

KCChronicle.com Prep Football Game of the Week

Breakdown of Batavia at Geneva

OFFENSIVE BACKFIELD

Batavia needed a spark in the backfield even before sophomore bruiser Brian Krolikowski started suffering from back spasms. The Bulldogs found one in the form of one of the top linebackers in the area, Tharryn Wright. Since starting to get some action in the backfield two weeks ago, Wright already has five touchdown runs. Brett Bullock has also been a factor in the backfield. Fullback Brandon Holl may be the best at his position in the area. Quarterback Alex Schroeder is having a solid season, though it has been overshadowed by the record-breaking seasons had by Kaneland's Boone Thorgesen and Geneva's Shaun Ratay.

Ratay is the key to the Vikings' offense. He has used a stellar rushing attack, led by Chris Modjeski and Pat Schiller, to set up his play-action passing attack. He has been remarkably efficient and has posted a touchdown-to-completion rate of better than a touchdown every four completions this season. Modjeski has turned into one of the area's top rushers in only his first season as a starter.

Edge: Geneva

OFFENSIVE LINE

Batavia's line has also been bolstered by a pair of defensive stars in Mike Garrity and Kevin McFarland. After losing to Kaneland, Batavia coach Mike Gaspari knew that some of his better athletes were going to have to start playing both ways. So Garrity has seen some time at tackle and McFarland as a blocking tight end in recent weeks.

Geneva's line has been versatile enough to help Modjeski to a career year at tailback and help keep Ratay upright long enough to start getting some Division I looks. This is a veteran unit that has been the key to Geneva's offensive excellence this season.

Edge: Even

RECEIVERS

Batavia senior Alex Warner has proven to be one of the most explosive receivers around this season. He is not the biggest player on the field, but he has been tough in addition to his terrific speed. Sophomore Ryan Webb has been a big target and in true Batavia tradition, the Bulldogs have solid tight ends in Jordan Church and Ryan Truffelli.

Mike Mayszak is similar to Warner in that he is explosive and tough without being the biggest receiver around. He has had a solid season as Ratay's top target. Aaron O'Connell has been Ratay's favorite safety valve at tight end, but was knocked out of last week's game against Kaneland and may not be available tonight.

Edge: Even

DEFENSIVE LINE

Batavia's line is one of the toughest around, led by Illinois-bound Garrity and McFarland, who is starting to garner plenty of Division I interest in his own right. Nick Nather, at 315 pounds, has plugged the middle well.

Geneva is anchored in the middle by Colton Potts and Maxx Parcell, who occupy plenty of blockers for Geneva's biggest strength, its linebackers. The defense went with a 3-4 look last week against pass-happy Kaneland, but should be back to its traditional attacking 4-3 style tonight.

Edge: Batavia

LINEBACKERS

Wright is one of the best linebackers around, and he gets plenty of help from Nick Bex and Andrew Sauer, who had an interception last week. Holl has started seeing action both ways recently, returning a fumble for a touchdown against Kaneland.

Gaspari says this is not only the strength of the defense, but maybe the entire team for Geneva. Josh Brennan, Schiller and Alex Springhorn have formed a fearsome trio of linebackers all season long. They are aided by a good secondary and a pair of big defensive tackles that allow them to roam around and make plays, which they normally do.

Edge: Geneva

DEFENSIVE BACKS

This has been a weak area for Batavia this season, as this group was exposed by Kaneland, as so many secondaries have been this season. Cam Conolty and Todd Tarter have been the leaders of this young group.

Mayszak has made an impact on this side of the ball, as well. Brendan Cagney and Brian Maurovich, who also handles Geneva's kicking duties, have been mainstays of this unit. Several new players have started to get into the mix here with Jake Conforti's season-ending knee injury.

Edge: Even

COACHING

Batavia football was an afterthought prior to Gaspari's arrival in the 1980s. Now the Bulldogs are perennial powers who look to be hosting a first-round playoff game and making a deep playoff run this season despite the outcome of this game.

Geneva's football program was in the doldrums before Rob Wicinski arrived seven years ago and now the Vikings are on one of the best runs in school history. The Vikings broke a 12-year playoff drought in 2004 by reaching the state semifinals. A second-round appearance followed and now the Vikings are off to their best start in over 30 years.

Edge: Even

About Batavia: The Bulldogs have rebounded after a tough loss to Kaneland to put themselves in a position to be the tri-champions of the Western Sun Conference with a win tonight. Counting Batavia out in this game because of the loss would be a mistake. The Bulldogs are still the No. 6 team in the Class 6A poll, according to the Associated Press.

About Geneva: People wondered about how well the Vikings would play against a quality opponent. Geneva, the Associated Press' No. 3 team in Class 6A, showed how good it is with a 24-21 win over previously unbeaten Kaneland last week. Now the Vikings want to finish off a perfect regular-season slate and get ready for a deep run in the playoffs.

FINAL SCORE: Geneva 24, Batavia 23.