

GAME 5: Marian Catholic 21, Notre Dame 20 (OT-Homecoming)

PEP RALLY PHOTOS

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m. Friday at Spartan Stadium.
Where: Joe Orr Road at Ashland Avenue, Chicago Heights.
Streaks: Dons- 1 win; Spartans- 3 wins.
ESCC records: Notre Dame 1-1; Marian Catholic 2-0.
Week 4: Notre Dame 35, Benet Academy 31; Marian Catholic 49, Saint Patrick 33.
Week 6: St. Patrick at Notre Dame (Fri., 7:30 p.m.); Marian Catholic at Crete-Monee (Fri., 6 p.m.)
Last year: Marian Catholic 17, Notre Dame 7.

The series: Marian holds an overall 9-6 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 15 games in the series have been decided by eight points or fewer.

Notes: The Dons prevailed in the last game played in Spartan Stadium, 13-10, in 2008... Despite a 3-1 start to the campaign, Marian has not has more first downs than its opponent in any of four games this year... The Spartans are one of only two ESCC teams still perfect in conference play (Carmel)... Notre Dame's 2-0 nonconference record has helped ESCC teams to a 19-2 overall mark this year outside the loop... Marian is averaging 7.5 yards per rush, including two backs gaining more than 12 yards per carry in Trevor Woolfolk (15.6) and Matt Simmons (12.9)... Spartan kicker Jabari Danzy is a perfect 16-for-16 on conversion kicks... Marian is seeking its second straight Homecoming victory and second straight 3-0 start in the ESCC... An alumni gathering will follow Friday's contest in the Sr. M. Paul McCaughey Leadership Center.

| Sept. 24 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | OT | Total |
|------------------------------------|----|---|---|---|----|------------|
| NOTRE DAME DONS | 0 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 6 | -20 |
| at MARIAN CATHOLIC SPARTANS | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | -21 |



Marian's defense pitched a first-half shutout Friday, then blocked a PAT in overtime to key a 21-20 overtime victory over Notre Dame in the ESCC.

PEP RALLY PHOTOS

Marian improves to 3-0 in ESCC with OT win over Notre Dame

This is becoming a habit for Marian junior Jason Martinez. Having blocked a punt to key a one-point win at Benet earlier, Martinez' hands proved to be the difference again on Friday when Marian Catholic hosted Notre Dame for its homecoming contest.

Quarterback John Rhode hit Randall Wells for a touchdown after Marian got the ball first in overtime (both teams get four downs from the 10-yard line). Then the able hands of Martinez held for Jabari Danzy's conversion kick and a 21-14 Spartan lead.

But Notre Dame's Nick Pieruccini scored his third touchdown of the game for the apparent tie. However, Martinez burst through the line to block the conversion chance and give Marian the 21-20 ESCC victory for the Spartans' fourth consecutive victory and a 3-0 start in the loop.

The victory was also Marian's fifth consecutive in overtime.

"I just timed it and if I was going to be offside, I was going to be offside," Martinez said of his plan. "I just fired off the line and got my hands on the first part of the ball. Then Brandon Woods was there to knock it down and make sure it didn't go any farther. I just wasn't going home without a victory tonight."

The Rhode to Wells connection was the early and late show for Marian, which will visit Crete-Monee next Friday seeking a playoff-clinching fifth victory. The duo used three early completions to key scores in Marian's first two possessions for a 14-0 command before the game was eight minutes old.

"We were just trying to get the ball in the end zone," explained Wells, who made the overtime grab on a slant right at the goal line. "The plan was to look for me, but we were also looking for other options." Wells finished with four catches for 82 yards.

However, the Marian offense went into hibernation with just four more first downs through the rest of regulation, placing much of the pressure on the Marian defense.

For the most part, the Spartan defenders were up to the challenge. The likes of Marc Crosetto, Michael Toliver and Jack Ziltz put consistent pressure on the Notre Dame passing game. While the Dons (3-2, 1-2) didn't have an

interception or sustain a sack in 43 passing attempts, Marian's secondary of Tony Alozie, Wes Fleming, David Sowell, Cal Roque and Martinez was up to the challenge for the better part of 48 minutes.

Yet, Notre Dame made the most of its last gasp. Trailing 14-7 late in the fourth quarter, the Dons used a reverse on a punt return to gain possession at the Marian 45-yard line with 39 ticks to play.

Five plays later, Pieruccini pulled in a 20-yard pass between two defenders and squirmed into the end zone for the final 5 yards with just five seconds to play in regulation. One of the defenders on the play was Martinez.

"I just had to make up for the error on the last touchdown," Martinez later said after his game-deciding block. "There were a couple of us there, but I take the blame. Somehow, some way, I was going to make up for it."

Marian has made up for a lot of things in winning four straight, as the Spartans saw an opponent compile more first downs for the fifth game in a row this year.

Yet, Marian looked like it would make things easy in the early going.

After the Spartan defense forced a quick punt, Marian marched 79 yards in just five plays for a 7-0 command. Jeruel Taylor (17 rushes, 123 yards) exploded for a 29-yard touchdown to polish off the drive.

Marian was back in business quickly when Fleming recovered a Notre Dame fumble at the Dons' 37-yard line.

The Spartans again needed just five plays to score, as Rhode hit Wells from 12 yards out. Danzy stayed perfect on the year with his conversion boots for a 14-0 command with 4:48 to play in the opening quarter.

"It's (the passing game) key for us to open things up more and keep the defense off-balance," Wells explained. "We need to have multiple threats."

Along with Well's impressive night, Rhode finished 6-for-15 for 87 yards to complement a rushing game that churned out 196 yards.

Notre Dame proved resilient with a long scoring drive on its second possession of the second half, then the desperation drive late in the fourth quarter.

But thanks to Danzy and Martinez, Marian improved to 2-0 on the year in games decided by conversion kicks.

Sophomores: Marian fell to 1-3 in conference play with a 14-8 setback to the Dons.

| CATEGORY | Notre Dame | Marian Catholic |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| First downs | 17 | 10 |
| Rush attempts / yards | 25-102 | 35-196 |
| Passing yards | 235 | 87 |
| Pass completions | 22 | 6 |
| Pass attempts | 43 | 15 |
| Had intercepted | 0 | 0 |
| Fumbles / lost | 1 / 1 | 0 / 0 |
| Penalty yards | 1-15 | 5-27 |
| Next | ST. PATRICK | at Crete-Monee |

SCORING

MC- Jeruel Taylor 29-yard run (Jabari Danzy kick), 8:13 first.

MC- Randall Wells 12-yard pass from John Rhode (Danzy kick), 4:48 first.

ND- Nick Pieruccini 1-yard run (Sam Retzky kick), 2:16 third.

ND- Pieruccini 25-yard pass from Tim Whalen (Retzky), 0:05 fourth.

MC- Wells 10-yard pass from Rhode (Danzy kick), 1 OT.

ND- Pieruccini 10-yard pass from Whalen (kick blocked), 1 OT.

Rushing: ND- Conner Gavin 3-34, Connor Thomas 9-25, Whalen 4-20, Pieruccini 7-17 (TD), Jeremy Burgos 2-6. MC- Taylor 17-123 (TD), Rhode 6-34, Trevor Woolfolk 9-30, Matt Simmons 3-9.

Passing: ND- Whalen 21 of 42, 216 yards, 2 TD, 0 INT; Pieruccini 1 of 1, 19 yards. MC- Rhode 6 of 15, 87 yards, 2 TD, 0 INT.

Receiving: ND- Gavin 5-67, Brian Fitzsimmons 4-54, Pieruccini 4-43 (2 TD), Jack Meyer 4-36, Matt Livingston 1-19, Thomas 1-12, Jim Leyhane 1-7. MC- Wells 4-82 (2 TD), Taylor 2-5.

Interceptions: none.



