

**GAME**  
**3:**  
**Marian**  
**Catholic**  
**17,**  
**Notre**  
**Dame 7**

**Kickoff:** 7:30 p.m. Friday at Notre Dame High School.

**Where:** 7655 Dempster Street, Niles ([Yahoo map](#)).

**Streaks:** Spartans- 2 victories; Dons- 2 victories.

**Week 2:** Marian 35, Bloom Township 6; Notre Dame 20, Fenwick 17.

**Week 4:** St. Joseph at Marian (Fri, 7:30 pm); Notre Dame at St. Patrick (Fri, 8 pm-Hanson)

**Last year:** Notre Dame 13, Marian Catholic 10.

**The series:** The teams have split the last four meetings, but Marian holds an overall 8-6 series edge dating back to 1992. Defensive battles have characterized the series, as the winner has scored more than 23 points only once. Ten of the 14 games in the series have been decided by eight points or fewer.

**Notes:** Marian is seeking its first 3-0 start to the campaign since 2002 when the Spartans jumped to a 5-0 start en route to a 7A playoff berth... The Dons are playing their third straight home game to start 2009, although just the second-ever contest on new *FieldTurf*... The Spartans will play seven of their nine regular-season contests this fall on artificial turf... Marian has jumped to a five-touchdown lead in both contests this year before allowing the opposition to score... The Spartans did not score in the 30s at all last year and are seeking their first three-game stretch in the 30s since 2006.

Sept. 11	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>MARIAN SPARTANS</b>	0	14	0	3	<b>-17</b>
<b>at NOTRE DAME DONS</b>	0	7	0	0	<b>-7</b>



**Marian's defense stepped up big when it had to Friday to key a 17-7 ESCC victory at Notre Dame for a 3-0 start for the Spartans.**

## **Spartans (3-0) use big plays to win ESCC opener at ND**

At times Friday night in Niles, Notre Dame had its way with Marian Catholic on both sides of the ball.

However, the Spartans came up with big plays when they counted most to improve to 3-0 with a 17-7 come-from-behind victory to open the ESCC campaign.

Trailing 7-0 late in the second quarter, Marian scored on consecutive offensive plays to take the lead for good at 14-7 entering the intermission. In the second half, the Spartan defense bent at times, but came up with interceptions on three of the Dons' last four possessions to help seal Marian's first 3-0 start since 2002.

"In the first half, we were getting beat up physically and we just didn't click," explained

tailback Joey Walker, who got Marian on the board with a 67-yard rushing score and also contributed in the defensive backfield. "But we just had to stay with it mentally. It was a relief to get the big run. I was finally able to break one off."

With Notre Dame racking up nearly a 2-to-1 ratio in first-half snaps, Walker's run represented just Marian's fourth first down of the opening half. Spartan quarterback John Rhode had just hit Walker on a slant to move the chains, then the senior got loose to bring Marian to a 7-7 tie with 2:20 to play in the opening half.

Five plays and a missed Notre Dame field goal later, Joe Hess rambled 80 yards in a one-play drive. When kicker Adam Hutchison split the uprights with his second conversion, Marian owned a 14-7 edge it would not relinquish with 1:09 to play before halftime.

With Marian's offense again struggling to move the chains in the second half with just three first downs (nine total), the "closer" role was put into the hands of the Marian defense.

That's the same Marian defense that yielded 14 Notre Dame plays of 10 yards or more on Friday night in the Dons' second-ever game on their new artificial turf.

However, the Spartan defense rose to the occasion when it needed to most. Marian also forced the Dons into negative yardage on 10 of their snaps and came up with interceptions by Nolan Berens, Danny Vargas and the clincher by Wes Fleming with 63 seconds to play. The first pickoff by Berens came after Notre Dame had penetrated the Marian 15-yard line.

"The defense was just incredible tonight," praised Walker, who jumped in for a handful of snaps at defensive back. "They stepped up and made the plays when we really needed it."

While Notre Dame (2-1, 0-1) played right with Marian in statistical numbers, the Dons saw non-scoring drives end at the Marian 27, 21, 14, 34, 27 and 14. Along with the three interceptions, the Spartans escaped with a pair of missed field goal attempts and Michael Toliver came up with a key sack on fourth-down attempt from the Spartan 27-yard line.

Although Notre Dame tossed for 186 yards through the air, a Spartan secondary of Vargas, Fleming, Pat Healy, Bryon Bajorek and Tony Alozie came up with several key breakups and open-field tackles.

While Notre Dame missed both of its field goal attempts, Spartan Hutchison delivered the clincher on his only try. With 1:55 remaining in the contest, the Marian soccer standout was true with plenty of room to spare for a 32-yard field goal and 10-point cushion.

The Marian offense kept punter Hess busy with nearly as many attempts as the Spartans had first downs (8-9). However, the visitors still wound up with some impressive offensive totals courtesy of the big play and some opportunistic holes provided by an offensive line of Jeffrey Bona, Brian Kelly, Alexander Bell, Tim Michaels and James Jackson.

Hess finished with 113 yards on just four attempts, while Walker toted five times for 82 yards. Trevor Woolfolk added 50 yards on six carries, as Marian churned out 273 yards on the ground. Meanwhile, five of Rhode's six completions came on third down or went for first downs, as he finished with 80 yards through the air.

Coming off a 1-8 campaign and heading into another ESCC test vs. St. Joseph (7:30 p.m.) on Friday in Chicago Heights, the victory in the conference kickoff was an important one.

"A conference win is huge right now," added Walker, who also hauled in three receptions for 55 yards. "This is a key game for us to keep the momentum going. Now we have to keep it going by heading into next week with a chip on our shoulders."

**Sophomores:** The young Spartans improved to 3-0 with a 34-14 decision over the Dons.

CATEGORY	Marian Catholic	Notre Dame
First downs	9	17
Rush attempts / yards	34-273	29-150
Passing yards	80	186
Pass completions	6	12
Pass attempts	15	32
Had intercepted	0	3
Fumbles / lost	0 / 0	0 / 0
Penalty yards	5-40	4-30
Next	ST. JOSEPH	at St. Patrick

#### SCORING

**ND-** Tim Hirsch 37-yard pass from Drew Diaz (Sam Retzky kick), 11:51 second.

**MC-** Joey Walker 67-yard run (Adam Hutchison kick), 2:20 second.

**MC-** Joe Hess 80-yard run (Hutchison kick), 1:09 second.

**MC-** Hutchison 32-yard field goal, 1:55 fourth.

**Rushing:** MC- Hess 4-113 (TD), Walker 5-82 (TD), Trevor Woolfolk 6-50, Jeruel Taylor 7-17, Joe Sanfratello 7-13, Jesse Steward 2-0, John Rhode 3-(minus 2); ND- Julian Burgos 16-91, Drew Diaz 6-36, Connor Thomas 6-18, Jeremy Burgos 1-5.

**Passing:** MC- Rhode 6 of 15, 80 yards, 0 TD, 0 INT; ND- Diaz 11 of 27, 171 yards, 1 TD, 2 INT; Tim Whalen 1 of 5, 15 yards, 0 TD, 1 INT.

**Receiving:** MC- Walker 3-55, Austin Guaccio 3-25; ND- Hirsch 7-103 (TD), Shaun Early 2-58, Thomas 1-19, Whalen 1-8, J. Burgos 1-(minus 2).

**Interceptions:** Nolan Berens, Danny Vargas, Wes Fleming (all MC).

