

Oct. 16	1	2	3	4	Final
MARIAN SPARTANS	6	8	0	0	14
ST. RITA MUSTANGS	0	3	0	6	9

Spartans seal playoff bid

Tom Bijak, Justin McMulin and Rod Middleton found themselves in the right place at the right time for Marian Catholic on Saturday night.

On Marian's Catholic Metropolitan Conference Blue visit to St. Rita, Bijak picked off a pair of passes and McMulin added a fumble recovery to a key conversion knockdown. Finally, Middleton picked off a pass in the game's final minute to secure a 14-9 Spartan victory.

The win improves Marian to 6-2 and 3-2, sending the Spartans to their eighth playoff berth of the 1990s. Marian will try to equal its best regular-season victory turnaround in school history (from 2-7) next week when it travels to Notre Dame.

"We're real happy to be back in the playoffs," said the injury-plagued Bijak, who led the Spartans bend-but-don't-break defense Saturday. "That's been one of our goals all the way. Now that we've established that, we know we have to set some higher goals now."

Marian was outgained, 321-175, but still managed to spoil the first-ever night game at St. Rita (4-4) with a pair of first-half scores.

The Spartans marched 82 yards on their opening possession, as Deon Bradley capped a 10-play drive with a 5-yard plunge for a 6-0 command.

When the Mustangs narrowed the gap in the second quarter on a 21-yard field goal by Dan Brown, Marian needed just one play to respond.

On the Spartans' next snap, junior quarterback Mike Gavin hit Luke Carreras on a slant that the senior wide receiver parlayed into a 53-yard score. Gavin found Bradley on the conversion toss to send the visitors to the locker room with a 14-3 cushion. Carreras pulled in six passes for 113 yards.

The Marian offense produced just 13 yards and one first down after the intermission. However, the defense stepped up by forcing four turnovers.

A secondary of Bijak, Middleton, Carreras, Eric Papp and Nick McDonnell was tested consistently, as St. Rita went to the air 30 times.

"We worked real hard all week in practice on defending their pass," Bijak explained. "We knew if we shut down No. 85 (Ade Adeyemo, two catches for 40 yards) and their quarterback, we would be in good shape. The defense really stepped up today."

CATEGORY	Marian	St. Rita
First downs	9	16
Rush att./yards	31-42	36-151
Passing yards	133	170
Pass completions	9	13
Pass attempts	13	30
Had intercepted	0	3

Fumbles/lost	2/1	3/1
Penalty yards	25	71
Next	at N. Dame	LEO

SCORING

MC- Bradley 5-yard run (kick failed), 5:10, first quarter.

SR- Brown 21-yard field goal, 2:25, second.

MC- Carreras 53-yard pass from Gavin (Gavin pass to Bradley), 2:05, second.

SR- Boyd 2-yard run (pass failed), 5:31, second.

Passing: MC- Gavin 9 of 13, 133 yards, 1 TD. SR- Lauer 13 of 30, 170 yards, 3 INT.

Rushing: MC- Bradley 22-61 (TD), Clark 1-5, Munde 1-4, Gavin 7-(minus 28). SR- Boyd 27-111 (TD), Passarello 3-27, Lauer 4-16, Connelly 1-0, Adeyemo 1-(minus 3).

Receiving: MC- Carreras 6-113 (TD), Bradley 3-20. SR- Kelly 6-83, Connelly 4-40, Adeyemo 2-40, Thomas 1-7.

Interceptions: Bijak 2, Middleton (MC).