

Marion stumbles into playoffs with 17-16 loss

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 20 October 2012 01:07 -

DEWITT - The Marion Indians won their district title and claimed a No. 1 seed for the Class 3A playoffs Friday night, but they didn't feel like winners.

They didn't play like winners, either.

Marion squandered a nine-point lead in the second half and lost to DeWitt Central, 17-16, in the final game of the regular season at DeWitt.

The Indians would have captured an outright division title with a victory. Instead, they finished in a three-way tie for the District 6 crown and won the No. 1 seed on a tiebreaker.

Marion (7-2) will host Western Dubuque (4-5) in the opening round of the playoffs Wednesday at 7 p.m. at Thomas Park.

The Indians did not back into the playoffs, but they didn't exactly go through the front door. They lost three fumbles, surrendered a crucial kickoff return for a touchdown and lost two key players to injuries.

"We'll use it as motivation," said tailback/linebacker Trev Biery. "This could be good for our team. We learn from it, come out Wednesday even stronger.

"Come out pissed off," he said. "That's our plan."

Andrew Davis was having a big game for the Indians with 76 yards on the ground and two touchdowns, but he broke his leg with 8:29 left in the fourth quarter and left the field on a stretcher.

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Justin Dolley was on crutches after the game, his status unknown for the playoffs.

"Being they're your brothers, it sucks," Marion captain Ethan Herren said about the injuries. "It's real emotional. But it's football, and it's next-man-in.

"You can't hang your heads on injuries like that. We've just got to bounce back."

The game had an odd ending. DeWitt Central owned the lead, but the Sabers attempted some tricky plays that could have cost them the game. Marion was trailing, but the Indians punted in the final seconds to prevent the Sabers from scoring again.

It all had to do with the playoffs and tiebreakers.

The Indians knew they would get the No. 1 seed from District 6 if the race ended in a three-way tie and they lost by fewer than 11 points Friday night.

Meanwhile, the Sabers knew they had to win by 11 points or more, which is why they didn't sit on a 17-16 lead with a minute left in the game.

"We played it smart," Marion Coach Tony Perkins remarked.

Perkins hates to lose and always plays to win, but this was a rare exception where discretion was the better part of valor.

"We could have come out with two minutes to go on our 10-yard line, guns ablazing and thrown it all over the place," he said. "But you've got to play for the big picture in that case.

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"Big picture, it's a three-way tie for the district championship and we still get the No. 1 seed. So big picture, we've got the playoffs coming up on Wednesday."

Marion, Solon and DeWitt Central tied for the district title with 5-1 records.

Marion got off to a bad start Friday. Biery lost a fumble on the first play from scrimmage and DeWitt Central promptly scored on a 13-yard run for a 7-0 lead.

The game was just 16 seconds old at the time.

The Indians rallied and grabbed a 16-7 lead on a 3-yard touchdown by Davis, a 22-yard field goal by Dalton Ott and a 14-yard touchdown by Davis with 43.4 seconds left in the third quarter.

Then it turned sour again.

Jacob Feldpausch returned the ensuing kickoff 87 yards for a touchdown, pulling DeWitt Central within 16-14 with 27.2 seconds left in the third period.

The Sabers kicked off and Marion senior Nick Connolly lost the ball on the kickoff return at his own 35-yard line, giving DeWitt excellent field position. The Sabers drove to the 4-yard line and took their 17-16 lead on a 22-yard field goal by Keegan Laff with 8:29 left in the game.

Davis broke his leg on that field-goal attempt and had to be carted off the field.

Perkins thought his offense and defense played well, except for the lost fumbles. He also bemoaned the kickoff return for a TD.

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"We actually scored 16 points. We gave them 17," he remarked. "We'll fix that the next two days. We've got Western Dubuque. We'll come out and play hard."

DEWITT CENTRAL 17, MARION 16

MAR DEW

First Downs	10	12
Rushing	34-127	47-157
Passing	8-10-0	7-12-1
Passing Yards	129	103
Punts	5-34.0	2-38.0
Penalties	5-35	5-30
Fumbles/Lost	3/3	1/1

Marion	6	3	7	0	- 16
DeWitt Central	7	0	7	3	- 17

SCORING PLAYS

DEW - Mitch Green 13 run (Keegan Laff kick)
MAR - Andrew Davis 3 run (run failed)
MAR - Dalton Ott 22 FG
MAR - Andrew Davis 14 run (Ott kick)
DEW - Jacob Feldpausch 87 kickoff return (Laff kick)
DEW - Laff 22 FG

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING

Marion: Davis 11-76, Biery 13-44, Gunderson 4-22, Mowry 2-5, Hornback 1-3, Hardman 5-minus 23.
DeWitt: Green 19-69, Keitel 17-68, Feldpausch 5-14, Lechtenberg 6-6.

PASSING

Marion: Hardman 8-10-0, 129 yards.
DeWitt: Green 7-12-1, 103 yards.

RECEIVING

Marion: Cannoy 4-97, Cole 1-14, Davis 1-12, Herren 1-6, Ross 1-0.
DeWitt: Lechtenberg 4-55, Enyeart 1-34, Keitel 1-9, Smith 1-5.