

GAME 6: Joliet Catholic 21, Marian Catholic 14

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m. Friday at Joliet Memorial Stadium.

Where: 3000 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet.

Overall records: Marian Catholic 3-2; Joliet Catholic 3-2.

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

Streaks: Spartans- 2 wins; Hilltoppers- 3 wins.

Last week: Marian 36, St. Viator 34; Joliet Catholic 54, Benet 12 .

Week 7: Marist at Marian (7:30 p.m. Fri.); Joliet Catholic at Notre Dame (7:30 p.m. Fri.).

Last year: Joliet Catholic 57, Marian Catholic 7.

The series: The Hilltoppers have captured six straight to take a 24-8 command in the longtime rivalry. Marian's last victory came with a 26-14 decision in 1994.

Notes: Marian owns a rushing and passing touchdown in each of its five contests this season... Spartan senior tailback Cliffton Gordon has rushed for 405 in his last two games... Going back to last year, Gordon owns a streak of eight games with 100+ yards rushing... In Marian's last visit to Joliet Memorial Stadium, the Spartans gave JCA its closest call (21-14) during a 14-0 state championship campaign.

Sept. 29	1	2	3	4	Total
MARIAN CATHOLIC	0	6	8	0	-14
at JOLIET CATHOLIC	7	14	0	0	-21



Marian's Paul Zarlengo prepares to rush the passer Friday night during the visiting Spartans' 21-14 ESCC setback at Joliet Catholic Academy.

Opportunities fade in narrow Marian loss to JCA

Marian Catholic had most of the necessary ingredients for an upset Friday when it visited Joliet Catholic for an East Suburban Catholic Conference test.

The Spartans hogged time of possession with an effective ball-control offense that churned out 65 plays for the night.

And the Marian defense turned in what might be its best effort of the season, certainly the best in four weeks.

What Marian didn't have on Friday was the ability to cash in when opportunities presented themselves.

The Spartans came away empty on two early red-zone opportunities, failed to keep the Hilltoppers in the shadow of their goal posts both times, and didn't cash in on the only two turnovers of the contest.

All of that added up to Joliet Catholic escaping with a 21-14 victory to improve to 4-0 in the ESCC and to send the Spartans home at 3-3, 2-2.

"We talked all week about trying to come in and be error-free," junior lineman Dominick Corsiglia said. "They were the ones that made the errors and we just didn't take advantage of opportunities."

Playing with an extremely painful groin injury that had him doubtful 24 hours earlier, Corsiglia gave the Spartans a gasp of life when he pounced on a JCA fumble at the Hilltopper 47-yard line with 5:11 to play.

However, a Marian offense that had gained at least one first down on all of its seven previous possessions managed just 3 yards in four plays. After an incomplete pass on fourth-and-7, the host squad never allowed Marian to see the football again.

As JCA ran out the clock, Marian was unable to complete a comeback from a 21-0 deficit, falling by the same score as in its last visit to Memorial Stadium in 2004.

Marian's defense pitched a shutout in the second half, but after trailing 21-6 at the half, the Spartans managed only a 7-yard touchdown run from Nnanna Alozie (Clifton Gordon conversion run) in their comeback bid.

"The defense was great in the second half with zero points allowed," Corsiglia assessed. "They have been blowing out teams (JCA scored 144 points in winning its first three ESCC games) and we held them. I just knew we were not going to lose after the fumble recovery. I had a feeling the offense would come down and score and it would be our game."

With as well as Marian controlled field possession in the first half, the Spartans deserved a much better fate than the 21-0 deficit it faced late in the second quarter.

Despite a pair of first downs on its opening possession, Marian was eventually forced to punt. However, the ball was mishandled and Rudy Rinas pounced on the fumble at the JCA 40-yard line. Gordon (30 carries, 145 yards) and Alozie both contributed 9-yard carries, as Marian moved to the JCA 15 before turning the ball over on downs.

The Hilltoppers answered with their first of three long scoring runs, a 54-yarder that gave JCA a 7-0 command.

Marian responded by marching from its own 29, again to the Hilltopper 15 before eventually yielding the ball on downs.

This time, JCA quarterback John Reuttiger reeled off a 76-yard run for a 14-0 command. After a short Marian punt, the Hilltoppers made it three possessions and three scores with a 32-yard run for a 21-0 count.

Marian stuck to its ball-control plan, marching 65 yards in 11 plays. An offensive line of Jonathan Jack, Richard Wilson, Rinas, Ben McDonnell, Brandon Banks and Dennis Kelly continued to open holes until Gordon finally burst into the end zone from 4 yards out.

Yet, despite running 45 plays to the Hilltoppers' 16 in the opening half, the visitors were still faced with a 21-6 halftime climb.

Climb Marian did in the third quarter. After forcing a quick three-and-out, Marian needed just seven plays to travel 58 yards. The Alozie score and Gordon conversion pulled the Spartans within 21-14 with more than 18 minutes to play.

However, JCA used some of its own ball-control recipe to ensure that Marian would see the football only two more times.

Alozie finished with a strong effort on the ground as well, carrying 13 times for 73 yards. Both squads' passing games were a virtual non-factor, as the Spartans gained 31 yards through the air and the Hilltoppers just 28.

"We just have to take all the good from the offense tonight and the defense in the second half and move ahead," concluded Corsiglia, who will help lead his squad in a Homecoming battle with Marist next Friday at 7:30 p.m.

"We just have to take all the good emotion and drive, and carry it into next week. I have a good feeling we're going to bounce right back. We still have confidence we can run the table."

CATEGORY	Marian Catholic	Joliet Catholic
First downs	17	16
Rush attempts / yards	52-233	40-342
Passing yards	31	28
Pass completions	5	2
Pass attempts	13	6
Had intercepted	0	0
Fumbles / lost	0 / 0	2 / 2
Penalty yards	1-5	3-14
Next	MARIST	at Notre Dame

SCORING

JCA- Tyler Hudetz 54-yard run (Gabe Suhadolc kick), 2:06 first.

JCA- John Reuttiger 76-yard run (Suhadolc kick), 8:50 second.

JCA- Connor Krisch 32-yard run (Suhadolc kick), 3:19 second.

MC- Cliffton Gordon 4-yard run (kick failed), 0:37 second.

MC- Nnanna Alozie 7-yard run (Gordon run), 6:37 third.

Passing: MC- Jack Krause 5 of 13, 31 yards, 0 TD, 0 INT. JCA- Reuttiger 2 of 6, 28 yards, 0 TD, 0 INT.

Rushing: MC- Gordon 30-145 (TD), Alozie 13-73 (TD), Krause 5-9, Derrick Middleton 4-6. JCA- Hudetz 10-97 (TD), Brandon Geiss 16-92, Reuttiger 5-83 (TD), Krisch 8-70, Tim Bennett 1-(minus 3).

Receiving: MC- Julian Williams 2-19, Gordon 1-7, Dennis Kelly 1-5. JCA- Coby Fleener 2-28.

Interceptions: none.

