of the Spartans." It was until this past Sunday in Joliet's Memorial Stadium that the show was finally and irrevocably canceled as Joliet Catholic scored a 6-0 semi-final victory which eliminated Marian from the playoffs.

The loss echoed the pattern which had been set over the final three encounters, beginning with the 14-3 defeat at Joliet West which cost a state tournament appearance, that is Marian's struggling offense coupled with an overworked but valiant defense. Mattio tried every formation in his playbook (running one play out of the shotgun), but nothing could inspire the Spartan attack.

EVEN SWITCHING junior Tom Klupchak from the halfback spot which enabled him to lead Marian in rushing this season to quarterback didn't seem to help. "When I made the change in quarterbacks, I hoped that the team would get a lift," Mattio explained, "but it didn't have the effect I thought. We didn't have any passing threat, so when teams took away the run from us, there wasn't much that we could do."

Losing four fumbles kept the Spartans on the defensive for

most of the way. Once came just after senior free safety Bob Klupchak's seventh interception of the campaign in the second period.

Klupchak enjoyed a brilliant playoff series with five steals in the two games. A bobbled center exchange enabled the Hilltoppers to take over merely 21 yards from Marian's goal.

The Spartans had managed one previous goal-line stand; however, Tony Novak's two-yard touchdown plunge would up spelling defeat for Marian, which finished with a 7-4 mark, the ninth straight winning record the school has posted.

INSPIRED BY another short-range denial courtesy of the Spartan stoppers, this time stiffing the Hillmen on four downs from the 2 yard line, Marian marched down to the Joliet Catholic 17 early in the fourth quarter. A first down illegal procedure penalty bogged down the drive.

"It would have been nice to have first-and-10, instead of first-and-15," noted Mattio, "that penalty really destroyed us."

On the next series, Tom Klupchak corralled a 31-yard strike from senior quarterback Mike Matchinis, but three plays later the Hillmen pounced on another Spartan fumble 39 yards from the end zone.

"I would consider this as a banner season despite the won and lost record," said Mattio. "The depth of our program was really tested offensively with all the injuries we had there, but it held together for a winning season. Of course, the defense was the backbone of our team."

STATISTICS point out just how stingy Marian's stop unit was. Eight foes were held to seven points or less as the Spartans surrendered 93 points in all. The secondary of Bob Klupchak, Mike Joyce, Joe Plomin and Don Zych swiped 21 passes, limited opposition passers to a 38% completion average and didn't allow a single touchdown pass to be tossed against Marian all year.

The linebacking group of Bill Ranieri, Tom Zarlengo and Tom Seibt lent support to defensive linemen Dan Lagone, Mike Bruno, Mark Lindbloom, Jeff Boylan and Tom VanDyck. "We'll have to do some rebuilding on defense next year," Mattio said.

Juniors John Clinnin, Joe Drejas, Mike Prior, Pete Bartolomei, Joe Brucato, Jim Beese and Rusty Krydinski will be looking to provide Marian with another strong defense.

"There'll be a nice nucleus returning for us on offense," pointed out Mattio, looking to Pat Murphy, John McGarry, Jim Donahue, Jim Schreiber, Tom Klupchak, Grey Murray, Paul Plomin and Ken Jurczyk, all of whom are juniors.

SEEING THEIR first varsity action in the pair of post-season contests, sophomores Dan Sheehan and Dave Essig both showed promise for the future, while Bob Ziltz, Mark Santschi, Art Bednarek, Dan Scott, Matt Wegrezy, John Perozzi, Bob Butcher, Tom Amadio, Pat King, Charade Miller, and Bob Kenney were largely responsive for the first perfect slate at Marian sophomore squad has enjoyed since entering the I-8 in 1970, capturing the fourth league crown earned by the Spartans on that level.

"We were one game from playing in Soldier Field, and one game from the Illini-8 championship and possibly playing Rich Central in the tournament," Mattio declared. "I feel that things look rosy for next year."

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