

Sanfratello Has Marian Catholic's Football Team Cooking

SCOTT RITTER - Times Correspondent | Posted: Friday, September 4, 2009 12:00 am

Marian Catholic running back Joe Sanfratello already has made it further into the 2009 football season than he did in 2008.

Last year, as a sophomore, Sanfratello rushed for 75 yards and two touchdowns in the season opener against Homewood-Flossmoor.

The next day, he broke his collarbone.

Sanfratello was forced to watch from the sidelines as his team lost four of its next five, including a loss to rival Bloom Twp., and a 50-7 drubbing at the hands of Mundelein Carmel on homecoming.

"That was actually the third time I had broken the same bone," the junior said. "I came back for the last three games, but I was never 100 percent. I was playing a little bit timid and hurt."

The abbreviated season and the 1-8 finish were more than enough to motivate Sanfratello going into 2009.

The Spartans' running back scored three first-half touchdowns in last week's opener, propelling Marian to a 34-18 win over H-F.

"Joe is very motivated to be successful," Marian coach Dave Mattio said. "His ability to be a big-game player probably far exceeds the maturity of other kids. That's probably the biggest thing he has going for him; he's mature beyond his years."

Sanfratello was sort of a young man in a hurry.

"I just wanted to come back and make up for all of that time I missed last year," Sanfratello said.

The comeback wouldn't be easy though. After bringing his oft-injured collarbone back to 100 percent, the Crete native put on more than 20 pounds while working hard in the weight room. But an offseason illness cost Sanfratello all of those gains.

"During the offseason he always lifted very feverishly and got himself up to 190 pounds," Mattio said. "Then, ironically he got sick and he was down under 170 pounds where he is today. So he has had a couple of setbacks that have befallen him, but he has risen to the occasion each time."

Sanfratello's dedication and personality remind Mattio of something he and some Spartans fans have seen before: his father, Joe Sanfratello Jr.

The elder Sanfratello was a running back on the 1982 and '83 squads that won six games each year. For Mattio, the parallels go even further.

"Kenny Elmore, Dempster Jackson and Joe Sanfratello were the backfield back then," Mattio said. "When you throw in the three Joes that we have now with (running backs) Joe Hess, Joe Sanfratello, and Joe Walker, it reminds me a lot of what went on in 1983."

PREP FOOTBALL

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See the latest info on tonight's prep football games. PAGE B5

The Joe Sanfratello file

School: Marian Catholic

Year: Junior

Position: Running back

Background: After breaking his collarbone for a third time, Sanfratello now plays with specially designed shoulder pads with air channels to guard against future injuries. The Crete native is the grandson of the founder of Sanfratello's Pizza, Joseph Sanfratello.

MARIAN CATHOLIC VS. BLOOM SERIES

Marian Catholic leads series, 8-2.

2008 -- Bloom Twp. 13, Marian 7

2007 -- Marian 27, Bloom Twp. 14

2006 -- Marian 22, Bloom Twp. 0

1989 -- Marian 15, Bloom 6

1984 --Marian 16, Bloom 7

1983 -- Marian 34, Bloom 12

1981-- Marian 8, Bloom 0

1974 -- Bloom 14, Marian 12

1973 -- Marian 22, Bloom 0

1972 -- Marian 14, Bloom 6

MARIAN CATHOLIC VS. BLOOM TRAIL

Marian Catholic won series, 1-0

1981-- Marian 47, Bloom Trail 0

Note: Bloom and Bloom Trail combined their athletic programs in 1995 to become Bloom Twp.