

GAME 1: Marian Catholic 51, St. Viator 27

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m. Friday at Spartan Stadium.

Where: Joe Orr Road, just west of Ashland Avenue, Chicago Heights.

2009 records: St. Viator 4-5; Marian Catholic 7-3.

Streaks: Lions- 4 losses; Spartans- 1 loss.

Week 2: St. Patrick at St. Viator (Friday, 7:30 p.m.); Marian at Benet (Benedictine, Friday, 7:30 p.m.).

Last year: Marian Catholic 45, St. Viator 21.

The series: The Spartans broke a two-game losing streak last year and now have a 13-4 overall command in the series that dates back to 1966.

Notes: Marian will open its campaign with an ESCC foe for the first time since 1995... the last ESCC home opening game resulted in a 20-19 victory over Notre Dame in 2003... the Spartans' first eight games will be against ESCC opponents... Marian is seeking its third consecutive playoff appearance and seven-victory season... the Spartans own a 5-6 record in season openers since 2000... St. Viator is one of eight ESCC teams (of nine) that entered the final week of the 2010 season with a mathematical chance of making the IHSA playoffs... this marks the first time in history that Marian has opened the season against the same foe against which it concluded the previous regular season.

Aug. 26	1	2	3	4	Total
SAINT VIATOR LIONS	7	12	8	0	-27
at MARIAN CATHOLIC SPARTANS	18	19	0	14	-51



Spartan Robert Ruiz prepares to rush on Friday during the host Spartans' 51-27 ESCC victory over Saint Viator to open the season.

Spartans bust out offense in opening victory over St. Viator

Marian Catholic's offense displayed balance, depth and a sense of urgency on Friday when the host Spartans opened the campaign by winning a 51-27 ESCC shootout against St. Viator.

The Spartans knew they had a good thing going this year with the return of ESCC Offensive Player of the Year Jeruel Taylor as their primary tailback.

Taylor put together his usual explosive numbers on Friday with a pair of touchdowns and 230 yards rushing. However, his presence as a threat made everybody else on the offensive side of the ball more dangerous in the season opener.

"He opens up everything for us," explained wingback Randall Wells, who scored three touchdowns in helping Marian build a 37-19 halftime command. "Our opponents are making it a big priority to stop number 33 (Taylor). So it opens up opportunities for all of us- other backs, receivers and Robbie."

Senior signal-caller Robbie Cifelli also made his mark in his varsity starting debut. Tossing just eight passes, he had an efficient six completions for two scores. The diminutive, but elusive signal-caller also rushed for 82 yards and another score.

The impressive Spartan offense churned out 459 total yards, as an offensive line of David Angell, Kevin Pawlak, Jesse Kilbourn, Phil Faso and Michael Coda paved the way for more than 9 yards per carry with 363 yards on 39 totes.

But more importantly, Marian seemed to score at all the right times.

Looking to jump start the season, Wells (23 yards) and Taylor (56 yards) rushed for scores for a quick 12-0 lead less than seven minutes into the contest. After St. Viator pulled to within 18-13, Marian got a 95-yard kickoff return from Matt Simmons to regain a two-touchdown command.

Then Marian closed out the opening half with two scores in the final three minutes, as Cifelli broke several tackles on his way to a 28-yard scoring scamper and then Wells found paydirt from 12 yards out with just 45 ticks remaining in the opening half.

Wells also pulled in a 12-yard scoring reception in the first half.

"It was very important for us to get a good start tonight," explained Wells, who scored on half of his rushing attempts (four carries, 39 yards). "A lot of people are counting us out in this conference, so we wanted to come out tonight and show what we can do."

While the scoring pace slowed in the second half, Marian finished with an exclamation point.

St. Viator pulled within 37-27 late in the third quarter, but Marian tallied twice in the final period.

Cifelli hit Dominic Pascale from 21 yards out for a 45-27 margin, then Taylor got loose for a 61-yard scoring jaunt to account for the final score.

With just six carries before intermission, Taylor wasn't showcased in the prolific first half. Yet, he finished with 230 yards on just 18 carries for a 12.8 per carry clip. Five of his second-half carries resulted in critical first downs.

Meanwhile, the Spartan defense improved as the contest moved into the second half.

The Lions managed only a one-play, 31-yard drive following a Marian turnover in the second half. And while St. Viator passed for 256 yards (on 55 aerial attempts), Marian turned the Lions into a one-dimensional operation.

With big stopping efforts up front from Robert Ruiz, Jack Ziltz, Matthew Hurt, Jacob Bishop and Justin Scott, the Spartans limited St. Viator to just 44 rushing yards on 21 attempts.

Justin Harris was the big-play contributor for the Spartan defense, as he recorded both an interception and fumble recovery.

Efficiency was the recipe for success on Friday, as Marian ran off just 47 snaps compared to 76 for the Lions.

Lorenzo Aldridge proved to be the leader in Marian's passing game with two catches for 41 yards.

"This is a good confidence boost to come out with a game like this," Wells assessed. "It gives us confidence, but at the same time- 37 points in the first half is nice, but we've still gotta get better every day because this is a very tough conference.

In a league that offers no easy pickings, Marian will move to its next test with a Friday 7:30 p.m. battle against Benet Academy at Benedictine University.

Sophomores: Marian opened the campaign with a 28-14 ESCC decision over St. Viator.

CATEGORY	St. Viator	Marian Catholic
First downs	17	21
Rush attempts / yards	21-44	39-363
Passing yards	256	96
Pass completions	29	6
Pass attempts	55	8
Had intercepted	1	0
Fumbles / lost	1 / 1	5 / 2
Penalty yards	7-72	7-80
Next	ST. PATRICK	at Benet

SCORING

MC- Randall Wells 23-yard run (kick failed), 11:06 first.

MC- Jeruel Taylor 56-yard run (pass failed), 8:44 first.

SV- Mike Phelan 66-yard fumble return (Will Solimene kick), 5:20 first.

MC- Wells 12-yard pass from Robbie Cifelli (run failed), 2:27 first.

SV- Shane Rooney 4-yard run (kick blocked), 10:59 second.

MC- Matt Simmons 95-yard kickoff return (kick blocked), 9:25 second.

SV- Jack Kellner 7-yard pass from Mickey Macias (pass failed), 3:51 second.

MC- Cifelli 28-yard run (run failed), 3:00 second.

MC- Wells 12-yard run (Pat Swanson kick), 0:45 second.

SV- Kevin Hammarlund 31-yard pass from Macias (Macias to Brian Guth), 3:09 third.

MC- Dominic Pascale 21-yard pass from Cifelli (Jason Martinez run), 9:10 fourth.

MC- Taylor 61-yard run (kick failed), 0:40 fourth.

Rushing: SV- Rooney 7-29 (TD), A.J. Wegrzyn 3-10, Macias 6-7, Romteen Bahramirad 1-2, Frank Laterza 3-(minus 2), Guth 1-(minus 2). MC- Taylor 18-230 (2 TD), Cifelli 10-82 (TD), Wells 4-39 (2 TD), Eric Hurley 3-11, Marcus Burden 1-4, Simmons 3-(minus 3).

Passing: SV- Macias 29 of 54, 256 yards, 2 TD, 1 INT; Laterza 0 of 1, 0 yards. MC- Cifelli 6 of 8, 96 yards, 2 TD, 0 INT..

Receiving: SV- Guth 9-87, John Balas 5-56, Hammarlund 3-45 (TD), Jack Fulton 5-27, Laterza 2-24, Rooney 4-10, Jack Fellner 1-7 (TD). MC- Lorenzo Aldridge 2-41, Pascale 1-21 (TD), Burden 1-13, Wells 1-12 (TD), Taylor 1-9..

Interceptions: Justin Harris (MC).

