

GAME 9: Benet Academy 21, Marian Catholic 14

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m. at Dave Mattio Field (Spartan Stadium).

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

Live media: Game live on [High School Cube](#).

2015 records: Benet Academy 6-2; Marian Catholic 1-7.

ESCC records: Benet 4-2; Marian Catholic 0-6.

Streaks: Redwings- 2 wins; Spartans- 7 losses.

Last week: Benet 24, Joliet Catholic 21; Notre Dame 50, Marian Catholic 12.

Next week: Benet- IHSA Playoffs; Marian- season over.

Last year: Benet Academy 66, Marian Catholic 7.

The series: The Redwings have won three in a row, but Marian has captured nine of the last 14 overall contests and holds an 18-7 advantage in the series. The Spartans' last win came in 2011 with a 27-7 decision at Benedictine.

Notes: Friday night will include Senior Night, as the Class of 2016 players and parents are honored in a pregame ceremony... Benet is one of five ESCC teams (likely six) already qualified for the IHSA playoffs... The 66 points scored by the Redwings last year are the most against Marian in the last 92 games... During its current three-game win streak in the series, Benet has gained a 150-20 scoring advantage.

Oct. 23	1	2	3	4	Total
BENET ACADEMY	7	7	0	7	-21
at MARIAN SPARTANS	7	0	0	7	-14



Chase Love awaits the snap on Friday during ESCC action against visiting Benet.

Spartans' strong season finale effort spoiled by Benet

There's no doubt that Marian Catholic saved some of its best for last on Friday night.

The Spartans scored early to take their first lead in a contest since Week Three, the ESCC opener.

Then, Marian scored early in the fourth quarter to forge a 14-14 stalemate.

Playing against its fifth straight ESCC playoff-bound foe, Marian saw its upset hopes diminished when Redwing quarterback Jack Sznajder got loose for his third rushing score, a 60-yard jaunt that lifted visiting Benet to a 21-14 ESCC decision.

The Redwings will move into the playoffs with a 7-2 mark. Marian concludes the campaign at 1-8, but knows it played some of its most competitive football in the final test of the season.

Even after falling behind with nine minutes to play in the fourth period, Marian wasn't done.

The Spartans responded with three quick first downs on a Christian Simmons run and a pair of Cameron Thomas pass completions to Joe Stith. Marian moved into Benet territory at the 36-yard line, but eventually turned the ball over on downs.

Resilient, Marian had one last gasp of hope.

After Benet, which had stunned Joliet Catholic last week (24-21), moved inside the Marian 5-yard line for an apparent back-breaker, the Spartans forced a fumble and Michael Adeleke pounced on the ball at the Spartan 11-yard line.

The upset bid was not meant to be, as three plays later Benet came up with a clinching interception.

Marian has now lost 29 straight contests, but this was one of the Spartans' most competitive battles in the string—clearly the best for the 2015 campaign.

Marian displayed its meant business on Friday with the opening possession. After a holding penalty backed up the Spartans to their own 9-yard line, Thomas hit Stith down the right sideline and the junior receiver outran the coverage and raced for a 91-yard score.

Matthew Taborn split the uprights on the conversion kick and Marian held its first lead since a 9-7 command over Marian Central Catholic in Week Three.

Benet eventually tied the contest on its third possession of the night, then the Redwings put together a 65-yard scoring march late in the second quarter to take a slim 14-7 margin into the locker room.

With the Marian defense getting a strong effort up front from the likes of Ryan Cook-Kemp, Tauru Robertson, Warren Allen, Aiden Anderson and Adeleke, Benet was unable to assert itself against a squad that had lost seven straight.

Late in the third quarter, it appeared Marian would make the Redwings pay.

After holding Benet scoreless on its first three possessions of the second half, Allen both forced a fumble and recovered the ball for a turnover to give Marian life at the Benet 34-yard line.

On a fourth-down try, Thomas hit Jacob Cavazos on a 27-yard gainer to gain a first-and-goal at the Benet 5-yard line. Two plays later, Thomas tossed a fade on the right side of end zone with sophomore Victor Akinyemi making a sparkling one-handed catch to send the contest into a 14-14 tie.

Displaying its playoff colors, Benet used Sznajder's third scoring run just four plays into the next possession to come up with the deciding points.

Along with a valiant effort on defense (Marian hadn't allowed fewer than 35 points since an opening-game victory), the Marian offense was as balanced as it has been all year.

With Stith (four catches, 129 yards) as the primary target, Thomas turned 12 completions into 190 passing yards. Meanwhile, the Spartan ground game amassed 173 yards, easily a season high and the first time with more than 100 yards since Week One.

Deaven Covington led the way in the infantry with 63 yards on eight carries. while Simmons turned his eight totes into 55 yards. Thomas also scrambled his way to 52 rushing yards.

Cavazos pulled in three passes for 25 yards, while Luis Unzueta and Michael Friel each finished with 15 receiving yards.

Sophomores: The young Spartans concluded the year with a 35-13 setback to the Redwings.

CATEGORY	Benet Academy	Marian Catholic
First downs	19	15
Rush attempts / yards	44-205	33-173
Passing yards	166	190
Pass completions	14	12
Pass attempts	29	37
Had intercepted	0	1
Fumbles / lost	3 / 2	2 / 1
Penalty yards	4-30	5-44
Next	IHSA Playoffs	Season over

SCORING

MC- Joe Stith 91-yard pass from Cam Thomas (Matthew Taborn kick), 10:45 first.

BA- Jack Sznajder 20-yard run (Ryley Guay kick), 0:28 first.

BA- Sznajder 2-yard run (Guay kick), 4:23 second.

MC- Victor Akinyemi 7-yard pass from Thomas (Taborn kick), 10:33 fourth.

BA- Sznajder 60-yard run (Guay kick), 9:02 fourth.

Rushing: BA- Alex McEachern 16-96, Sznajder 12-66 (3 TD), Marty Dozen 11-35, Charlie Weidenbach 4-11, Will O'Grady 1-(minus 3). MC- Deaven Covington 8-63, Christian Simmons 8-55, Thomas 12-52, Jacob Cavazos 2-3, Michael Friel 2-2, Chase Love 1-(minus 2).

Passing: BA- Sznajder 13 of 28, 152 yards, 0 TD, 0 INT; Weidenbach 1 of 1, 14 yards. MC- Thomas 12 of 37, 190 yards, 0 TD, 1 INT.

Receiving: BA- Karl Schmidt 5-56, Will O'Grady 3-53, Dozen 3-22, Weidenbach 1-20, C.J. Birck 1-13, McEachern 1-2. MC- Stith 4-129 (TD), Cavazos 3-25, Luis Unzueta 2-15, Michael Friel 1-15, Akinyemi 1-7 (TD).

Interceptions: Ryan Liszka (BA).

