

**GAME 8: Marian Catholic 29, Nazareth Academy 28**

**Kickoff:** 1:30 p.m. Saturday at Nazareth Academy.  
**Where:** 1209 W. Ogden Avenue, LaGrange Park.  
**Television:** Comcast Network- Look for the rebroadcast throughout Chicagoland at 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 16, and at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 19, on CN100. (**Game Preview** )  
**Streaks:** Spartans- 1 loss; Roadrunners- 5 losses.  
**ESCC records:** Marian Catholic 3-1; Nazareth 0-5.  
**Week 7:** Carmel 24, Marian Catholic 0; Benet Academy 48, Nazareth 21.  
**Week 9:** St. Viator at Marian Catholic (Fri., 7:30 p.m.); Nazareth at Notre Dame (Fri., 7:30 p.m.)  
**Last year:** Marian Catholic 16, Nazareth Academy 10.  
**The series:** The snapped a two-game losing streak last year and moved into the brief series lead at 4-3. Last year marked the first time in seven contests that the winning team didn't score at least 26 points.  
**Notes:** The Roadrunners are the lone ESCC team eliminated from the IHSA playoffs... the ESCC has been dominant in nonconference play this year, posting a 22-2 overall mark outside the loop... the Spartans are 1-0 under the sunshine (Bloom Township) this season, but dropped their last Saturday afternoon encounter at Nazareth, 42-13... Marian has prevailed in its last three road contests after a season-opening setback at H-F... The Spartans are 3-2 this season on artificial turf... Marian tailback Jeruel Taylor needs 164 rushing yards to eclipse the 1,000-yard barrier... Spartan kicker Jabari Danzy is a perfect 23-for-23 on conversion kicks this season... Two more wins would give Marian at least a share of second place in the conference, which would be the best league finish since 2000 and best ESCC finish since 1995.

Oct. 16	1	2	3	4	OT	Total
<b>MARIAN CATHOLIC SPARTANS</b>	7	0	8	14		<b>-29</b>
<b>at NAZARETH ROADRUNNERS</b>	7	8	0	13		<b>-28</b>



Spartan Jabari Danzy made the deciding conversion kick in Saturday's stunning 29-28 comeback ESCC victory at Nazareth Academy.

**Marian escapes Nazareth for victory with 0:00 on clock**

According to Randall Wells, he was the last option.  
 If Marian Catholic was a cat, the Spartans surely had used up most of their nine lives.  
 After virtually everything had gone wrong for 48 minutes (and a couple ticks more) on the Spartans' Saturday ESCC visit to Nazareth Academy, all was atoned for in one play.  
 As the fourth-quarter clock expired, Marian quarterback John Rhode lofted a desperation heave to the left corner of the end zone that Wells pulled in for a 39-yard touchdown.  
 Perfect on the season in conversions, Jabari Danzy made it 26-for-26 with the clock reading 0:00 to give the Spartans a stunning 29-28 come-from-behind victory.  
 "It was the last option," Wells said with a chuckle. "We were looking strong side and the last play had just gone to that side. I just came across the field the other way and was trying to find an opening."  
 "There's just tremendous emotion right now. I was in a car accident last night, so I didn't even know if I would be able to play today. But when it was in the air, I knew it was a touchdown. I just had to go up and get it."  
 Until Danzy's kick, Marian (6-2, 4-1) didn't hold a lead for the entire 48 minutes and then some.  
 While Marian was a lock to make the IHSA playoffs with five wins because of playoff points, the comeback victory will officially put the Spartans on the IHSA playoff roster. Marian will host St. Viator on Friday at 7:30 p.m. in the season finale, trying to lock up second place in the ESCC and secure a stronger playoff seeding.  
 For Rhode, the heroic finish capped off what was turning into a less than memorable day.  
 For the fourth time in the game, Nazareth had taken a one score lead when quarterback Matthew Behrendt plunged in from 1 yard out for a 28-22 with just 42 seconds on the clock. The conversion kick sailed wide to the right, but it seemed alarmingly late for Marian to make that matter.  
 Returner Trevor Woolfolk gave the Spartans some life when he returned the kickoff 39 yards to the Roadrunner 47-yard line. After a 5-yard penalty against the Spartans, Rhode tossed an incomplete pass to make him 0-for-5 on the day.

But a 9-yard hookup with Dominic Pascale moved the ball to the Nazareth 39-yard line. On what would prove to be the game's final play, the long connection with Wells followed. The junior receiver was already in the end zone and just had to pull in Rhode's perfectly placed pass.

"It was a pre-snap read and I saw that he could get a good release," Rhode explained. "He was just able to get over the cornerback. I knew I had to make the throw because I hadn't had a completion all day (before the Pascale reception). I just knew I had to step up."

It marked the fourth comeback score of the game against a stunned Nazareth (2-6, 0-6), which held leads in the game of 7-0, 15-7, 22-15 and 28-22.

Ironically, it was also Marian's third victory of the ESCC season that came courtesy of a missed conversion. While Danzy has been perfect, the Spartans also claimed one-point wins over Benet and Notre Dame (overtime) on blocked conversion kicks.

Despite trailing on four different occasions, Marian came back each time on a rushing score by Wells and two rushing touchdowns from Jeruel Taylor.

Rhode also stated the obvious amid a euphoric Marian sideline.

"We are never even in this game without Jeruel," explained Rhode, who has tossed five touchdowns to just one interception this year. "He just carried us the entire game."

Taylor eclipsed the 1,000-yard barrier at 1,018 with 182 hard-earned yards on 26 carries. He also added a two-point conversion run that knotted the contest at 15-15 in the third quarter.

As a team, Marian rushed for 284 yards, which should have made things easy against the lone ESCC squad that has been eliminated from the IHSA playoffs.

That's where those nine lives come into play.

\*- Marian committed seven penalties in the first half when it earned a 15-7 halftime deficit.

\*- Marian fumbled the ball away on its second snap of the contest.

\*- Marian allowed scoring tosses of 90 and 80 yards against the Roadrunners.

\*- A fumbled punt snap set up Nazareth once at the Marian 25-yard line.

\*- The Spartans had to hold the Roadrunners deep in the red zone courtesy of a Brandon Woods interception.

\*- Marian failed to convert after Wells pounced on a muffed punt on the Roadrunner 42-yard line.

\*- Marian went backward with two negative yardage plays on the first drive of the third and fourth quarters.

It may not add up to nine lives, but the point should be well-taken.

Nevertheless, the Spartans were resilient enough to escape what would have been a deflating defeat.

An offensive line of Trent Podnar, Steven Jackson, Jeff Bona, Brian Kelly, Phil Faso and Jack Ziltz paved the way for a big day from Taylor and Woolfolk (seven rushes, 92 yards).

The likes of Xavier Munoz, Mark Crosetto Jacob Bishop (sack), Michael Toliver and Byron Munoz kept enough pressure on the Nazareth offense that a lackluster effort didn't let a comeback chance sail away. Meanwhile, Marc Grkinich secured a key fumble recovery that led to one of Marian's touchdown drives.

And Tony Alozie came up with a key block of a 30-yard field goal attempt near the end of the opening half.

Marian seemed to find an answer each time Nazareth took a lead, as Taylor scored on a 35-yard jaunt to make it 7-7, Wells scampered around from 10 yards away to tie matters at 15-15 and Taylor added a 52-yard scoring burst to force a 22-22 stalemate.

While it won't go down in history as the prettiest of Coach Dave Mattio's 245 career victories, the Spartans nevertheless found a way to send their fans away happy on a Saturday ride to LaGrange Park.

**Sophomores:** The Spartans fell behind early and sustained a 39-0 setback to the Roadrunners.

CATEGORY	Marian Catholic	Nazareth
First downs	11	15
Rush attempts / yards	42-284	40-196
Passing yards	48	266
Pass completions	2	11
Pass attempts	7	21
Had intercepted	0	1
Fumbles / lost	3 / 1	1 / 1
Penalty yards	8-49	10-75
Next	ST. VIATOR	at Notre Dame

**SCORING**

**NZ-** Sean Maloney 90-yard pass from Matthew Behrendt (Samuel Poulos kick), 4:42 first.

**MC-** Jeruel Taylor 35-yard run (Jabari Danzy kick), 1:58 first.

**NZ-** Kalium Ewing 80-yard pass from Behrendt (Kevin Curtin run), 8:22 second.

**MC-** Randall Wells 10-yard run (J. Taylor run), 5:59 third.

**NZ-** Joseph Yruegas 3-yard run (Poulos kick), 5:44 fourth.

**MC-** Taylor 52-yard run (Danzy kick), 4:19 fourth.

**NZ-** Behrendt 1-yard run (kick failed).

**MC-** Wells 39-yard pass from John Rhode (Danzy kick), 0:00 fourth.

**Rushing:** MC- Taylor 26-182 (2 TD), Trevor Woolfolk 7-92, Wells 1-10 (TD), Rob Cifelli 3-5, Danzy 1-(minus 1), Rhode 4-(minus 4). NZ- Yruegas 21-131 (TD), Michael Kruvalis 3-24, Behrendt 10-22 (TD), Rudy Rumagnano 4-13, Michael Gary 1-4, Kelium Ewing 1-2.

**Passing:** MC- Rhode 2 of 7, 48 yards, 1 TD, 0 INT; NZ- Behrendt 11 of 21, 266, 2 TD, 1 INT.

**Receiving:** MC- Wells 1-39 (TD), Dominic Pascale 1-9. NZ- Maloney 4-112 (TD), Ewing 1-80 (TD), Ryan Marske 4-54, Rumagnano 1-14, Brian Duranty 1-6.

**Interceptions:** Brandon Woods (MC).

