

## Batavia's 'D' ties up Geneva

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One constant for the Geneva football team this season has been its ability to light up the scoreboard with big numbers.

On Friday night at Burgess Field, that was far from the case as Batavia handed the Vikings their first loss of the season with a 24-6 victory.

Batavia, Geneva and Kaneland all finished with one loss each in the Western Sun Conference and will share the conference title.

"Nobody likes to share things, obviously," Batavia coach Mike Gaspari said. "It was the best we could do after the loss to Kaneland, so it's special for us."

What was really special was the Bulldogs defense, which limited Geneva to only 33 rushing yards and just 113 yards of total offense. What made such numbers most impressive was the fact that Geneva entered the ballgame averaging 38 points per game.

"Our kids are real smart and when we put a game plan and do some complex things, I think it's confusing to look at offensively," Batavia defensive coordinator Dennis Piron said. "We really felt that we couldn't let (Geneva quarterback Shaun) Ratay stand there and throw."

Batavia (8-1, 6-1) blitzed frequently and the defensive line was able to constantly put pressure on Ratay who threw an interception and only completed 8-of-18 passes for 80 yards.



**Batavia receiver Alex Warner hoists quarterback Alex Schroeder in the closing seconds of the Bulldogs' 24-6 win at Geneva Friday. (Mary Beth Nolan/Daily Herald)**

"What we decided to do was blitz," Piron said. "We're going to come get you and if you can get the ball off, good for you; if not we're going to sack you or you're going to throw under duress."

Geneva (8-1, 6-1) turned the ball over four times while Batavia didn't have a single turnover. The Vikings were marching down the field on their first possession of the game, but they fumbled the ball away on the Batavia 20-yard line.

The Bulldogs scored the only points of the first half when quarterback Alex Schroeder spotted Alex Warner down the sideline and completed an 83-yard touchdown pass.

The third quarter opened uneventfully for the Vikings as they could do nothing on their first

possession. That seemed to set the tone for the remainder of the contest.

“The key was our first drive of the second half,” Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. “I thought if we could’ve got something there, but we turned around and went three and out. If that was the best we could come up with at halftime we don’t deserve to win.”

After a booming 57-yard punt by Brian Maurovich, the Bulldogs had to start their first second half drive from their 9-yard line, but what a drive it would prove to be.

The first 11 plays of the drive featured runs, before Schroeder completed a 25-yard pass to Warner. Five plays later and Tharryn Wright plowed into the end zone from less than a yard away to complete the 17-play drive, which lasted nearly 9 minutes.

“That drive was instrumental in the game,” Gaspari said. “To take it (91 yards), and we did eat up most of the third quarter, it kept the ball out of a very, very difficult offense. Again, it’s a credit to our offensive line. The way those kids have come around the last four weeks or so. I’m very proud of that group too.”

A fumble on the ensuing kickoff gave the ball right back to Batavia and the Bulldogs capitalized with Schroder’s 18-yard touchdown run. The two-point conversion made it 21-0.

Geneva broke the shutout when Ratay completed an 18-yard touchdown pass to Mike Mayszak, his 10th of the season, with 9:28 remaining.

It was the only real highlight for the Geneva offense, which was only on the field for 4 minutes and 22 seconds in the second half.

Wright, who also played linebacker, led the Bulldogs with 25 rushes and 122 yards. He’s now scored 6 touchdowns in the past three games.