

GAME 9: Nazareth Academy 35, Marian Catholic 21

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

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

Live media: game broadcast on [High School Cube](#).

Records: Nazareth 4-4, Marian Catholic 1-7.

ESCC records: Nazareth 1-4; Marian Catholic 0-5.

Last week: Nazareth 47, Riverside-Brookfield 7; Saint Viator 31, Marian Catholic 21.

Streaks: Roadrunners- 1 win; Spartans- 2 losses.

Last meeting: Nazareth Academy 35, Marian Catholic 19 (2011).

The series: The Spartans have won two of the last three meetings and hold a slim 5-4 series edge. The winning squad has scored at least 26 points in nine of the 10 contests.

Notes: Friday's contest will be the sixth at home for Marian and the eighth in nine games on turf... Pending playoff points, Nazareth is one of seven ESCC team still alive for an IHSA playoff spot... The Spartans have scored a touchdown in their last seven contests... Marian has not had a passing touchdown since Week 4 (10 rushing, 1 special teams since then)... The Spartans are hoping to avoid their first 1-8 season since 2008 and just the fourth one-win year in school history... The Roadrunners have played the weakest schedule of all ESCC teams... Nazareth defeated Notre Dame, 21-6, the lone victory in six contests against common opponents (Benet, Carmel).

Oct. 19	1	2	3	4	Total
NAZARETH ROADRUNNERS	7	14	7	7	-35
at MARIAN CATHOLIC SPARTANS	14	0	0	7	-21



Marian's offense produced 14 first-quarter points in Friday's ESCC meeting vs. Nazareth Academy.

Spartans foiled by Nazareth in ESCC season finale

Marian Catholic's Ki-Jana Crawford proved once again on Friday night that he could be one of the area's best wide receivers.

The versatile junior caught four passes for 100 yards and a touchdown.

Unfortunately, as has been the case many times this season, Crawford was forced into signal-calling duty after another injury to a Spartan starting quarterback (Eric Hurley).

Visiting Nazareth Academy scored five straight times after Hurley was knocked out, as the Roadrunners erased a 14-7 deficit and raced to a 35-21 victory over the Spartans in the season finale in Chicago Heights.

"I really like his competitiveness," Spartan Coach Dave Mattio praised of Crawford. "He's our best receiver, he's our best runner and he could be our best defensive back. A lot has been asked of him this year and he's had to prepare to do a lot of different things. He's got a very bright future as an athlete."

Marian's story on Friday was very similar to its 1-8 season (0-6 in the ESCC).

Despite a schedule that included seven teams eligible for the IHSA playoffs (five or more wins), the Spartans proved very competitive- at least for quarters at a time in contests. But whether it be injury, lack of size and depth,

or luck- things often started steamrolling against the Spartans.

"Throughout the year, we played well for a few quarters or for some series," Mattio explained. "We did some things that generated excitement, but we just didn't have enough depth. I thought our seniors played extremely hard these last few games.

"I was happy with our performance in spurts tonight. We started with some consistency and had some energy. But then we had a couple key injuries. Once we had to start moving people around, we lost that level of consistency." Despite Nazareth (5-4, 2-4) needing the victory to become playoff-eligible, Marian had the Roadrunners on the ropes prior to being forced into the quarterback change.

Using an early connection to Crawford to cross midfield, Hurley led the Spartans on a 65-yard drive following the opening kickoff. The nine-play march was capped off when Hurley hit Lorenzo Aldridge for a 6-yard touchdown and quick 7-0 Spartan command when Chris Taborn booted the conversion kick. Aldridge would later display his versatility as well.

Nazareth quickly erased the deficit when Joshua Moore returned the ensuing kick 91 yards for a 7-7 stalemate. Undaunted, Marian immediately marched for the lead score with an eight-play, 70-yard drive. A long aerial connection to Crawford ignited the drive, which concluded with Hurley sneaking the ball 4 yards for a 14-7 lead. However, the Spartans lost the lead for good when Nazareth marched 73 yards for the tying score.

On the next Marian possession, Hurley went down with an ankle sprain on the first play.

The Spartans would manage just two first downs on their next seven possessions.

With a defensive front of Jeremy Simmons, Justin Scott, Drew Robinson (fumble recovery) and Gideon Woods- along with linebackers Shane Ratkovich, Jacob Forney and Tim Mason- limiting the Roadrunners in the first half, Marian went to the locker room with just a 21-14 deficit.

However, Nazareth doubled the lead with the opening drive of the second half when a 69-yard jaunt led to a 28-14 differential.

Following a competitive first half, Marian was in a familiar position of playing second-half catchup- not a good recipe.

Marian managed just two first downs in the second half, but the second one led to some excitement.

With Aldridge lined up at quarterback for the first time all year, he opened the Spartans' final drive by hitting Crawford on the fly down the right sideline for a score and the 35-21 final.

Despite challenging foes consistently through week nine, Marian concluded the year with its fourth one-win campaign in school history.

Hot early, Hurley finished five of six for 72 yards and the score. However, Marian's ground game netted just 2 yards a snap (34 carries, 68 yards), as Troy Nutall led the way with 23 yards on 14 carries.

Sophomores: Marian averted a shutout with a late field goal, but still suffered a 55-3 loss to the Roadrunners.

CATEGORY	Nazareth	Marian Catholic
First downs	14	10
Rush attempts / yards	35-135	34-68
Passing yards	138	112
Pass completions	9	6
Pass attempts	14	9
Had intercepted	0	0
Fumbles / lost	1 / 1	2 / 0
Penalty yards	9-70	8-52
Next	TBA	Season over

SCORING

MC- Lorenzo Aldridge 6-yard pass from Eric Hurley (Chris Taborn kick), 8:57 first.

NZ- Joshua Moore 91-yard kickoff return (Matt Ramsey kick), 8:42 first.

MC- Hurley 4-yard run (Taborn kick), 4:16 first.

NZ- Carl Jackson 25-yard pass from Jake Bartels (Ramsey kick), 11:20 second.

NZ- Moore 7-yard run (Ramsey), 7:10 second.

NZ- Aeneas White 1-yad run (Ramsey), 5:38 third.

NZ- Moore 5-yard run (Ramsey), 8:39 fourth.

MC- Ki-Jana Crawford 40-yard pass from Lorenzo Aldridge (Taborn), 1:24 fourth.

Rushing: NZ- Moore 21-81 (2 TD), White 6-31 (TD), Christopher Simmons 2-11, Cyle Tucker 2-11, Jessie Villanueva 1-2, Joseph Fontano 1-1, Bartels 1-(minus 1), Sam Citro 1-(minus 1). MC- Troy Nutall 14-23, Hurley 3-

20 (TD), Dillon Burns 8-19, Crawford 9-6.

Passing: NZ- Bartels 9 of 14, 138 yards, 1 TD, 0 INT. MC- Hurley 5 of 6, 72 yards, 1 TD, 0 INT; Crawford 0 of 2, 0 yards; Aldridge 1 of 1, 40 yards, 1 TD, 0 INT.

Receiving: NZ- Zachary Manual 6-68, Jackson 2-40 (TD), Joey Nelson 1-30. MC- Crawford 4-100 (TD), Aldridge 1-6 (TD), William Allen 1-6.

Interceptions: none.

