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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAMEDAY OPENING KICKOFF

Battle of unbeatens matches opposites

Kaneland must cope with Geneva's size

By Bob Sakamoto
Tribune staff reporter

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Shaun Ratay and Boone Thorgesen have gone head-to-head before--most recently on a basketball court last winter.

"I blocked his shot a few times and he scored on me a few times," said the 6-foot-7-inch, 220-pound Ratay, Geneva's Division I quarterback prospect.

"He's being generous," the 5-11, 176-pound Thorgesen, Kaneland's electric QB, said with a laugh. "He's blocked most of my shots."

They'll be taking shots at one another Friday night when No. 14 Kaneland (7-0) visits No. 7 Geneva (7-0) in what is being billed as the Western Sun Conference title game.

For Ratay, it's another opportunity to show an anticipated overflow crowd of more than 7,000 why Nebraska, Duke and Western Michigan are recruiting him. He has passed for 1,194 yards and 22 touchdowns.

For Thorgesen, it's another chance to show that size isn't everything. The dynamic senior has passed for 2,001 yards and 24 touchdowns and rushed for 497 yards and eight TDs.

Of course, not many Division I schools will take a flier on a 5-11 quarterback.

"If anybody gives him a shot, there's no doubt he can play at the college level," Ratay said. "If he's able to be a walk-on somewhere, he'll do a great job."

Thorgesen said he is "having a blast," operating the Knights' shotgun offense in which receivers Casey Crosby, Adam Blazek and Jody Henningson have combined for more than 100 catches.

"I think every quarterback in the state would want to run our offense," Thorgesen said. "All I've got to do is sit back there and make my reads."

Ratay is a little envious.

"It was like the third or fourth week, and Boone's stats from that game--that's what I had for the whole season," he said. "Our biggest worry is that he is so accurate. He's also real quick and could run all over you."

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"He's a dual-threat quarterback and I'm a pocket passer. I'll take some chances and gamble more, but he's more conservative."

Ratay's top targets include 6-6 Aaron O'Connell, 6-6 Joe Augustine, 6-5 Michael Faught and 6-3 Michael Mayszak. Ratay said the Vikings audible nearly every play, with one of his favorites being the high-fade pass to O'Connell.

"With so many tall receivers, we have a window of opportunity up top that most people can't ever get to," Ratay said.

"Shaun is a great player," Thorgesen said. "He has great accuracy and a cannon for an arm. He's hard to defend because he can scramble, throw the ball 40 yards and hit the receiver in stride."

Kaneland's roster is about half the size of Geneva's, but this "Band of 32" takes pride in toppling bigger schools. (Kaneland's enrollment is 1,025, Geneva's 1,794.)

"It's a pretty good feeling when you beat a team with 60 or 70 guys," Thorgesen said. "We don't complain about being the smallest school in our league. It just makes us play better."

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