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Marian Season Brightened By Upset in Final Game

By Bob Lueder

“Just a little more offense and we could have ended up with a winning season,” was the way Marian’s Norm Mack summed up his first year as head football coach.

The Spartans closed the campaign with a 6-0 upset win in the final minute of action over Chicago’s DeLaSalle at Gately field Sunday afternoon.

Larry Kuchyak’s clutch grab of a Greg Lee pass brought Marian the victory for a 4-won, 5-lost record.

Mack pointed out that he had only tackle Dave Mattio, who played every game in 1964, back to build his team around and “it is hard to work an offense around a lineman.”

Marian won three of its last four games and was only a touchdown shy of taking three other games that could have meant the best record ever posted at the school.

“Most of the year we thought Claudio Cerulli would be back for the next game, but this never came true,” Mack said. Cerulli was the best halfback prospect and was out all season with an injury.

The Spartans had a pair of good runners for the short yardage in Mike Platt and Mark Klausner. However, a breakaway runner was needed.

Tim Massey was installed after the halfway point of the season and this was one of the key factors in the fast finish.

The defense, led by a line of Mattio, Joe Marconi, Steve Grivish, Mike Fanning, John Towle and Tim Gaffney played a big part in Marian’s success.

The opponents were able to average 11.2 points per game average, while the Spartans were near the 10 point mark to show the close caliber of competition.

“We were really only out of two games, the 18-2 loss to Gary Andean and a 19-6 defeat at Maryville,” Mack said.

Marian opened with a 13-6 loss on a warm afternoon to Homewood-Flossmoor. The Spartans’ lone score came on an intercepted pass by linebacker John Towle.

The Spartans led in their next game against Lockport West until 6:20 to play. A touchdown by Nick Falco evened the score and then quarterback Lee was trapped in the end zone for a safety that spelled loss number two.

Platt and T. Massey each scored touchdowns as Marian opened its final Catholic Metropolitan conference schedule with a 13-6 win over Little Flower.

Andean had too much, too often and flattened Marian at Gilroy stadium in the Spartans’ only night contest of the season. The next week was even worse when a lightly regarded Maryville team waltzed to a 19-6 conquest.

Marian came to life and trimmed St. Francis de Sales 9-0 when for a while it looked like Towle’s safety was going to be the only scoring. Lee went over with 11 seconds remaining to add to the score.

The Spartans played one of their best games of the year when they held a high scoring Carmel of Mundelein on even terms before dropping a tough 13-7 decision.

Tim Massey had a field day as he scored three times and rolled up 185 yards in 17 carries as the Spartans jumped out to a big lead and then had to hang on before spilling Crete-Monee 25-21.

“If I would have had anything near the breakaway running Tim displayed in this contest, we would have been one of the area’s top clubs,” Mack asserted.

Then came the season finale against DeLaSalle, which Mack and his coaching staff called before the game time, “the best looking team we’ll face this year.”

Gately stadium showed the effects of a rainstorm, plus five games in three days and the going was a little on the slow side to stay the least, but the Spartans came to play football.

The game was scoreless and Marian tried the first gamble with 10:32 left in the game when Mack gave Grivish the go ahead on a field goal try from the 14-yard line. The boot was just off the mark.

Both teams stayed on even terms and with 1:35 left to go John Pascarella intercepted a pass and a 71 yard march to victory was on as Lee picked up 25 yards in three carries.

Kuchyak, a 15 year old junior who never caught a pass or ran with the ball in a varsity game, made a neat over the shoulder catch and raced one yard short of the end zone.

Lee tried a pair of sneaks and the second one was good to put the Spartans up 6-0. DeLaSalle had time for three passes and the final one was good, nearly going all the way.

Ted Obler connected on the throw to Mike Barnotes, the two standouts for the Meteors, and a good tackle by Grivish halted the play at the 14 yard line as the time ran out.