

GAME 4: Marian Catholic 20, St. Joseph 12

Kickoff: 1:30 p.m. Saturday at St. Joseph High School.

Where: 10900 W. Cermak Road, Westchester.

2008 records: Marian Catholic 0-3, St. Joseph 2-1.

ESCC records: Marian Catholic 0-1; St. Joseph 0-1.

Streaks: Spartans- 5 losses; Chargers-1 loss.

Week 3: Notre Dame 13, Marian Catholic 10; Benet Academy 35, St. Joseph 0.

Week 5: Carmel at Marian Catholic (Fri., 7:30 p.m.); Notre Dame at St. Joseph (Sat, 1:30).

Last meeting: Marian Catholic 40, St. Joseph 0 (2005).

The series: The Spartans have captured the previous 13 meetings and own a current blitz of 126 consecutive points. Marian has scored 40 or more points against the Chargers on nine occasions in a series that dates back to 1968.

Notes: Despite an 0-3 start, Marian Catholic has been outscored by just 14 total points... with a pair of season-opening wins, the Chargers snapped a streak of five straight 0-9 seasons... St. Joseph has not been closer than 31 points in each of the last eight meetings... the Spartans have not allowed more than 81 yards rushing in a game and have outgained two of their three foes... St. Joseph is seeking its first three-win season since 2000 (4-5)... the ESCC still has three unbeaten teams and Marian and Joliet Catholic are the lone squads to have been outscored overall this fall.

September 20	1	2	3	4	Total
MARIAN SPARTANS	0	0	13	7	-20
at ST. JOSEPH CHARGERS	6	6	0	0	-12



Marian's Caleb Dyson reels in a pass on Saturday afternoon during the visiting Spartans' 20-12 comeback ESCC victory at St. Joseph.

Roque keys Marian comeback victory at St. Joseph

It may have been the Chargers and Spartans meeting on Saturday in an ESCC battle in Westchester, but somewhere along the way, some cat gave these Spartans nine lives.

After a series of mishaps, misfortune and miscues sent visting Marian Catholic to the locker room with **only** a 12-0 halftime deficit, the Spartans managed to find a way to overcome.

The visitors primarily overcame through the legs, toe and anticipation of senior Dan Roque. Along with a pair of conversion kicks, Roque returned the second-half kickoff 78 yards for a score and with St. Joseph driving for a potential winning score, he picked off a pass and dashed 95 yards to key the Spartans to their first victory, a 20-12 decision over the stunned Chargers.

"We've been saying all along that we need somebody to be a big playmaker," explained Roque. "We've been saying since day one that someone needs to step up. We've been so close, but this team just needed to make some big plays."

Roque was that someone on Saturday, bailing out an offense that produced just 39 yards rushing and passed for 123, but with three interceptions of its own.

Those nine lives?

- *- The Spartans (1-3, 1-1) survived despite committing five turnovers.
- *- Two of St. Joseph's six turnovers came inside the Marian 10-yard line.
- *- The Chargers ran 74 plays to the Spartans' 39 snaps.
- *- Marian survived nine penalties, not including one St. Joseph declined on Roque's interception return in order to regain possession as time was running out.
- *- St. Joseph was successful on all four fourth-down conversions.
- *- The Spartans allowed St. Joseph to chew up more than 16 minutes of the first-half clock.
- *- Marian missed two golden opportunities of its own with a pair of red-zone turnovers in the opening half.
- *- The Spartans put the ball on the turf two more times, but managed to recover.

Well, maybe it was more than nine lives.

In any case, Roque made much of the Murphy's Law portion of the contest forgettable. With Marian fortunate to be trailing just 12-0 at the half (St. Joseph had fumbled at the Spartan 3-yard line and threw an interception inside the 10), Roque began to turn the momentum as soon as the second-half clocked rolled.

He fielded the kickoff at his own 22-yard line, eluded a couple potential tacklers and raced down the left sideline. His conversion kick fell short, but Marian trailed just 12-6 and finally had a spark on its side.

"I just knew I had to do something to get us going," Roque said of the return. "We knew we had been flat in the first half. I just fielded the ball and knew the guys up front were going to do a great job blocking. We had to do something for the team at that point." Marian wasn't out of the woods yet, as its next three possessions resulted in a punt, interception and fumble.

However, St. Joseph committed one of its six turnovers to give Marian possession at the Charger 29-yard line.

Since driving was not the Spartans' forte on Saturday (just seven first downs), Marian used a quick-strike approach as Tommy Doane hit Armando Lopez down the right sideline for the 29-yard score. This time, Roque's toe was true, as his conversion kick gave Marian its first lead of the day at 13-12 with 37 seconds to play in the third period.

On a day where nothing would come easy for the visitors, St. Joseph gained possession on an interception with 8:50 to play at its own 39-yard line.

The Chargers used almost the entire clock, and 13 players later, faced a third down at the Marian 7. Roque made sure the drive proceeded no further, as he raced in front of one of the Chargers' 36 aerial attempts and bolted 95 yards for the apparent deciding score. A clipping penalty that would have nullified the score was declined, as St. Joseph had only one timeout remaining.

True to form, salting away victory #1 for Marian wasn't done without some drama.

Following a short kickoff, St. Joseph found time for seven plays in 46 seconds to get to the Marian 26-yard line with two seconds to play. The final desperation pass fell incomplete. A familiar ending for Marian, but one that finally found the Spartans on top after three narrow setbacks to open the season.

While Marian was outgained, 321-162, for the day, the Spartans did have their share of clutch defensive plays. Mac Stevenson (sack) and Josh Mayers recovered fumbles, while Austin Guaccio (three catches, 52 yards) pounced on a fumble after a Charger interception was fumbled right back. Josh Forney also notched a sack, while Roque, Dan Vargas and Nolan Berens recorded interceptions.

In a Marian offense that averaged just 4.1 yards per snap, Doane passed for 123 yards and Joey Walker was the leading rusher with 23 yards on 15 carries.

"We needed this today," Roque understated as the Spartans head into a homecoming contest with 3-1 Carmel next Friday in Spartan Stadium. "Now, we need to get back to work because we have a good opponent next week. We just need to work harder and try to perfect some things."

Saturday's effort was hardly perfect. But after three opening-losses the could've left the Spartans at 3-0 with a break here and there, the victory was a welcome sight against a much-improved Charger squad.

Sophomores: Marian improved to 4-0 with a dominant 48-0 victory over the Chargers..

CATEGORY	Marian Catholic	St. Joseph
First downs	7	20
Rush attempts / yards	23-39	38-112

Passing yards	123	209
Pass completions	8	23
Pass attempts	17	36
Had intercepted	3	3
Fumbles / lost	4 / 2	4 / 3
Penalty yards	9-67	5-35
Next	CARMEL	NOTRE DAME

SCORING

SJ- Tim Kelly 1-yard run (run failed), 5:23 first.

SJ- Anthony Boddy 30-yard pass from Meredith Cameron (pass failed), 5:20 second.

MC- Dan Roque 78-yard kickoff return (kick failed), 11:46 third.

MC- Armando Lopez 29-yard pass from Tommy Doane (Roque kick), 0:37 third.

MC- Roque 95-yard interception return (Roque kick), 0:47 fourth.

Rushing: MC- Joey Walker 15-23, Joe Sanfratello 4-17, Armando Lopez 1-0, Doane 3- (minus 1); SJ- Kelly 30-95 (TD), Ron Moore 1-13, Cameron 5-6, Boddy 1-5.

Passing: MC- Doane 8 of 17, 123 yards, 1 TD, 3 INT; SJ- Cameron 23 of 35, 209 yards, 1 TD, 3 INT; Moore 0 of 1, 0 yards.

Receiving: MC- Austin Guaccio 3-52, Lopez 2-36, Caleb Dyson 2-24, Walker 1-11. SJ- Moore 8-65, Boddy 3-16 (TD), Dan Quintana 6-47, Kelly 3-16, Ryan Cole 2-15, Sterling Jackson 1-5.

Interceptions: Roque, Dan Vargas, Nolan Berens (MC); Boddy, Roosevelt Carr, Jackson (SJ).

