

Marian Catholic Starts Fast In Rout Of Hyde Park



Ki-Jana Crawford returned a punt and a kickoff for a touchdown in Marian Catholic's 42-3 win over Hyde Park on Saturday,

[Phil Arvia - Times Correspondent](#)

Marian Catholic 42, Hyde Park 3

The Spartans' Dillon Burns scored four touchdowns.

CHICAGO HEIGHTS | A day later than anticipated, the Jerry Verde era nonetheless got off to a quick start Saturday at Marian Catholic.

Ki-Jana Crawford took the opening kickoff 81 yards for a touchdown, priming the pump for a 42-3, running-clock blowout of Hyde Park in the makeup of a game postponed due to lightning Friday evening.

That Crawford handed Verde, in Marian's first game after Dave Mattio's 37-year run as head coach, a lead 13 seconds into his tenure was, the new coach conceded, a relief.

"It took some of the nerves away, that's for sure," Verde said.

But what else could the Spartans take away from a contest with such an obviously over-matched Thunderbirds squad? After all, the second half was played with second-stringers and a running clock.

While Marian's starters were in, they dominated. For the game, Hyde Park completed only one pass, for zero yards, and ran the ball 35 times for 56 yards.

"Well, no matter what, you can't simulate game situations in practice," Verde said. "We learned we have really nice team defensive speed, and we're not afraid to hit — which we're going to have to do.

"Plus, you can still see who your playmakers are."

Saturday, there were two. Crawford had 193 yards on five returns -- the 81-yard kick return, the rest on punts, including a 45-yarder for a touchdown in the second quarter.

Meanwhile, Dillon Burns had four touchdown runs — of 44, 7, 9 and 4 yards — in a seven-carry, 85-yard evening, and had two catches for 66 yards. His four scores came between 9:29 of the first quarter and 6:19 of the second.

After that, the only contest was between Burns and Crawford, when they were asked who was faster.

"I don't know," Crawford said.

"Me," Burns said. "I run track. I ran a 10.6 in the 100 last year. And we raced in practice. I beat him — but it was close."

Crawford was more effusive in discussing his return plan.

"Coach says make the first player miss, then look for a block," Crawford said. "And he says special teams are a scoring opportunity. I think we are."

As for Burns, he celebrated a career — his first four-touchdown game, even going back to his days with the County Club Hills Cougars. He credited his blockers for his scoring plays, each of which ended without significant contact.

"On the first one (44 yards around left end), I saw the edge. The wideouts were holding good blocks," he said. "And on the others, the linemen were moving the defense and I was finding the holes."

The only downside of the evening for Marian was the loss of senior left tackle/inside linebacker Gage Bonczek on Marian's first defensive snap to a thumb injury. He did not return.