

GAME 9: Marian Catholic 40, St. Patrick 21

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

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

Overall records: St. Patrick 2-6, Marian Catholic 5-3.

ESCC records: St. Patrick 2-4, Marian Catholic 4-2.

Streaks: Shamrocks- 1 win; Spartans- 2 wins.

Last week: St. Patrick 26, Nazareth 25; Marian Catholic 34, Benet Academy 13.

Week 10: Season over for St. Patrick; Marian will enter IHSA Class 8A playoffs.

Last year: St. Patrick 38, Marian Catholic 13.

The series: The Shamrocks have captured two straight wins in the series, but Marian still holds a 9-5 overall series advantage.

Notes: Marian is looking to improve its playoff stock- a victory and some help gives the Spartans a chance to land a Top 16 seed in Class 8A... The Spartans own a 21-7 turnover differential this season... Spartan tailback Clifton Gordon needs 84 rushing yards to eclipse 1,500 for the season... Gordon is within two scoring points of the ESCC lead with 82; he has scored 108 points for the season... The Spartans are looking to score in double figures for a 14th consecutive game.

Oct. 20	1	2	3	4	Total
ST. PATRICK	14	0	0	7	-21
at MARIAN CATHOLIC	0	14	20	6	-40



Marian's offensive line opened the way for 380 rushing yards Friday in a 40-21 ESCC victory over visiting St. Patrick.

Spartans rip St. Patrick behind Gordon's record 307 yards

Marian Catholic made a commitment to smashmouth football Friday night with the Spartans hosting St. Patrick for the final regular-season game of the season.

St. Patrick made a commitment to playing spoiler for the playoff-bound Spartans.

Both accomplished their goals early, including the St. Patrick jumping to a 14-0 first-quarter lead.

Then senior running back Clifton Gordon began to take matters into his own hands (and feet). Starting with a 1-yard run to get Marian on the board and finishing with a 46-yard burst to cap the scoring, Gordon exploded for a school-record 307 rushing yards and four scores in leading Marian to a 40-21 ESCC victory.

"He's just a great worker," praised offensive lineman Jon Jack, who led a group that helped open holes for 380 worth of rushing yards on the night. "He just knows how to take it at you and his cutbacks were great tonight. We told him he was going to beat the record before he left here, and he did it tonight."

Now, Marian (6-3) will await for its first Class 8A playoff assignment when the IHSA pairings are announced on Saturday night.

The Spartans, who watched their sophomores claim a share of the ESCC crown with a 14-7 win Friday, will take a three-game winning streak into their first playoff visit since 2003.

Once Marian got things going on Friday, there was little doubt about the outcome. The Spartans answered the early deficit with a punishing 16-play, 65-yard scoring drive as Gordon toted 14 times before bursting into the end zone from a yard out. Dennis Kelly booted the first of four conversion kicks to pull Marian within 14-7.

As it did on three occasions, the Spartan defense set up the next score. Marian's Andres Rodriguez pounced on a Shamrock fumble with the visitors driving at the Spartan 12. One play and 88 yards later, Gordon ripped down the right sideline to pull Marian even at 14-14 with 2:18 to play in the opening half.

Gordon was Marian's lone ballcarrier before halftime, rushing 21 times for 185 yards.

"Last year at a basketball game, they (St. Patrick) shouted 'let's play football,' after they had beaten us in football," Jack explained. "We took that as a challenge. We just came out to play football tonight. We came out a little sluggish, but then we flipped on the switch."

The Spartans kept the momentum rolling in the second half, going 59 yards the first time they had the ball on a drive capped off by Gordon's 5-yard TD run. An interception set up Marian's next score, as the Spartans needed to travel just 34 for a score when Jack Krause hit Mark Scott on a 17-yard touchdown toss for a 28-14 command.

Next, the Spartan defense got into the act, as defensive back Matt Dee picked off a pass and raced 52 yards for the score that gave Marian a 34-14 cushion.

With Marian stuffing the Shamrocks' running game for less than 4 yards an attempt, the Spartan secondary was able to capitalize on opportunities.

Rodriguez finished with two pickoffs to go with the fumble recovery and Dee added his interception. The likes of Kevin Kammert, Derrick Middleton, Jared White and Dan Roque were also able to disrupt the St. Patrick passing game because of good pressure up front from Paul Zarlengo, Josh Forney, Elliott Echols, Matt Golubski and Corey White.

With the four turnovers forced, Marian improved its season ratio to 25-9.

The teams just traded late scores for the final result, but the last score of the night proved to be the record-breaker. Looking to run out the clock with a 34-21 command, Gordon (35 carries) exploded through a hole near midfield and scampered 46 yards into the record books.

Along with Jack, Gordon can thank the likes of offensive linemen Kelly, Ben McDonnell, Rudy Rinas, Richard Wilson and Jeremy Hess for their hand in breaking a record that has stood since 1969 (Rick Klupchak's 274 yards vs. St. Francis de Sales). Marian also churned out drives that consumed 7:17 and 8:18 in time of possession.

For the season, Gordon has rushed for 1,723 yards and his career total was boosted to 3,039 yards- the fourth highest total in history.

Records aside, Marian's priority now will go toward extending the season.

"We've got a lot more football to play," said Jack, who also recovered a fumble. "We need to focus in practice, go hard-nosed out here and prepare to play five more weeks of football."

CATEGORY	St. Patrick	Marian Catholic
First downs	12	19
Rush attempts / yards	28-104	51-380
Passing yards	272	34
Pass completions	13	3
Pass attempts	25	8
Had intercepted	3	1
Fumbles / lost	1 / 1	2 / 1
Penalty yards	1-15	2-20
Next	Season over	8A Playoffs

SCORING

SP- Tom Fogarty 9-yard pass from Kyle Dietz (Chris Zepeda kick), 7:23 first.

SP- Brian Ruiz 1-yard run (Zepeda kick), 3:15 first.

MC- Clifton Gordon 1-yard run (Dennis Kelly kick), 8:04 second.

MC- Gordon 88-yard run (Kelly kick), 2:18 second.

MC- Gordon 5-yard run (Kelly kick), 5:41 third.

MC- Mark Scott 17-yard pass from Jack Krause (Kelly kick), 2:49 third.

MC- Matt Dee 52-yard interception return (kick failed), 1:05 third.

SP- Wally Labuz 80-yard pass from Dietz (Zepeda kick), 1:24 fourth.

MC- Gordon 46-yard run (kick failed), 0:41 fourth

Passing: SP- Dietz 13 of 25, 272 yards, 2 TD, 3 INT. MC- Krause 3 of 8, 34 yards, 1 TD, 1 INT.

Rushing: SP- Ruiz 18-68 (TD), Ryan Hohenadel 9-34, Kevin Rutherford 1-2. MC- Gordon 35-307 (4 TD), Scott 7-27, Nnanna Alozie 3-22, Malcolm Allen 4-9, Derrick Middleton 1-8, Krause 1-7.

Receiving: SP- Labuz 3-130 (TD), Jack McKenna 1-54, Ruiz 2-29, Eric Morris 3-23, Tim Hain 1-15, Fogarty 1-9 (TD), Eddie Ortiz 1-9, Hohenadel 1-3. MC- Scott 1-17 (TD), Kelly 1-10, Julian Williams 1-7.

Interceptions: SP- Steve Larsen. MC- Andres Rodriguez (2), Matt Dee (TD).

