

PREP BOWL: Marian Catholic 21, Holy Cross 0

Kickoff: 1 p.m. Saturday at Holy Cross High School.

Where: 3000 N. 80th Avenue, River Grove.

Records: Marian Catholic 10-3, Holy Cross 11-1.

Last game: Marian Catholic 19, Carmel 7; Pontiac 37, Holy Cross 14

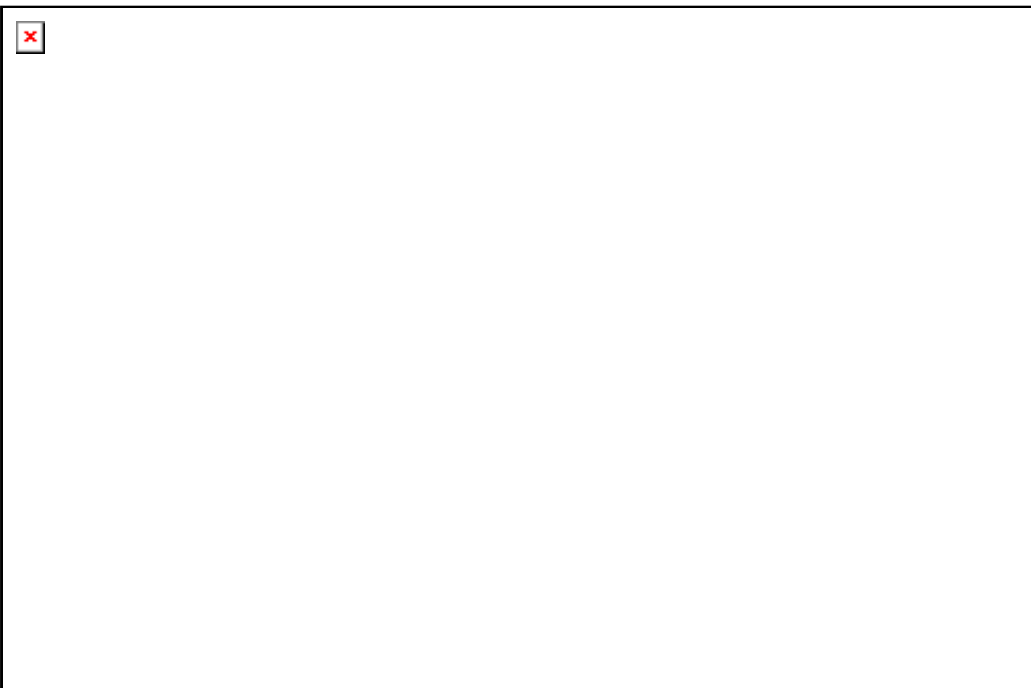
Winner: Advances to play Prep Bowl Final vs. Public League Champ, 11/24.

Last meeting: Marian Catholic 21, Holy Cross 6 in 1999.

The series: The Spartans own a 10-1 series advantage, including a 14-6 Prep Bowl victory in 1979. The Crusaders lone win came in 1998 (21-14).

History: Marian Catholic has participated in the Prep Bowl playoffs on three previous occasions, compiling an overall record of 6-3. The Spartans' last visit was 1997 when they advanced to the Prep Bowl title game at Soldier Field. Marian defeated Fenwick, 10-7, in its only other Catholic title game (1997).

Nov. 18	1	2	3	4	Final
MARIAN CATHOLIC	7	6	0	8	21
at Holy Cross	0	0	0	0	0



The Marian Catholic offensive line opened holes for 247 rushing yards and three scores in a 21-0 win over Holy Cross Saturday, sending the Spartans (11-3) into the Prep Bowl Championship contest on Friday at 1 p.m. at Soldier Field.

Spartans (11-3) blank Holy Cross

The Marian Catholic defense kept host Holy Cross guessing Saturday when the Spartans visited River Grove for a Prep Bowl Tournament semifinals contest.

Using a variety of fronts and looks, the Marian defense limited the Crusaders (11-2) to a stifling 29 total yards for the day.

Meanwhile, the offensive line engineered a 60-rush attack that yielded three scores and a 21-0 victory that sends the Spartans (11-3) to Soldier Field at 1 p.m. Friday for their second Prep Bowl Championship contest vs. the Chicago Public League in four years.

Crusader running back Garrett Wolfe had shreaded defenses throughout the season, but Marian knocked him to the bench in the second half after just six carries for 9 yards in the opening half. Holy Cross managed just five first downs in the contest, two coming at the close of each half against a prevent-oriented Marian defense.

"We set up normally most of the time when they came up to the line," Marian linebacker John Sandrick said of the Spartans' multiple defensive looks. "But then we changed-- always to something different. We knew what we had to do for each of their offensive formations.

"When we lost to Richards (5A playoffs), there wasn't so much excitement about the Prep Bowl. But once we played St. Viator, we knew we wanted to go all the way. We wanted to win and play at Soldier Field."

The 11 victories ties for the second best in school history.

While the defense stymied a Holy Cross attack that had produced 404 points in 12 games, the offense left no secret it would help keep the Crusader offense off the field.

Behind Josh Vittori, Mike Romeli, Matt Bartolini, Nick Betts, Chris McDonnell, fullback Mike DiGiulio and tight end Tom O'Brien, the Spartans rushed the ball on 60 of 68 offensive snaps.

Deon Bradley benefitted most from the efficient effort, toting 34 times for 172 yards and two scores. Joe Marias added 37 yards on nine carries.

Marian quarterback Mike Gavin opened the scoring when he bulled into the end zone from 3 yards out on the game's opening possession. Tim Rhoads booted the conversion for a 7-0 margin. With 5:52 to go before halftime, Bradley found paydirt from 7 yards away for a 13-0 halftime cushion.

Bradley added the clincher with 9:16 on the clock with a 10-yard scoring scamper. Gavin hit O'Brien for two points and the final margin.

The Marian defense was helped by sacks from Duane Harrigan, Ben Zerante, Jared McMahon and a combined effort by Pat Carroll and Jonathan McMahon. Holy Cross had just four of 40 snaps go for more than 10 yards.

"We had hear a lot about their attack and their running back," Sandrick said. "But we just came in knowing what we had to do and knowing we could do it."

CATEGORY	Marian	Holy Cross
First downs	14	5
Rush att./yards	60-247	27-(minus 4)
Passing yards	21	33
Pass completions	3	4
Pass attempts	8	13
Had intercepted	0	0
Fumbles/lost	1/0	2/1
Penalty yards	6-50	1-5

Next	Bowl finals	season over
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SCORING

MC- Mike Gavin 3-yard run (Tim Rhoads kick), 4:30, first.

MC- Deon Bradley 7-yard run (kick failed), 5:52, second.

MC- Bradley 10-yard run (Gavin to Tom O'Brien pass), 9:16, fourth.

INDIVIDUALS

Passing: MC- Mike Gavin 3 of 8, 21 yards. HC- Mike Bleke 4 of 13, 33 yards.

Rushing: MC- Deon Bradley 34-172 (2 TD), Joe Marias 9-37, Gavin 6-15 (TD), Eric Papp 5-14, Mike DiGiulio 3-4, Don Busse 2-4, Forrest McCain 1-1. HC- Travis Johnson 8-29, Sean Lyon 7-16, Garrett Wolfe 6-9, Jeremiah Walsh 1-(minus 17), Bleke 5-(minus 41).

Receiving: MC- DiGiulio 3-21. HC- Pat Bunyon 2-21, Tony Pecararo 1-9, Johnson 1-6.

Interceptions: none.