

GAME 4: Marian Catholic 31, Nazareth Academy 27

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m. Friday at Spartan Stadium.

Where: Joe Orr Road at Ashland Avenue, Chicago Heights.

ESCC records: Nazareth 0-3; Marian Catholic 1-2.

Streaks: Roadrunners- 6 losses; Spartans- 1 loss.

Week 3: Benet Academy 35, Nazareth 22; Carmel 21, Marian Catholic 10.

Week 5: Notre Dame at Nazareth (1:30 Sat.); St. Viator at Marian Catholic (7:30 Fri).

Last year: Marian Catholic 40, Nazareth Academy 0.

The series: Last year's meeting in LaGrange Park represented the first contest between the current ESCC rivals.

Notes: Despite a 1-2 start to the campaign, Marian's defense ranks third in the ESCC for points allowed... Nazareth's last victory came in week six of 2003 with a 34-0 victory over St. Joseph... The Spartans have not turned the ball over via fumble this season... Seven different players have scored Marian's nine touchdowns this season.

Sept. 17	1	2	3	4	Total
NAZARETH ROADRUNNERS	7	7	7	6	-27
MARIAN SPARTANS	7	7	9	8	-31



Marian's offense churned out 439 yards of offense Friday en route to a 31-27 ESCC victory over visiting Nazareth.

Marian fends off Nazareth's upset bid

It was very clear that both teams were going to run strictly to set up the pass when Nazareth Academy visited Marian Catholic for an East Suburban Catholic Conference battle on Friday.

The teams lit up the Chicago Heights night for more than 500 passing yards, combining for 69 aerials attempts.

All of that makes it ironic that Clifton Gordon's 12-yard run proved to be the winning score and Noe Arroyo's 31-yard field goal the deciding points in a 31-27 Marian victory.

While the quarterbacks virtually matched yardage totals, the Spartans' 179-24 margin in rushing proved to be the difference in Marian improving to 2-2.

"We told our line we basically weren't going to run the ball in the first half," explained Marian quarterback Zach Denny, who finished with 260 passing yards and three scores. "But we knew if we were going to win the game, we would eventually have to run the ball too. The line showed up when it counted in the end when we needed it the most."

The senior signal-caller finished 19 of 34 for 260 yards, and the host squad needed almost every one of them.

Roadrunner quarterback Peter Zavagnin was equally brilliant, completing 20 of 35 pass for 266 yards. The game was not decided until the Marian secondary forced four straight incomplete passes on Nazareth's final possession.

Marian took one-score leads twice in the first half before setting for a 14-14 halftime stalemate on a night the Spartans celebrated Decade of Champions. Denny hit Malcolm Parker with a 22-yard touchdown pass and Cameron Williams with a 6-yard scoring toss to

complete a drive that spanned more than eight minutes.

The Spartans stalled before getting to the end zone in the opening possession of the second half, but emerged with critical points.

After having a field goal blocked at the end of the first half, Noe Arroyo booted a 31-yarder with 9:04 to play in the third quarter for a 17-14 Spartan lead. It proved to be the score Nazareth couldn't match.

The Roadrunners did take a 21-17 lead two possessions later, but Marian responded with one of three scoring drives that spanned 74 yards or more. Denny hooked up with Walter Fisher (seven catches, 149 yards) on a 54-yard touchdown that gave Marian a 23-21 lead.

Despite being a target in the shotgun most of the night, Denny responded with big pass plays and 55 rushing yards.

"It's kind of fun when they know you're going to pass," Denny explained. "It's good to know our offense can still come out and execute. It shows something about our offense when they know it's coming and we still execute well."

The job was not complete, however.

Marian applied a back-breaker when it drove 92 yards to expand the margin to two scores. Keyed by a 27-yard burst earlier in the drive, Gordon finished off matters with a 12-yard scoring run, as the Spartans piled up their rushing totals late.

Ignited by efforts on the offensive line from Jon Scudella, Patrick McNamara, Dan Kwiatkowski, Jonathan Jack and Stephen Peternell, Marian rattled off 68 snaps on Friday. Only two of those were punts- one that resulted in a Spartan fumble recovery by Josh Howe, and the other coming with less than five minute remaining in the game.

Gordon finished with 85 yards on 11 carries and Sean Whitfield totaled 81 combined rushing-receiving yards.

"We wish we were better than .500," Denny explained. "But we just want to keep improving, keep winning and take it one game at a time. We need five wins to get in the playoffs, and we want to get some momentum going by that time."

Freshmen: After spotting Nazareth a 14-0 lead, Marian Catholic used three touchdown runs by Malcolm Allen to key a 22-14 comeback victory. Allen added a conversion run and Jake Pozywio passed for another. Marian (2-2) also got a strong rushing effort from John DiGiovanni.

CATEGORY	Nazareth	Marian
First downs	16	26
Rush attempts / yards	19-24	31-179
Passing yards	266	260
Pass completions	20	19
Pass attempts	35	34
Had intercepted	0	1
Fumbles / lost	2 / 1	0 / 0
Penalty yards	4-50	6-27
Next	NOTRE DAME	ST. VIATOR

SCORING

MC- Malcolm Parker 22-yard pass from Zach Denny (Noe Arroyo kick), 9:18 first.

Nz- Rodney Payton 13-yard pass from Peter Zavagnin (Zavagnin kick), 7:05 first.

MC- Cameron Williams 6-yard pass from Denny (Arroyo kick), 4:02 second.

Nz- Matt Schiffler 2-yard run (Zavagnin kick), 0:50 second.

MC- Arroyo 31-yard field goal, 9:04 third.

Nz- Zavagnin 4-yard run (Zavagnin kick), 5:38 third.

MC- Walter Fisher 54-yard pass from Denny (kick failed), 3:09 third.

MC- Clifton Gordon 12-yard run (Denny to Parker), 8:21 fourth.

Nz- Payton 32-yard pass from Zavagnin (run failed), 6:28 fourth.

INDIVIDUALS

Passing: Naz- Zavagnin 20 of 35, 266 yards, 2 TD. MC- Denny 19 of 34, 260 yards, 3 TD, 1 INT.

Rushing: Naz- Schiffler 12-25 (TD), Payton 1-0, Zavagnin 6-(minus 1-TD). MC- Gordon 11-85 (TD), Denny 12-55, Sean Whitfield 6-40, Williams 2-(minus 1).

Receiving: Naz- Kevin Frymire 6-84, Payton 4-65 (2 TD), Schiffler 5-57, Charles Hayes 4-47, Brad Duranty 1-21. MC- Fisher 7-149 (TD), Whitfield 5-41, Parker 3-36 (TD), Williams 2-17 (TD), Matt Swanson 2-17.

Interceptions: Michael Dudak (Naz).