

GAME 3: Marian Catholic 14, Benet Academy 13

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m. Friday at Benedictine University.
Where: Maple Ave. and Yackley Ave, Lisle.
Streaks: Spartans- 1 win; Redwings- 2 wins.
Week 2: Marian 38, Bloom Township 0; Benet 33, Marian Central Catholic 21.
Week 4: St. Patrick at Marian (Fri, 7:30 p.m.); Benet at Notre Dame (Fri., 7:30 p.m.)
Last meeting: Marian Catholic 34, Benet Academy 3 (2007).
The series: Marian has won seven of the last nine, giving the Spartans a 16-6 overall advantage in the series.
Notes: This marks the third consecutive road contest for the Spartans... In the last meeting played at Benedictine, the Spartans notched a 34-13 victory in 2006... The East Suburban Catholic has posted an impressive 17-1 mark in the first two weeks of nonconference play... Marian is seeking its second straight victory in an ESCC opener... The Redwings are seeking their first victory against Marian since a 29-20 decision in 2005... The winner in this series has scored at least 20 points in 21 of 22 meetings... Friday will be the second of six games the Spartans will play this season on *FieldTurf*.

Sept. 10	1	2	3	4	Total
MARIAN CATHOLIC SPARTANS	14	0	0	0	-14
at BENET ACADEMY	0	13	0	0	-13



The Marian defense blanked host Benet in the second half Friday night to key a 14-13 victory in the ESCC opener for both teams.

Marian uses blocked kicks to edge Benet in ESCC opener

Jason Martinez and Byron Munoz made sure the Marian Catholic special teams were something special on Friday night.

Martinez blocked a punt deep in Benet territory that Cal Roque recovered and scored the Spartans' second touchdown, and Munoz blocked a conversion kick late in the second half.

The visiting Spartans needed every bit of the "special" touches on Friday.

Munoz' block preserved a 14-13 edge at halftime and the Marian defense pitched a second-half shutout, as the Spartans (2-1, 1-0) won their second straight and captured the ESCC opener for both squads, 14-13.

"We practiced all week for blocking kicks," explained Martinez, who was also the holder on both Jabari Danzy conversion kicks- the difference in the contest. "I was just striving to get to the punter's foot and I was able to get it right off the shoulder pad. I knew we were going to get one sooner or later."

Marian got more than one, as Munoz' block prevented Benet (2-1, 0-1) from coming all the way back from a 14-0 deficit before halftime.

The special teams' prowess couldn't have been more necessary on Friday.

Benet outgained the Spartans, 394-160, and held Marian to just two first downs before the Spartans took possession at their own 10-yard line with 6:10 to play.

Assistant coach Sean Mele shouted out, "four first downs and we win this game."

Doubling the first down output seemed like a tall order at that point. However, John Rhode tossed his lone two completions of the night to Randall Wells for chain-movers and the Spartans picked up another first down via penalty. Gaining three of those four desired first downs was enough to give Benet the ball back at its own 26-yard line with just 32 seconds to play.

As it did the entire second half, the Marian defense rose to the occasion. The Redwings used short passes to pick up a pair of first downs and move to the Marian 44-yard line. However, a secondary of Wes Fleming, Tony Alozie, Brandon Woods, David Sowell and Martinez stiffened, as four straight incomplete passes- the last one as time expired- preserved the victory.

"Our defense played heckuva game," Martinez assessed. "Our offense couldn't get much going, but the defense did a great job of playing bend, but don't break. We came up with the big plays when we had to.

"This is a big victory. It gives us some nice momentum for our first home game of the year (Friday at 7:30 p.m. vs. St. Patrick). It also gives us some nice momentum for the rest of the year."

The Redwings advanced within 40 yards of the Marian end zone three times in the second half. But led by strong linebacker play from Munoz, Mark Crosetto and Jake Bartolomei, the Marian defense stiffened when it needed to.

Munoz came up with a couple key sacks, while defensive end Michael Toliver added a sack.

In the first half, when Marian took a halftime lead despite being outgained, 244-96, Woods came up with a key interception.

So how did Marian take that onetime 14-0 lead that it made hold up?

The Spartans made the most of their lone first down of the opening half. On Marian's second possession of the contest, Trevor Woolfolk broke off a 71-yard run to account for almost half the Spartans' offense for the night. Two plays later, Woolfolk burst in from the 1 for a 7-0 command.

The next score came just 1:36 later when Martinez split the defense to block a Redwing punt from the Benet 23-yard line. When Roque scooped up the ball, he had only 6 more yards to travel for a score and 14-0 lead following Danzy's second conversion kick.

Benet scored on two of its next three possessions, but the Munoz block and a steady defensive effort in the second half made the margin hold up for the narrowest of victories.

Woolfolk finished up with 76 yards on just three carries, while Jeruel Taylor proved the workhorse with 50 yards on 18 carries, including 23 yards on the final clock-eating drive.

Sophomores: The Spartans fell to 1-2 and 0-1 with a 29-12 setback to the Redwings.

Freshmen: Marian dropped a 33-8 decision to Benet in its ESCC opener.

CATEGORY	Marian Catholic	Benet Academy
First downs	5	14
Rush attempts / yards	34-144	38-206
Passing yards	16	188
Pass completions	2	13
Pass attempts	9	27
Had intercepted	0	1
Fumbles / lost	1 / 1	1 / 0
Penalty yards	5-30	7-65
Next	ST. PATRICK	at Notre Dame

SCORING

MC- Trevor Woolfolk 1-yard run (Jabari Danzy kick), 3:04 first.

MC- Cal Roque 6-yard return of blocked punt (Danzy kick), 1:28 first.

BA- Nick Mankowski 1-yard run (Hunter Miller kick), 8:30 second.

BA- Patrick Gillespie 42-yard pass from Mankowski (kick blocked), 2:54 second.

Rushing: MC- Woolfolk 3-76 (TD), Jeruel Taylor 18-50, Rhode 9-19, Matt Simmons 3-1, Rob Cifelli 1-(minus 2). BA- E.J. Howe 22-126, Connor Nelligan 4-39, Mankowski 10-28 (TD), Pat Boyle 1-(minus 1).

Passing: MC- John Rhode 2 of 9, 16 yards, 0 TD, 0 INT. BA- Mankowski 13 of 27, 188 yards, 1 TD, 1 INT.

Receiving: MC- Randall Wells 2-16. BA- Nelligan 8-101, Gillespie 3-82 (TD), Howe 1-13, Mankowski 1-(minus 7).

Interceptions: Brandon Woods (MC).

