

5A SECOND ROUND: Richards 24, Marian Catholic 20

Kickoff: 7 p.m. Friday at Richards High School.

Class 5A Pairings

Where: 10601 S. Central Ave., Oak Lawn.

Records: Marian Catholic 8-2; Richards 10-0

Seeds: Spartans #14; Bulldogs #3.

Winner: Advances to play winner of Providence (8-2) at Libertyville (9-1).

Streaks: Marian Catholic- 3 wins; Richards- 10 wins.

Last week: Marian Catholic 42, Dunbar 10; Richards 41, Rockford Guilford 12.

Last meeting: This will mark the teams' initial meeting.

Nov. 3	1	2	3	4	Final
MARIAN CATHOLIC	0	0	14	6	20
at Richards	7	3	7	7	24

Spartans (8-2) bounced by Richards

Richards used a pair of big defensive plays by Phil Cheek and a huge special teams play to ensure that Marian Catholic would not make a return trip to the Class 5A state championship game.

The Spartans had taken a pair of second-half leads with comeback touchdowns, but were unable to run out the clock with less than three minutes to play.

Following a bad snap, a Marian punt was blocked by Bulldog Ricky Rodriguez. The ball was scooped up by Richards' Donte Plus and returned 23 yards for the deciding score in a 24-20 Richards victory in the Class 5A second round Friday in Oak Lawn.

Devon Clark (seven catches, 93 yards, two touchdowns) had torched Richards (11-0) much of the night. However, Cheek stepped in front of a pair of passes intended for Clark to seal the fate for Marian (8-3).

Cheek picked off a pass early in the fourth quarter when Marian was driving inside the Bulldog 15, then collected his second interception to end the Spartans' final desperation drive.

The big plays by Richards spoiled what could've been a brilliant comeback from a 10-0 halftime deficit.

"We came out flat in the first half and that killed us," explained Marian senior defensive back Eric Papp, who was all over the field in another sterling effort. "If we hadn't let them roll over us in the first half, we would've won the game. I thought we had it when we came back in the second half, and we did until the blocked punt."

Following an extremely lackluster first half that saw Marian gain only 25 yards, the Spartans came out with an explosive attack in the third quarter.

Marian marched 64 yards in nine plays to pull within 10-7, as Mike Gavin (10 of 16, 141 yards) hit Clark with a 10-yard scoring toss. Strong defensive play from Papp and Quentin Sykes quickly returned the ball to Marian's hands.

After three plays gained 17 yards, Clark simply outran Gavin's pass on a fly pattern for a 35-yard touchdown. Sergio Flores' conversion boot gave the

Spartans a 14-10 command.

Richards, which will travel to Providence Catholic for a quarterfinal matchup, responded with a 21-yard touchdown from Dan Spano. Marian was then foiled once on the first Cheek interception, but rallied again.

Deon Bradley (16 rushes, 65 yards) followed Chris McDonnell and Tom O'Brien into the end zone from 6 yards out for a 20-17 Spartan edge. After Richards went three-and-out, Marian gained one first down before the fateful punt attempt.

The Spartans will have a chance to keep their season alive as they enter Prep Bowl competition next weekend.

"It's kind of hard to think about that right now," Papp said. "Especially as a senior, all you're working for is going to state and bringing home that ring. This is a big letdown."

Marian got a big effort on Friday from fullback Mike DiGiulio, who rambled 50 yards on eight carries.

CATEGORY	Marian	Richards
First downs	15	13
Rush att./yards	35-104	37-148
Passing yards	141	78
Pass completions	10	7
Pass attempts	17	12
Had intercepted	2	0
Fumbles/lost	0-0	0-0
Penalty yards	9-60	6-65
Next	Prep Bowl	@ Providence

SCORING

R- Dan Spano 2-yard run (Erik Lis kick), 4:46, first.

R- Lis 27-yard field goal, 1:46, second.

MC- Devon Clark 10-yard pass from Mike Gavin (Sergio Flores kick), 7:14, third.

MC- Clark 35-yard pass from Gavin (Flores kick), 4:05, third.

R- Spano 21-yard run (Lis kick), 2:31, third.

MC- Deon Bradley 6-yard run (Flores kick), 7:34, fourth.

R- Donte Plus 23-yard return of blocked punt (Lis), 2:32, fourth.

INDIVIDUALS

Passing: MC- Gavin 10 of 16, 141 yards, 2 TD, 2 INT; Don Busse 0 of 1. R- Chris Humbles 7 of 12, 78 yards.

Rushing: MC- Bradley 16-65 (TD), Mike DiGiulio 8-50, Eric Papp 1-1, Gavin 10-(minus 12). R- Spano 21-103 (2 TD), Humbles 11-21, Plus 1-14, Jim Gibson 2-6, Jason Orozco 2-4.

Receiving: MC- Clark 7-93 (2 TD), Papp 1-36, David Carcelli 1-7, DiGiulio 1-5. R- Matt Maxwell 1-28, Duran Johnson 2-24, Orozco 3-15, Spano 1-11.

Interceptions: Phil Cheek 2 (TD).