

# Mattio, Marian Give It To Carmel

By Mike McGraw | Daily Herald Staff

Published: 9/25/2009 11:57 PM

Last weekend, Marian Catholic coach Dave Mattio drove all the way from South Suburban Chicago Heights to attend the party to celebrate Andy Bitto's 100th coaching victory at Carmel.

Apparently, Mattio saved his present for later.

Marian Catholic jumped to a 17-0 lead, held off a Carmel rally well enough to force overtime, then pulled out a 20-17 victory on a 25-yard field goal by Adam Hutchinson.

"I love coming up here," Mattio joked of the roughly 140-mile round trip to Mundelein. "It's like a trip to the grocery store."

"It was nice of him," Bitto said. "He's one of my best friends in coaching and my mentor as an athletic director. He's one of the best coaches in Illinois. Last year, they were 1-8. This year, they're 5-0. That shows you what kind of a coach he is."

The visiting Spartans (5-0, 3-0) were undefeated heading into the game, but were largely unproven because three of the victories came against teams that had 1 win or less.

Carmel (3-2, 2-1) got the ball first in overtime and drove to the 2-yard line. On fourth down, Bitto called for a fake field goal, but a pass from backup quarterback Larry Amato for Mike Fitzgibbons was deflected by players from both teams and fell incomplete. Marian ran one running play before sending in the field goal team.

"I thought we could catch them napping a little bit and we didn't execute," Bitto said. "As bad as we played, we still had two or three chances to win."

Marian sophomore quarterback John Rhode showed impressive poise while completing his first 10 passes of the game. Most were for short gains, but he found a wide-open Austin Guaccio for a 33-yard strike with 4:27 left in the third quarter that made the score 17-0.

With its back against the wall, Carmel's defense forced five straight three-and-outs. The Corsairs finally got on the board when Brian Serio threw a missile to Matt Felicelli for a 71-yard touchdown.

In the fourth quarter, Carmel had a field goal blocked. Four plays later, Luke Venegoni deflected a Marian punt and the ball was caught out of the air by Alex Eppel, who ran it back 43 yards to the 1. That set up Eric Stevenson's touchdown run that made it 17-14 with 7:37 remaining.

The Corsairs got the ball back at the Marian 37-yard line, but went nowhere. Following an exchange of punts, Carmel again started in good field position and Nick Battilini tied the score with 1:34 left on a 28-yard field goal.

The Corsairs got another chance and drove to the Marian 20 with 13.2 seconds left. When Serio tried to spike the ball, though, it slipped out of his hand. He gathered it in and threw it to the ground, but the official threw a flag for intentional grounding since Serio mishandled his first attempt at a spike. The penalty moved Carmel back 7 yards and Bitto chose not to try a field goal from the 27.

Carmel lost its leading tackler, safety Matt Trippichio, early in the game with a hip pointer and running back Christian Nemeth in the second half with a knee sprain. Sophomore Jordan Kos ran for 147 yards on 20 carries.