

**GAME 6: Marian Catholic 31, Crete-Monee 27**

**Kickoff:** 6 p.m. Friday at Crete-Monee High School.  
**Where:** 760 W. Exchange Ave., Crete.  
**Streaks:** Spartans- 4 wins; Warriors- 3 wins.  
**Nonconference records:** Marian Catholic 1-1; Crete-Monee 1-2.  
**Week 5:** Marian Catholic 21, Notre Dame 20 (OT); Crete-Monee 21, Kankakee 14.  
**Week 7:** Carmel at Marian Catholic (Fri., 7:30 p.m.); Rich Central at Crete-Monee (Fri., 6 p.m.)  
**Preview story:** [By Jim Baranski, Russell Publications](#) (PDF).  
**Last meeting:** Marian Catholic 25, Crete-Monee 21 (1965).

**The series:** This is just the fifth overall meeting, as the Spartans have won two straight to hold a 2-1-1 edge in the series. The Warriors claimed their lone win in the first encounter, 21-20, in 1962. Marian head coach Dave Mattio played in the last meeting.

**Notes:** The contest will match Marian 35-year coach Dave Mattio against one of his pupils, Jerry Verde... Verde was a member of Marian Catholic's 1993 IHSA state championship squad and has also served as an assistant with Mattio on the Marian staff... The rare early start time is accommodated by Marian hosting the Freshman A (4:30 p.m.) and Sophomore contests (6:15 p.m.) on Thursday... Crete-Monee completes the trio of truly neighborhood rivalries for Marian on the nonconference ledgers after opening the year with visits to Homewood-Flossmoor and Bloom Township... Bloom represents the only other Southland foe on Marian's schedule, as the Spartans try to go 2-0 after a 38-0 conquest of the Blazing Trojans this year... The ESCC continues to be an impressive 20-2 in nonconference play, meaning Marian is a lock to qualify for the IHSA playoffs with a fifth victory on Friday... The Warriors have qualified for the playoffs in all three seasons under Verde, who owns a 27-11 record at C-M... Meanwhile, Mattio ranks 16th all-time in IHSA football victories with a 243-126 record.

Oct. 1	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
<b>MARIAN CATHOLIC SPARTANS</b>	7	10	7	7		<b>-31</b>
<b>at CRETE-MONEE WARRIORS</b>	13	8	0	6		<b>-27</b>



Mentor Dave Mattio (right) prevailed over pupil Jerry Verde (left) as two ESCC Hall of Famers met Friday in a 31-27 Spartan nonconference victory at Crete-Monee.

**Marian topples Crete-Monee for playoff-clinching victory**

Crete was the city of Big Shoulders on Friday night. That's the big shoulders of Marian Catholic's offensive line. Facing a 21-17 halftime deficit on its visit to Crete-Monee, the Spartans put matters in the hands of its offensive line in the second half. While Marian scored just twice after the intermission, the Spartans ate clock and set the tone in a 31-21 come-from-behind nonconference victory that will send the Spartans (5-1) into the IHSA playoffs for the fourth time in five years.

"We were able to grind it out," explained senior offensive lineman Jeff Bona, who joined with mates Brian Kelly, Steven Jackson, Phil Faso, Trent Podnar and Jack Ziltz to lead a rushing game that churned out 300 yards. "We knew we needed to just keep pushing. They (Crete-Monee) were big up front, but we just kept pushing them."

Marian pushed for the lead score on its second possession of the second half, as the Spartans drove 62 yards in seven plays. Jeruel Taylor capped the drive with a 1-yard touchdown run. Jabari Danzy, perfect on the year with 23 conversion kicks, gave Marian a 24-21 lead with 1:38 to play in the third quarter.

Then after the defense set up the offense with a Mark Crosetto interception, Marian marched 55 yards in five plays for the eventual clinching score- a 4-yard touchdown burst by Taylor.

It was fitting that Taylor got into the end zone for all of Marian's four six-pointers. The junior tailback was a monster on Friday, averaging 7.4 yards per carry with 238 yards on 32 totes. The Spartan workhorse often carried a host of Crete-Monee defenders for extra yards after initial contact.

"It takes guts," Bona said of the grinding rushing game. "It seems like we've been in a lot of close games. We always have that late drive that we need to eat some time. We did a good job of doing that tonight."

The Spartans finished with a dominant 300 yards on the ground, as they've rushed for 12 touchdowns in the last three contests. After not being Marian's leading rusher in the first three games, Taylor has rushed for 218, 123 and 238 in the

last three victories.

With its fifth straight victory and a load of IHSA playoff points, Marian has secured a second straight IHSA playoff berth heading into next Friday's 7:30 p.m. ESCC meeting with Carmel Catholic in Chicago Heights. The victory in the first meeting since 1965 gives Marian a 3-1-1 series edge over the Warriors (3-3).

Spartan coach Dave Mattio played in that last contest and also coached Crete-Monee head coach Jerry Verde on the Spartans' 1993 state championship squad. Verde has led the Warriors to playoff berths in each of his first three seasons.

While Taylor and the offensive line put up gaudy numbers on Friday, Marian had its other pieces of the puzzle clicking as well.

After allowing the Warriors to score on three of their first four possessions, the Spartan defense held firm on a fake punt, got the Crosetto interception and forced a punt on the first three Crete-Monee possessions of the second half. Crete-Monee managed a late score with 1:41 remaining to pull within 31-27, but one first-down tote by Taylor on the ensuing possession sealed the deal.

Despite the 5-1 mark, Friday marked the first time all season that Marian had more first downs than its foe, as the Spartans gained a 20-18 edge.

Spartan quarterback John Rhode completed just five of 11 aerial offerings, but four netted first downs and the final 11-yarder to Dominic Pascale helped salt away the clock in the fourth quarter. Earlier, Rob Cifelli pulled in a 35-yard completion to help set up Marian's final score.

Special teams played a hand as well, as Danzy's 22-yard field goal with two seconds remaining in the opening half could have been the margin of victory had the Warriors not missed their final conversion kick. Meanwhile, Matt Simmons returned a kickoff 58 yards to set up Marian after the Warriors had taken a quick 7-0 command.

It looked to be a shootout early, as the Warriors scored on an 80-yard run on the first snap of the contest and Marian needed just five plays to answer after the big Simmons return. Taylor barreled in from 10 yards away, but Crete-Monee was quick to answer.

After the Warriors drove 86 yards in a grueling 15-play drive (missed conversion), Marian answered the challenge by going 60 yards in eight plays (3-yard Taylor run) for a 14-13 edge with just 27 ticks gone in the second quarter.

The next two series saw a pair of punts, as the Warriors were thwarted by a big third-down sack by Spartan David Sowell. But then Crete-Monee and its array of athletes produced a nine-play, 92-yard drive that netted the home team a 21-14 lead. With Taylor shouldering much of the load, Marian marched 52 yards in 10 plays and came away with Danzy's 22-yarder to set up a strong second half for the Spartans.

While a major goal is in the books with the playoff berth, the ESCC lead is on the line next Friday when the Spartans host the Corsairs in a battle of the lone two ESCC unbeaten. Marian will try to equal its six-game winning streak that opened last season, one that included a 20-17 overtime victory at Carmel.

"It feels good (the playoff berth)," Bona said. "But we're still taking things one game at a time. "We've got Carmel coming up next and they're unbeaten and a top-ranked team. We'll just work hard this week and try to take it to them."

**Sophomores:** The Spartans improved to 2-4 overall with a 22-14 victory over the Warriors on Thursday.

CATEGORY	Marian Catholic	Crete-Monee
First downs	20	18
Rush attempts / yards	53-300	26-197
Passing yards	72	234
Pass completions	5	17
Pass attempts	11	31
Had intercepted	0	1
Fumbles / lost	1 / 0	2 / 0
Penalty yards	3-35	7-41
Next	CARMEL CATH	RICH CENTRAL

**SCORING**

**CM-** Julius Spicer 80-yard run (Jack Mykytiuk kick), 11:41 first.

**MC-** Jeruel Taylor 10-yard run (Jabari Danzy kick), 9:13 first.

**CM-** Kenneth Kidd 1-yard run (pass failed), 2:38 first.

**MC-** Taylor 3-yard run (Danzy kick), 11:33 second.

**CM-** Lexus Jackson 47-yard pass from Jaylan Bailey (Jackson run), 4:04 second.

**MC-** Danzy 22-yard field goal, 0:02 second.

**MC-** Taylor 1-yard run (Danzy kick), 1:38 third.

**MC-** Taylor 4-yard run (Danzy kick), 9:55 fourth.

**CM-** LaQuan Treadwell 8-yard pass from Bailey (kick failed), 1:41 fourth.

**Rushing:** MC- Taylor 32-238 (4 TD), Matt Simmons 7-45, John Rhode 10-12, Randall Wells 3-5, Rob Cifelli 1-0. CM-

Spicer 9-131 (TD), Kidd 7-33 (TD), Bailey 8-25, Leandre Vallot 1-8.

**Passing:** MC- Rhode 5 of 11, 72 yards, 0 TD, 0 INT. CM- Bailey 17 of 30, 234 yards, 2 TD, 1 INT; Jordan Eqing 0 of 1, 0 yards.

**Receiving:** MC- Cifelli 2-45, Wells 1-12, Dominic Pascale 1-11, Taylor 1-4. CM- Treadwell 8-90 (TD), Jackson 3-83 (TD), Thurman Lesley 2-38, Lance Lenoir 2-12, Mike Jamison 1-8, Spicer 1-3.

**Interceptions:** Mark Crosetto (MC).

