

GAME 8: Benet Academy 35, Marian Catholic 13

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m. Friday at Benedictine University.

Where: Maple Road and Yawkey, Lisle.

ESCC records: Marian Catholic 3-4; Benet Academy 4-3.

Streaks: Spartans- 2 losses; Redwings- 1 loss.

Week 7: Marist 19, Marian Catholic 0; St. Patrick 14, Benet Academy 11.

Week 9 (Fri., 7:30 p.m.): St. Patrick at Marian Catholic; Benet at Notre Dame.

Last year: Marian Catholic 20, Benet Academy 19 (overtime).

The series: A five-game winning streak has given Marian a 14-4 command in the series, as the Redwings last prevailed, 14-10, in 1997 when the teams split two contests.

Notes: The game represents one of the first contests ever played at Benedictine's new turf stadium... The Spartans are seeking their first road victory in four tests... Marian has outscored the Redwings, 142-58, during the current winning streak... The Spartans have not lost three straight contests since the 1998 season.

Oct. 15	1	2	3	4	Total
MARIAN SPARTANS	0	0	0	13	-13
BENET ACADEMY REDWINGS	0	14	7	14	-35



Marian's defense had its back to the wall often Friday in a 35-13 ESCC setback against host Benet Academy.

Marian playoff hopes dashed with loss at Benet

Benet Academy certainly earned its double-whammy East Suburban Catholic Conference victory on Friday in Lisle.

A 35-13 decision for the Redwings virtually assured them a playoff berth, while delivering the final blow to visiting Marian Catholic's playoff hopes.

However, it didn't seem like the Redwings (5-3) had to work very hard at times in engineering their victory.

Benet scored on first-half drives of 28 and 27 yards, then capped its scoring for the night with a 29-yard drive. A credit to their defense, the Redwings benefitted from two critical Spartan turnovers, six Marian punts, an advantage in special teams and a unique call.

The Redwings can still take satisfaction, however, in denying Marian (3-5) a third straight IHSA state playoff appearance. As well, their most challenging drive against a deceptively stingy Marian defense probably provided what proved to be the clinching score.

Marian finally broke the ice early in the fourth quarter with the game's longest scoring drive at that point. Set up by first-down passes from Zach Denny to Walter Fisher and Cameron Williams, Sean Whitfield finally got the visitors on the board with a 5-yard touchdown run. Noe Arroyo's conversion kick pulled the Spartans within 21-7 with 11:21 to play.

The score also halted a scoreless string of eight quarters and avoided the first back-to-back Spartan shutouts since 1998.

Despite fairly short scoring drives, a Marian defense playing without middle linebacker Jake Zsuppon (knee injury) had played somewhat tough. A defensive front led by Arroyo, Ian Turak,

Ron Freeman, Justin Lynch, Steve Ajdinovich and Jovon Dixon had led Benet to fewer than 3 yards per carry in the opening half.

But faced with a Spartan uprising, the Redwings finally broke down the Marian defense. Benet quarterback Dan LeFevour capped an 11-play, 69-yard scoring march with a 2-yard sneak for a 28-7 cushion.

To that point and thereafter, things were made somewhat easy for the Redwing offense.

After a scoreless first quarter, the Redwings' 6-0 lead came courtesy of an 18-yard punt return to the Marian 28-yard line. The margin swelled to 14-0 after an interception set up Benet at the Spartan 27-yard line.

Following halftime, a short punt left the host squad just 55 yards from the end zone.

The Redwings' final score of the night epitomized the way things went for Marian on Friday. First, Benet gained possession at the Marian 29-yard line after a fumble on a kickoff return.

Despite playing on the new artificial turf at Benedictine University, a playground ruling aided the Redwings in their final score. On an apparent fumble and touchback, an inadvertent whistle resulted in perhaps the first "do-over" in Marian memory. The creative officiating gave Benet a fifth-down play, one it used to score its fifth touchdown.

The play was not significant, as it occurred with just more than three minutes to play. It also allowed Marian time for its longest drive of the night and a consolation score.

With junior quarterback Zack Stevenson at the helm, the Spartans marched 78 yards in six plays for the final score of the evening.

A 39-yard pass to Williams highlighted the drive, which was also aided by a pass interference call. The drive concluded with a pair of Stevenson passes to Whitfield, the second one carrying 4 yards for the touchdown.

Despite having a short field much of the night, Benet managed to run off 65 plays (not including the phantom down) to the Spartans' 49 snaps.

Frequent appearances by Spartan punter Andrew Hebda were a result of a Marian rushing game that included four sacks and just 36 yards on the ground in 21 tries. Clifton Gordon carried nine times for 31 yards as the top ground-gainer.

Marian's quarterback tandem actually produced solid numbers. With Walter Fisher (four catches, 54 yards) as the favorite target, Denny clicked on 11 of 23 passes for 127 yards. Stevenson was three of five for 51 yards and the scoring strike to Whitfield. However, several dropped passes prevented Marian from staying in the contest much longer.

Faced with just its third losing campaign in the last 34 years, Marian will conclude the season next Friday when the Spartans host playoff-bound St. Patrick at 7:30 p.m.

Sophomores: Marian bowed to the Redwings by a similar score, 34-13.

Freshmen: Despite taking an early lead, the Spartans fell to 2-6 with a 22-13 loss to the Redwings. Marian scored first on a hook-and-ladder, as Kevin Kammert tossed to Scott Smith, who lateraled to Mark Scott. He ran the final 50 yards for the score. Scott also added a score on a 40-yard sweep play.

CATEGORY	Marian	Benet
First downs	13	18
Rush attempts / yards	21-36	50-231
Passing yards	178	95
Pass completions	14	9
Pass attempts	28	15
Had intercepted	1	1
Fumbles / lost	2 / 1	1 / 1
Penalty yards	6-54	7-80
Next	ST. PATRICK	at Notre Dame

SCORING

BA- Nick Dirienzo 5-yard run (kick failed), 3:45 second.

BA- Mike Persak 6-yard pass from Dan LeFevour (LeFevour run), 0:55 second.

BA- Dirienzo 42-yard run (Brendan Hannigan kick), 5:47 third.

MC- Sean Whitfield 5-yard run (Noe Arroyo kick), 11:21 fourth.

BA- LeFevour 2-yard run (Hannigan kick), 5:57 fourth.

BA- LeFevour 7-yard run (Hannigan kick), 2:53 fourth.

MC- Whitfield 4-yard pass from Zack Stevenson (pass failed), 1:06 fourth.

INDIVIDUALS

Passing: MC- Zach Denny 11 of 23, 127 yards, 1 INT; Zack Stevenson 3 of 5, 51 yards, 1 TD. B- LeFevour 9 of 15, 95 yards, 1 TD, 1 INT.

Rushing: MC- Clifton Gordon 9-31, Whitfield 6-28 (TD), Stevenson 1-2, Denny 5-(minus 25). B- Dirienzo 12-102 (2 TD), Matt LeMay 14-40, LeFevour 13-38 (2 TD), Bob Brown 5-31, Mike Szela 4-11, Chris Rocci 1-8, Adam Ahern 1-1.

Receiving: MC- Cameron Williams 3-65, Walter Fisher 4-54, Whitfield 3-30 (TD), Malcolm Parker 2-24, Matt Swanson 1-11, Gordon 1-4. B- Persak 3-33 (TD), Szela 2-25, Dirienzo 1-13, LeMay 1-11, Sean Carr 1-7, Brown 1-6.

Interceptions: Michael Buxbaum (MC); Mike Guess (B).